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COLONEL CLAUS VON STAUFFENBERG IN THE GERMAN RESISTANCE TO HITLER: BETWEEN EAST AND WEST

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I

Within a few months of Hitler's appointment as Reich chancellor (30 January 1933), opposition was driven underground. Illegally organized opposition was on the whole destroyed by the Gestapo (secret state police); opposition within the establishment (vice-chancellor von Papen, SA chief of staff Röhm) was suppressed in a round of murders; the rest was gradually intimidated, as in the case of the churches. The opposition surviving underground could not act effectively to change the regime. It became clear that in the Nazi police state opposition could not be effective without support from the principal non-Nazi force in the nation, the army.

A new opposition within the establishment structure, in the civil service and in the army, began to crystallize in 1938 as Hitler drove Europe to the brink of war. Among its leaders were the former mayor of Leipzig, Dr Carl Goerdeler; General Ludwig Beck, who resigned as chief of the general staff of the army in protest against Hitler's policy toward Czechoslovakia; Colonel Hans Oster, head of the central office of military intelligence (OKW/Amt Ausland/Abwehr); the vice-president of police in Berlin, Fritz-Dietlof Count von der Schulenburg. It is held by some participants and historians that in September 1938 in the days before the Munich conference a high-level conspiracy in Germany was poised and able to remove Hitler if Britain and France supported Czechoslovakia.¹ There is much to be advanced for the thesis, however, that the confrontation with Hitler which General Beck sought in July and August 1938 had held greater promise for a *coup d'état* against the regime, until it had become clear on that occasion that the support of the commander-in-chief of the army, General Walther von Brauchitsch, was not forthcoming². Notwithstanding further conspiracies and plots in 1939 and 1940, this position did not change until Brauchitsch's resignation in December 1941.

In the summer of 1942 the times of seemingly unstoppable advances of the

¹ Hans Rothfels, *The German opposition to Hitler: an appraisal* (Hinsdale, Illinois, 1948), pp. 61–2; Gerhard Ritter, *Carl Goerdeler und die deutsche Widerstandsbewegung* (Stuttgart, 1956), pp. 201–3; Eberhard Zeller, *The flame of freedom: the German struggle against Hitler* (London, 1967), pp. 31–4.

² Cf. Peter Hoffmann, 'Ludwig Beck: loyalty and resistance', *Central European History*, xiv (1981), 332–50.

German military machine were over, serious defeats loomed in the Atlantic, in Africa, and at Stalingrad. No longer was it absurd to argue that Germany as a nation state was doomed unless the war ended before Germany's total defeat.

In considering what was patriotic in the given situation, the anti-Nazi conspiracy more than ever found itself on the horns of a dilemma. Must they let the war run its course until either a compromise was reached or Germany was defeated and occupied by the allies; or must they overthrow Hitler and the Nazis, thus shortening the war, and could they avert losses of territory and independence, or must they accept total defeat and unconditional surrender as the *sine qua non* for an end to the conflict?

From 1938 forward, numerous envoys of the German resistance sought the answer in clandestine contacts with British, French and American government officials or persons thought to have appropriate contacts. There were no reassuring answers, rarely direct answers; but there was always a statement of allied war aims in some form. After the battle of Britain, and even more clearly after the German attack on the Soviet Union and the entry of the United States into the war, allied demands invariably included unconditional surrender and annexations of German territory involving expulsions of German populations.³ Was it reasonable for resistance emissaries to continue seeking modifications of these aims? The resistance sought modifications because they could not hope to win sufficient support in the army without a prospect of an acceptable settlement of the conflict, and because they believed they needed political credibility to carry on after a *coup d'état*. At the same time, they prosecuted plans and plots to overthrow the regime without allied assurances. Several plots failed in February and March 1943.⁴

In April 1943, the centre of the conspiracy in the Abwehr was destroyed through a Gestapo investigation resulting in the arrests of Dr Hans von Dohnanyi, Dr Josef Müller, Pastor Dietrich Bonhoeffer, and his sister Christine von Dohnanyi; Oster was removed from his duties and placed under house arrest.⁵ For a time the conspiracy was in disarray. But from early autumn 1943, a new figure became dominant in the conspiracy: Lieutenant-Colonel Count von Stauffenberg.

II

Stauffenberg graduated from the war academy in 1938 and was posted as supply officer (Ib) to the staff of the First Light Division in Wuppertal, a cavalry division which was re-organized after the campaign in Poland as the Sixth Tank Division.⁶ Stauffenberg's division participated in the occupation

³ Peter Hoffmann, 'Peace through coup d'état: the foreign contacts of the German resistance 1933-1944', *Central European History*, xix (1986), pp. 6-13.

⁴ Peter Hoffmann, *The history of the German resistance 1933-1945* (London, 1977), pp. 278-89.

⁵ Hoffmann, *History*, pp. 293-4.

⁶ For this and the three following paragraphs see Joachim Kramarz, *Stauffenberg: the architect of the famous July 20th conspiracy to assassinate Hitler* (New York, 1967), pp. 52-86, 113-26; Ludwig

of the Sudeten region in 1938, in the campaign in Poland in 1939, and in the campaign in France in 1940. During the campaign in France Captain Count von Stauffenberg was posted to army high command and given the desk for peace-time army organization. Soon preparations of the attack against the Soviet Union superseded peace-time organization.

Through relatives and friends Stauffenberg had been in contact, though not in concert, with the growing anti-Nazi conspiracy from the moment of its crystallization in 1938.⁷ It became plain by 1942 that the supreme military authorities — Brauchitsch, and Beck's successor as chief of the general staff, General Franz Halder — had failed in their duty, in Beck's words: 'to resist with every means "political demands on war-making which it cannot meet"'. Worse still, the military leaders had become involved deeply in the crimes of the regime. These crimes included the deaths of millions of prisoners of war, the mass murder of Jews, and, in part resulting from these, a culpable mismanagement of the campaign in Russia.

In autumn 1942, Stauffenberg declared himself willing to assassinate Hitler.⁸ On 26 January 1943 he took part in an attempt to move Field-Marshal Erich von Manstein to action against Hitler.⁹ Then he was posted, in February 1943, as first general-staff officer (operations officer) to the Tenth Tank Division in Africa. On 7 April 1943 he was wounded near Gafse. He lost an eye, his left hand, three fingers on the right hand, and a kneecap; he recovered, contrary to the physicians' expectations.

Since senior commanders did not take appropriate action to end the crimes, the war, and the regime, Stauffenberg believed 'the colonels' must act. Since Oster's and Dohnanyi's cell in the Abwehr had been eliminated, a new leadership cell was required. Colonel Henning von Tresckow, the operations officer in the general staff of Army Group Centre and *spiritus rector* of at least two assassination plots in March 1943, tried to take things into his hands in Berlin. He had himself transferred to his army group's liaison staff in Berlin in the summer of 1943 and began reconstituting the *coup-d'état* organization. But

Beck, *Studien*, ed. Hans Speidel (Stuttgart, 1955), p. 62; Christian Streit, *Keine Kameraden: Die Wehrmacht und die sowjetischen Kriegsgefangenen 1941–1945* (Stuttgart, 1978); Helmut Krausnick, Hans-Heinrich Wilhelm, *Die Truppe des Weltanschauungskrieges: Die Einsatzgruppen der Sicherheitspolizei und des SD 1938–1942* (Stuttgart, 1981); Hoffmann, *History*, pp. 290–300.

⁷ In the limited space available the question cannot be addressed at length what Stauffenberg might, could or ought to have done between 1938 and the end of 1942. Some answers are implicit in his explanation for deciding to join the conspiracy. An appropriate theory was developed in Théodore Bèze, *Du droit des magistrats* (Geneva, 1970; first published, 1574).

⁸ Kramarz, *Stauffenberg*, p. 122; Christian Müller, *Oberst i. G. Stauffenberg* (Düsseldorf, [1970]), pp. 254–5; Walter Bussmann, *Die innere Entwicklung des deutschen Widerstandes gegen Hitler* (Berlin, [1964]), p. 29; Bussmann, interview with the author on 27 Aug. 1974; Brigadier (ret.) Oskar-Alfred Berger, letters, 7 May and 30 June 1984, and interview with the author on 12 July 1984; Berger was Gruppenleiter I in OKH/GenStdH/Organisationsabteilung where Stauffenberg was Gruppenleiter II in 1942.

⁹ See preceding note, and 'Anlage [1] zum Kriegstagebuch der Heeresgruppe Don bzw. Heeresgruppe Süd vom 22.11.42–23.3.43 (O. B.-Gespräche)', Bundesarchiv-Militärarchiv, Freiburg i.Br., RH 19 VI/42.

he tried in vain to obtain an appointment that would have allowed him to continue, either in Berlin or in Hitler's headquarters. Then Stauffenberg was appointed chief of staff to one of the key conspirators in the home army command, General Friedrich Olbricht. He began his duties on 15 September 1943.¹⁰ Now Stauffenberg took over the 'technical' leadership of the coup from Oster and Tresckow.¹¹ He also showed an interest in political matters.

Stauffenberg had evidently accepted the military necessity of the campaign against the Soviet Union and believed in 1941 and 1942 that it could be won with the support of the population; the analogy of 1917 was an obvious one. But Hitler's policies produced more resistance than support among the population of the Soviet Union. At the same time, the enlistment of volunteers from non-Russian, pro-German populations in the Soviet Union was forbidden, while the numbers of German soldiers became increasingly inadequate for the campaign in the vast Russian space against the growing strength of Soviet forces.¹² Stauffenberg was forced to abandon his earlier view that the war must be won before the victorious army could return to Germany and sweep out the brown pest. It had proved impractical.¹³

The recognized leaders of the conspiracy, Beck and Goerdeler, insisted on its political character and opposed tendencies to military dictatorship. Consequently, they wished a strict separation of 'technical' and political preparations.¹⁴ This was accomplished imperfectly. Goerdeler visited and wrote to senior commanders at the fighting front, and Stauffenberg had close contacts with Helmuth James Count von Moltke in OKW/Amt Ausland, and with Moltke's 'Kreisau Circle', with Dr Adam von Trott zu Solz in the foreign office, and with the socialist Dr Julius Leber.¹⁵ Goerdeler wrote in prison, having been sentenced to death and awaiting execution, that he had met Stauffenberg in the autumn of 1943, and that Stauffenberg 'later turned out to be a wrongheaded fellow [Querkopf] who also wished to involve himself in politics. I had a high regard for him, and yet I had a good number of clashes

¹⁰ Handliste der Generalstabsoffiziere, OKH/HPA Amtsgr. P3, Stand 1. Juli 1943, National Archives, Washington, T-78 roll R 57.

¹¹ Kramarz, *Stauffenberg*, pp. 120–6.

¹² *Ibid.* pp. 96–104; Hans von Herwarth with S. Frederick Starr, *Against two evils* (New York, [1981]), pp. 211–27; 'Rede von Hans Christoph Freiherr von Stauffenberg am 2. August 1963', mimeographed, ([Bad Boll, n.d.]), p. 126; Zeller, *Flame*, p. 189–91.

¹³ Kramarz, *Stauffenberg*, p. 122; cf. Müller, *Stauffenberg*, pp. 254–5.

¹⁴ Jakob Kaiser, 'Deutschlands Trennung war vermeidbar', *Das Parlament*, 20 July 1954; Elfriede Nebgen, *Jakob Kaiser: Der Widerstandskämpfer* (Stuttgart, [etc.] 1967), pp. 140, 165, 177; Hans Bernd Gisevius, *To the bitter end* (Boston, 1947), pp. 503–4; Ritter, *Goerdeler*, pp. 366–9, 543 n. 61, 618.

¹⁵ Ritter, *Goerdeler*, pp. 352–60, 612–16; *Spiegelbild einer Verschwörung: Die Kaltenbrunner-Berichte an Bormann und Hitler über das Attentat vom 20. Juli 1944* (Stuttgart, 1961), pp. 410–12, 110–11, 173–6, 299–300; [Clarita von Trott], 'Adam von Trott zu Solz: Eine erste Materialsammlung, Sichtung und Zusammenstellung', mimeographed typescript ([Reinbek, 1957]), pp. 261–3. The story that Stauffenberg wanted a guarantee of Trott's trustworthiness and accepted Leber's word for it (Trott, 'Trott', Appendix I/III) is subject to doubt; Berthold Count von Stauffenberg had known Trott from 1938 and he had had discussions with him through the years: *Spiegelbild*, p. 56.

with him. He wanted an unclear political course in association with left-wing socialists and communists and he has made my life difficult through arrogant obstinacy [Eigensinn].¹⁶

III

Although Stauffenberg had views in the matter of foreign contacts of the resistance, it was not until 1944 that his hand in them can be detected with any certainty.

The missions to Istanbul undertaken by Moltke on behalf of the German opposition and with Canaris' support in July and December 1943, were designed to bring about an understanding with the western allies. Moltke had friends in Istanbul, and Canaris contrived to send him there on official business on two occasions, from 5 to 10 July 1943, and from 11 to 16 December 1943.¹⁷ On his first visit, Moltke established contact through his friends with American intelligence persons. On his second visit, he communicated to them a resistance proposal for transmission to the western allied governments. Stauffenberg may have been consulted by Moltke before his Turkish mission of December 1943; the evidence is inconclusive.¹⁸ But the evidence is clear that what Moltke transmitted coincided at least in essence with Stauffenberg's views, and that Moltke's description of factions in the conspiracy included the Stauffenberg group in home army command.

The proposal said that Moltke spoke for the pro-western wing of the anti-Hitler conspiracy in Germany; that the pro-Russian wing was 'considerably stronger', particularly in the armed forces; that there was in the 'eastern wing' which was dominant in the air force a 'strong and traditional conviction of a community of interests between the two mutually complementary powers, Germany and Russia, which led to the historical co-operation between Prussia and the Russian monarchy, and between the German Republic and Soviet Russia in the Rapallo period (1922), when the Reichswehr and the Red Army concluded a far-reaching understanding'. The memorandum continued that among the eastern wing 'the foundation of the German Officers' League at Moscow has evoked a powerful echo, the more so as the leaders of the League are recognized in the Wehrmacht as officers of outstanding ability and personal integrity'; the eastern wing had 'for a long time been in direct communication, including regular wireless contact, with the Soviet Govern-

¹⁶ Carl Friedrich Goerdeler, 'Unsere Idee', Nov. 1944, typescript, Nov. 1944, p. 25, Bundesarchiv, Koblenz, Nl. Goerdeler 26; Gisevius, *End*, pp. 502-5.

¹⁷ Michael Balfour and Julian Frisby, *Helmuth von Moltke: a leader against Hitler* (London, 1972), pp. 271-7; Freya von Moltke, Michael Balfour, Julian Frisby, *Helmuth James von Moltke 1907-1945: Anwalt der Zukunft* (Stuttgart, [1975]), pp. 219, 262-4, 285; OSS report Dogwood 234 of 30 Dec. 1943 and related correspondence in the possession of Freya von Moltke; cf. Hoffmann, *History*, pp. 735-7 n. 66-68c, and Peter Hoffmann, *Widerstand, Staatsstreich, Attentat: Der Kampf der Opposition gegen Hitler* (4th rev. edn, Munich, 1985), pp. 278-9.

¹⁸ Moltke to Freya von Moltke 19 July, 8 Aug., 7 and 30 Sept. 1943, Moltke papers in possession of Freya von Moltke; memorandum in Balfour, Frisby, *Moltke*, pp. 273-7.

ment, until a breach of security on the Russian side led to the arrest and execution of many high-placed [*sic*] officers and civil servants early in 1943'; the western group of the opposition, on the other hand, 'although numerically weaker', included 'many key men in the military and civil service hierarchy', and key members of the OKW (a reference to Canaris, Moltke, and Dr Berthold Count von Stauffenberg, Claus' elder brother, probably also to home army command); the western group was 'in close touch with the Catholic bishops, the protestant confessional church, leading circles of the former labour unions and workmen's organizations, as well as influential men of industry and intellectuals', referring obviously to Moltke's 'Kreisau Circle', with which Claus Count Stauffenberg co-operated, and to the conspiracy led by Beck and Goerdeler. The 'logical prerequisites of a successful collaboration between this Western Group of the German democratic opposition and the allies, were described as follows:

(1) Unequivocal military defeat and occupation of Germany is regarded by the members of the group as a moral and political necessity for the future of the nation. (2) The Group is convinced of the justification of the Allied demand for unconditional surrender, and realizes the untimeliness of any discussion of peace terms before this surrender has been accomplished. Their Anglo-Saxon sympathies result from a conviction of the fundamental unity of aims regarding the future organization of human relations which exists between them and the responsible statesmen on the Allied side.... (3) An important condition for the success of the plan outlined in the following points is the continuance of an unbroken Eastern front, and simultaneously its approach to within a menacing proximity of the German borders, such as the line from Tilsit to Lemberg. Such a situation would justify before the national consciousness radical decisions in the West as the only means of forestalling the overpowering threat from the East. (4) The Group is ready to realize a planned military co-operation with the Allies on the largest possible scale, provided that exploitation of the military information, resources, and authority at the Group's disposal is combined with an all-out military effort by the Allies in such a manner as to make prompt and decisive success on a broad front a practical certainty¹⁹.... (5) Should, however, the invasion of Western Europe be embarked upon in the same style as the attack upon the Italian mainland, any assistance by the Group would not only fail to settle the issue of the War, but would in addition help to create a new 'stab-in-the-back' legend, as well as compromise before the nation, and render ineffectual for the future the patriots who made the attempt. There is no doubt that half-measures would damage the cause rather than promote it, and the Group is not prepared to lend a hand in any collaboration with limited aims.

¹⁹ This point is confirmed as Moltke's own view, most probably supported by Lt.-Col. von Stauffenberg, by Moltke's letter to Freya von Moltke of 7 Jan. 1944, and by what Dr Theodor Steltzer and Dr Eugen Gerstenmaier, both members of the 'Kreisau Circle', had told Dr Ivar Anderson, the editor of *Svenska Dagbladet*, on 6 Oct. 1943; Moltke, *Moltke*, p. 285; Anderson diary 17 Sept., 6 Oct., and 30 Oct. 1943, Royal Library, Stockholm, Ivar Anderson paper L 91:3; the view is reflected as well in the memorandum for President Roosevelt of 29 July 1944 by the Director of OSS, William J. Donovan, in Franklin D. Roosevelt Library, Hyde Park, N.Y. (F.D.R. Library), PSF OSS file. A suggestion similar to Moltke's had been made earlier in 1943 by Kurt Freiherr von Lersner in Ankara who was backed by Ambassador von Papen, to the United States Naval Attaché in Ankara; George H. Earle, 'Roosevelt's fatal error and how I tried to prevent it', *Human Events*, xvii, 12, (24 March 1960), 1-4.

(6) If it is decided to create the second front in the West by an unsparing all-out effort, and follow it up with overwhelming force to the goal of total occupation of Germany, the Group is ready to support the Allied effort with all its strength and all the important resources at its disposal.... (8) The Group would see to it that simultaneously with the Allied landing a provisional anti-Nazi government would be formed which would take over all non-military tasks resulting from the collaboration with the Allies and the political upheaval that would accompany it.... (9) The Group... regards the possibility of a bolshevization of Germany through the rise of national communism as the deadliest imminent danger to Germany and the European family of nations. It is determined to counter this threat by all possible means, and to prevent, in particular, the conclusion of the War through the victory of the Red Army, followed by a Russian occupation of Germany before the arrival of the Anglo-Saxon armies. On the other hand no cleft must be allowed to develop between the future democratic Government and the masses of German labour. A non-communist democratic home policy will only be possible in conjunction with a whole-hearted policy of collaboration with Russia.... In this way it should be sought not to antagonize the strong pro-Russian circles in Germany but to rally them in a common constructive effort and to win them over. Finally, what must be avoided at all costs is the development of a situation which would lay a democratic Government open to the reproach of placing foreign interests above national concerns, and unify against this Government the forces of nationalism, communism and Russophily. (10) The envisaged democratic Government, in order to steal the thunder of left radicalism, should operate at home with a very strong left wing, and lean heavily on the social democrats and organized labour, and even, if necessary, seek the co-operation of personally unimpeachable independent communists.

The Moltke mission and the resulting memorandum which was passed to Washington through OSS channels was a desperate attempt to influence western allied war aims policy. It contained inconsistencies and transparent arguments. The acceptance of unconditional surrender and the necessity to bring home the total defeat was contradicted by the proposition to stop fighting voluntarily in the west, and to continue fighting in the east.²⁰ The references to the strength of a pro-Soviet faction in the armed forces and particularly in the air force mean primarily the Red Orchestra spy network and whatever remained of it after the 'arrest and execution of many high-placed officers and civil servants early in 1943'. It is unclear whether or not Trott was meant to be understood as belonging to the pro-Soviet faction since names are not mentioned. The alleged powerful echo of the foundation of the German Officers' League in Moscow certainly did not refer to Stauffenberg who roundly condemned those German collaborators in Soviet captivity as traitors.²¹ The elaborate description of a pro-Russian faction in the resistance, in a paper of a self-declared pro-western faction, can be explained only as an

²⁰ Balfour, Frisby, *Moltke*, pp. 279–80.

²¹ Interview with Nina Countess von Stauffenberg (Claus' widow) 23 Aug. 1969 and letter 19 Jan. 1973; confirmation from Mrs Erika Dieckmann (sister of Colonel Mertz von Quirnheim, Stauffenberg's closest collaborator in home army staff), letter 30 Jan. 1979; after extended attempts to establish a link between the conspirators and the pro-Soviet prisoners' associations in Russia, the Gestapo came to the conclusion that there had not been any; *Spiegelbild*, p. 507.

attempt to persuade the western allies to deal separately with a resistance government.

It was not a good time for such ideas: the United States and Britain were determined to bring the war to an end in conjunction with the Soviet Union in just the way the memorandum ostensibly accepted, by Germany's unconditional surrender and occupation.²² The director of the American intelligence service, the office of strategic services, Colonel William J. Donovan, commented on Moltke's approach (Moltke was code-named 'Hermann' in OSS correspondence):

The approach in Istanbul was made at a time when it was clear that our relations with the Russians would not permit negotiation with such a contact, especially since the plan advanced involved an attempt to permit Anglo-Saxon occupation to the exclusion of Russia. ... I directed our representative in Istanbul to enter into no negotiations with Hermann but to keep open the channel of contact.²³

The idea of opening the front in the west, on the other hand, was more practicable than might at first appear. Moltke either knew through his work in Canaris' organization, or he assumed, that the western allies had a plan for an emergency operation to enter the continent in case of a German collapse or internal revolt before the establishment of the second front on the continent (Operation Overlord). This emergency plan was ready from September 1943, and known as the Rankin Plan.²⁴

Trott, and Dr Hans Bernd Gisevius, a conspirator in the Abwehr posted to the German consulate in Zürich, made every effort to bring to the attention of decision-makers in the west the same fundamental argument that is found in Moltke's memorandum. Both Trott and Gisevius addressed the American OSS Resident in Bern, Allen Dulles. Trott also tried to reach the British government through a contact in Stockholm as late as June 1944.²⁵ From early in 1943 on, Gisevius had been discoursing to Dulles concerning the dangers of communism and bolshevism, and had pleaded for a separate arrangement between a post-Hitler Germany and the western powers. He claimed there was in the conspiracy a strong group favouring a separate arrangement with the Soviet Union and referred to Trott (a liberal socialist) as 'eastward oriented'. But the views Gisevius himself advanced were similar to those of Trott.²⁶ In a

²² See *Foreign relations of the United States, diplomatic papers: the conferences at Cairo and Tehran, 1943* (FRUS [etc.]) (Washington, 1961), pp. 475-654, esp. pp. 497-508; *FRUS 1944 I* (Washington, 1966), pp. 504-14; cf. Balfour, Frisby, *Moltke*, pp. 279-80.

²³ Donovan to Roosevelt 29 July 1944, F.D.R. Library PSF OSS file.

²⁴ Forrest C. Pogue, *United States Army in World War II: the European theater of operations: the supreme command* (Washington, D.C., 1954), pp. 102-6, 339-43; John Ehrman, *Grand strategy. Volume v: August 1943-September 1944* (London, 1956), pp. 8-10, 110, 389.

²⁵ Hoffmann, *History*, pp. 228-39.

²⁶ Allen Welsh Dulles, *Germany's underground* (New York, 1947), pp. 131-3; Gisevius, *End*, p. 486; confirmed by Eduard Waetjen's comments on Dulles' manuscript of *Germany's underground*, in 1946 or 1947, in Princeton University Library, Allen W. Dulles papers, Box 20: 'Hellmuth [Count Moltke] and I tried to convince Peter Yorck, Adam Trott and others who were inclined to the eastern solution of the necessity of the western solution for Germany. Trend towards East

memorandum which he left for Allen Dulles when he returned to Germany to take part in the *coup d'état*, in July 1944, Gisevius said the German masses gravitated towards bolshevization, he warned of a transformation of Hitler's revolution into Lenin's world revolution, and he drew attention to a strong tendency among Germans in general and German military men in particular to be impressed with Russian military achievements, and to favour German-Russian co-operation. World revolution, the memorandum suggested, might appear as something worth fighting for, whereas unconditional surrender only suggested occupation and division by the victors. It behoved the western powers to offer an alternative, a vision of a new Europe in which the nations, including Germany, could exist freely and in peace. The memorandum pleaded for assistance to the plotters who were about to kill Hitler and to take over government powers in Germany, for assistance to 'these men who now take over a tragic heritage, instead of placing them in a difficult position from the beginning by making demands on them which originate in the arsenal of anti-Hitler propaganda'.²⁷

Dr Berthold Count von Stauffenberg, the colonel's brother who served as a navy judge advocate in the naval high command international law department, was in Stockholm in January 1944 to conclude the German-Swedish negotiations on maritime shipping through Göteborg.²⁸ He appears to have tried to open a channel of communication with allied governments. Dr von Stauffenberg's co-worker, Lieutenant-Commander Kranzfelder, who had travelled with Dr von Stauffenberg, related that a contact with the Wallenberg brothers had been sought but not achieved. This episode appears to be connected with Goerdeler's statement to the Gestapo after his arrest in August 1944 that Colonel von Stauffenberg had told him in June 1944 he had a line of communication to Churchill through Count von Bismarck; Goerdeler added he assumed the connexion to have been established through Jacob Wallenberg who had always stayed with Bismarck when he had come to Berlin.²⁹ Goerdeler repeated, in Gestapo custody in November 1944, that

grew after Moltke's arrest in Jan. 1944. Possibly Moltke could have prevented this had he been able to remain with the conspirators.' 'Adam Trott met me in April '44 in Zürich. Adam and I no longer agreed on foreign policy. He was very disturbed because of Gisevius' and my conversations with AWD [Dulles] and about Beck's and Goerdeler's wish to be informed whether western allies were interested in Germany opening western front if eastern front could be held by German armies until the American and British forces had reached German eastern borders of 1920. He asked Gisevius and me to abandon our talks with Dulles and informed me that I would no longer belong to their circle if I did not do so.' This was obviously a manifestation of Trott's frustration at western silence, since Trott certainly did not act on his own advice. Waetjen told the author (interview 5 Dec. 1986) that Trott toyed with the idea, simply because he looked at every method for saving Germany.

²⁷ H[ans] B[ernd] G[isevius], memorandum for A[llen] W[ilhelm] D[ulles], July 1944, typescript in the author's possession; Gisevius, *End*, p. 493.

²⁸ Hoffmann, *Widerstand*, pp. 301-2.

²⁹ *Spiegelbild*, pp. 247-8; Goerdeler, 'Unsere Idee', p. 29; cf. Hoffmann, *Widerstand*, p. 742 n. 120. The matter remains a mystery. Presumably 'Count Bismarck' was the senior government official (Regierungspräsident) in Potsdam, Gottfried Count von Bismarck-Schönhausen; cf. Ritter, *Goerdeler*, p. 550 n. 104. Bismarck died in 1955, apparently without having been interviewed by Ritter.

Colonel von Stauffenberg had told him on 18 July that he had a direct line of communication to Churchill ('*dass er direkte Verbindung mit Churchill habe*').

A nebulous reference is found in General Speidel's post-war account of his tour of duty as Field Marshal Rommel's chief of staff in France.³⁰ Speidel says that Colonel J. E. Smart, formerly of General Eisenhower's staff, had been shot down over Vienna on 10 May 1944 and had wished to be put into contact with Field Marshal Rommel for the purpose of 'independent conclusion of the war'. After the war Colonel Smart denied this version.³¹ If there was any substance in Speidel's earlier account, a Stauffenberg connexion may have run through Lieutenant-Colonel (res.) Dr Cäsar von Hofacker, a relative and friend of Stauffenberg who had been considered by Rommel for a negotiating team along with General Karl Heinrich von Stülpnagel, head of the military administration of France, General Baron Leo Geyr von Schweppenburg, Speidel, General Count Gerd von Schwerin, and Vice-Admiral Friedrich Ruge.³² Hofacker played an important liaison role in June and July between the Berlin centre of the conspiracy and the German forces command in the west.

Then there was Dr Otto John. He was a corporation lawyer with Lufthansa, co-operating also with Abwehr offices. In November 1943 Captain Dr Ludwig Gehre of Abwehr instructed John to find out whether his contact with the American embassy in Madrid could be used for rapid communication with General Eisenhower, with a view to an imminent *coup d'état*.³³ John flew to Madrid and reported to Stauffenberg and Colonel Georg Hansen, Canaris' successor from February 1944, that the contact was ready. When John received no further information, he returned to Berlin on 16 December and

³⁰ Hans Speidel, *Invasion 1944: Ein Beitrag zu Rommels und des Reiches Schicksal* (5th edn, Tübingen, [1964]), pp. 87–8.

³¹ Col. J. E. Smart, letter to the author 22 Jan. 1969. Speidel did not mention the episode in his later reminiscences published in 1977: Hans Speidel, *Aus unserer Zeit: Erinnerungen* (Berlin, Frankfurt am Main, Vienna, 1977). The references recounted here may relate to what the widow of the Quartermaster General, General Eduard Wagner, remembered: the Quartermaster General had said about a week before Stauffenberg's assassination attack 'that now one could no longer await the result of the negotiations with Eisenhower through the Sorbonne'; Eduard Wagner, *Der Generalquartiermeister: Briefe und Aufzeichnungen* (Munich, Vienna, 1963), pp. 235–6.

³² Speidel, *Invasion*, p. 91.

³³ Annedore Leber, *Das Gewissen steht auf* (9th edn, Berlin, Frankfurt/M., 1960), pp. 134–6; Otto John, 'Zum Jahrestag der Verschwörung gegen Hitler – 20. Juli 1944', *Wochenpost: Zeitung für Kriegsgefangene* (London), no. 138, 18 July 1947, pp. 4–6; Otto John, 'Some facts and aspects of the plot against Hitler', typescript (London, 1948), pp. 41–7; John's reports for Stauffenberg and Col. Hansen (Canaris' successor): Otto John, 'Bericht. Betrifft: Spanien/Portugal', typescript (n.p., Feb./March 1944), and 'Bericht' [from Madrid], typescript (n.p., March 1944), both from papers of Dr Walter Bauer; Dr Walter Bauer to the author 1 April 1964; the reports were printed in Otto John, *Zweimal kam ich heim: Vom Verschwörer zum Schützer der Verfassung* (Düsseldorf, Vienna, 1969), pp. 361–8; see also John, *Zweimal*, pp. 139–41, 145–7; A. W. Dulles' reports to OSS Nos. 1888–9 and 1890–3 of 27 Jan. 1944, O.S.S. Archive, C.I.A., Langley, Virginia; cf. *FRUS 1944* 1, pp. 496–8; the OSS cover-name for John was Luke (Dulles to OSS 27 Jan. 1944, Breakers cable no. 1888–9, OSS Archive); indictment dated 20 Dec. 1944 against Dr Klaus Bonhoeffer, Dr Rüdiger Schleicher, Dr Hans John, Friedrich Justus Perels and Dr Hans Kloss, Institut für Zeitgeschichte, Munich, ZS/A-29/1.

learned that the occasion which was to have provided the opportunity for the assassination had been cancelled. In January 1944 John met Stauffenberg at the co-conspirator Werner von Haefen's house; Stauffenberg gave him instructions to set up communication channels to General Eisenhower and Field Marshal Montgomery. In March and in June 1944, John reported the line of communication to General Eisenhower had been set up; but also that the responses to requests to modify the unconditional surrender demand were negative. John reported to Stauffenberg and Hansen that America supported Russia fully in her war effort in Europe and would not try to help maintain the independence of eastern Europe. Whoever controlled the German government could submit only an offer of surrender.

Trott related to Gestapo interrogators Stauffenberg's instruction in 1944: 'I must know how England and America will act if Germany should be compelled to initiate negotiations on short notice.'³⁴ On 21 June Trott spoke to a member of the British embassy in Stockholm, David MacEwen.³⁵ Trott argued that unless the formula of unconditional surrender were retracted, co-operation between the underground opposition and the allies was impossible politically and psychologically. Trott suggested assurances regarding the territorial integrity of Germany and the self-determination of the 'main body of German-speaking population', implicitly accepting losses. He said conditions better than those which would follow Hitler's defeat were necessary for the political credibility and survival of any anti-Nazi German government. Not even the smallest gesture of encouragement came from allied officials in response to Trott's information and suggestions.

Trott is reported also to have made an attempt to meet with the Soviet ambassador in Stockholm, Alexandra Mikhailovna Kollontay.³⁶ Willy Brandt and a Swedish person are said to have acted as intermediaries. But the attempt was called off, allegedly by Trott; the reasons are unclear. According to an informant of the American chargé d'affaires in Stockholm, Trott told his

³⁴ *Spiegelbild*, p. 175.

³⁵ Trott, 'Trott', pp. 252–3; Henry O. Malone (author of *Adam von Trott zu Solz: Werdegang eines Verschwörers 1909–1938* [Berlin, 1986]), letter 13 Dec. 1978; Henrik Lindgren, 'Adam von Trotts Reisen nach Schweden 1942–1944', *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte*, 18 (1970), pp. 281–2, 289–91; the American minister in Stockholm, Herschel V. Johnson, to the secretary of state 26 June 1944, *FRUS 1944 I*, pp. 523–5; Hans Rothfels, 'Trott und die Aussenpolitik des Widerstandes', *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte*, xii (1964), 309–10; Ger van Roon, *Neuordnung im Widerstand: Der Kreisauer Kreis innerhalb der deutschen Widerstandsbewegung* (Munich, 1967), pp. 316–17.

³⁶ Johnson to secretary of state 26 June 1944, *FRUS 1944 I*, pp. 523–5, 552; according to Johnson to secretary of state, 14 Sept. 1944, indirect information from Willy Brandt indicated that 'contact could not be made in time'; Malone was informed by Willy Brandt that Brandt was in process of arranging this contact, in June 1944, when Trott called it off because he had been warned by another person that such a contact was likely to be leaked to German authorities. Trott was on good terms with consul-general Pfeleiderer in Stockholm who was working to establish a contact with the Soviet legation there at the behest of ambassador Friedrich Werner Count von der Schulenburg, at about the same time; Trott, 'Trott', pp. 252–3; cf. Vojtech Mastny, 'Stalin and the prospects of a separate peace in World War II', *American Historical Review*, lxxvii (1972), 1370; cf. also Ingeborg Fleischhauer, *Die Chance des Sonderfriedens: Deutsch-sowjetische Geheimgespräche 1941–1945* (Berlin, 1986), pp. 235–40, using new and older sources unevenly.

Swedish intermediary on 22 June that the national committee 'Free Germany' had placed representatives in Germany and that his group had no reservations against co-operating with them, but they had not made contact because of warnings of Gestapo infiltration. His group was interested, however, in contacts with both the Russians and the British and Americans.³⁷

It must be coincidence that on the same day, the socialists Dr Adolf Reichwein and Leber met with Communist Party of Germany underground leaders Anton Saefkow and Franz Jacob.³⁸ The communists had brought along a third person who turned out to be a Gestapo spy; the communists and the socialists were arrested on 4 and 5 July. The socialist Dr Carlo Mierendorff, a friend of Moltke's in the 'Kreisau Circle', had advocated co-operation with the communists in June 1943. Reichwein, subsequently Moltke and Leber had been in favour, the trade-union leader Wilhelm Leuschner, Goerdeler, and the christian-socialist Jakob Kaiser had been opposed. Now, in June 1944, Stauffenberg and his friends Peter Count Yorck von Wartenburg and F.-D. Count von der Schulenburg had supported Leber's and Reichwein's meeting with the communist leaders.³⁹

The two events could be read as an 'opening to the east'. Trott, Colonel Albrecht Mertz von Quirnheim (Stauffenberg's friend and successor as chief of staff of General Olbricht), Stauffenberg and the co-conspirator Ulrich von Hassell (former ambassador in Rome) had spoken of the inescapability of having to come to terms with the Soviet Union if the western powers maintained their negative position.⁴⁰ Stauffenberg probably agreed to Trott's attempt at a Russian contact in Stockholm, as Trott and Stauffenberg co-operated closely.⁴¹ But Trott's principal efforts had been, and were in June 1944, to reach western allied governments.

³⁷ Johnson 26 June 1944, *FRUS 1944* 1, pp. 523–5, 552.

³⁸ See sources in Hoffmann, *Widerstand*, pp. 743 n. 132 and 133, and 790 n. 218.

³⁹ Roon, *Neuordnung*, pp. 589–90; Annedore Leber, *Den toten, immer lebendigen Freunden* (Berlin, 1946), p. 11; Ritter, *Goerdeler*, p. 471 n. 19 (according to Mrs Reichwein, F.-D. Count von der Schulenburg also agreed to the meeting); Fritz Sanger, 'Stauffenberg: Auch mit der KP', *Die Zeit*, no. 34, 18 Aug. 1978, p. 7 (only Fritz Sanger says that Goerdeler approved); Kurt Finker, *Stauffenberg und der 20. Juli 1944* (4th edn, Berlin, 1973), p. 199, quotes Mrs Reichwein as saying: 'I assume that Stauffenberg was informed of it.' Hans Mommsen, 'Social views and constitutional plans of the resistance', in *The German resistance to Hitler* (London 1970), p. 140 accepts Gisevius' and Goerdeler's allegations that Stauffenberg thought in terms of a revolutionary uprising by the army and the people, after the *coup d'etat*, to ensure the political success of the revolution through a combination of the 'revolution from below' with the 'revolution from above'; see Gisevius, *End*, pp. 486–8, 507–12; Goerdeler, 'Unsere Idee', p. 25: Stauffenberg wanted 'an unclear political course in connection with left-wing socialists and communists'. Mommsen also cites evidence from Major Roland Hosslin (*Spiegelbild*, p. 373), a friend of Stauffenberg's, that Stauffenberg considered 'the Wehrmacht in our state as the most conservative institution which was at the same time rooted in the people', and that Stauffenberg thought the army or home army alone could maintain order against revolution; on balance, Mommsen considers Stauffenberg's alliance with socialists and communists a tactical move. Cf. below, pp. 14, 19–20.

⁴⁰ Cf. notes 35 and 36 above; *Spiegelbild*, p. 507; Mrs Hilde Mertz von Quirnheim, interview 9 Sept. 1972 and letters 18 Dec. 1978, 28 Jan. 1979; Mrs Erika Dieckmann, letter 30 Jan. 1979; Gisevius, *End*, p. 509; Hassell, p. 283.

⁴¹ *Spiegelbild*, pp. 110–11, 173–6; Trott, 'Trott', p. 262; Mrs Clarita von Trott, letter 28 March 1987.

The evidence for an 'eastward tendency' of Stauffenberg is tenuous, but not tenuous enough to be ignored.⁴² What is in dispute is whether Stauffenberg, Trott, and their friends Fritz-Dietlof Count von der Schulenburg and Yorck intended merely 'to play the Russian card' in order to persuade the western allies to help them keep the Red Army out of most of German territory, or whether they really wanted to and had decided to strike a deal with the Soviet Union.

Some evidence comes from Eduard Waetjen, a lawyer from Bremen, who had an American mother, and good contacts in the German foreign office as well as with some American officials including Allen Dulles. Waetjen was a 'Kreisau Circle' friend of Moltke's and Trott's, a friend of Gisevius, an Abwehr operative for Canaris in Turkey and in Switzerland, and from early in 1943 attached, like Gisevius, to the German consulate in Zürich.⁴³ Waetjen told Dulles about his last meeting with Moltke in Berlin on 17 January 1944, two days before Moltke's arrest: 'If Moltke had not been arrested in January I believe his influence would have been sufficiently strong to have avoided giving up the western for the eastern solution, and the idea which was in the mind [*sic*] of Trott and others in the circle, of playing the "east card" against the western card. Moltke knew that for years Germany would be far too weak to play any cards whatever after the collapse of the Nazi regime.' In other comments for Dulles, Waetjen stated: 'Hellmuth and I tried to convince Peter Yorck, Adam Trott and others who were inclined to the eastern solution of the necessity of the western solution for Germany. Trend towards East [*sic*] grew after Moltke's arrest in Jan. 1944... Adam Trott met me in April '44 in Zürich. Adam and I no longer agreed on foreign policy. He was very disturbed because of Gisevius' and my conversations with AWD and about Beck's and Goerdeler's wish to be informed whether western allies were interested in Germany opening western front if eastern front could be held by german [*sic*] armies until the American and British forces had reached German eastern borders of 1920. He asked Gisevius and me to abandon our talks with Dulles and informed me that I would no longer belong to their circle if I did not do so.'⁴⁴

The background of this is the perennial discussion among the conspirators about whether or not one ought to try to communicate with the Soviet authorities since the western governments met every attempt with silence. At the last general meeting of the 'Kreisau Circle' at Kreisau, at Whitsuntide (12–14 June) 1943, Trott had spoken on 'foreign policy' and suggested that the Soviets might be more reasonable than Nazi propaganda portrayed them; that they might make greater concessions to a post-coup resistance government than the western allies; that in fact the west was unlikely to make any concessions at all whereas this was much less clear in the case of Russia;⁴⁵ that

⁴² See discussion of evidence in Hoffmann, *Widerstand*, pp. 744–6 n. 139.

⁴³ Waetjen, interview 5 Dec. 1986; Dulles, *Underground*, pp. 93, 134.

⁴⁴ Waetjen memorandum, Allen W. Dulles papers, Box 20. Waetjen, letters to the author 3 July 1987, confirms the circumstances (1944 in Dulles' office in Bern) and contents of the MS typed and corrected by another hand.

⁴⁵ Roon, *Neuordnung*, pp. 254–5.

he, Trott, proposed to try to contact the Soviet envoy in Stockholm, then a minister, Mrs Kollontay.⁴⁶ This was accepted generally. There was evidently little urgency in this matter, however. These 'foreign-policy' matters were a secondary concern in the 'Kreisau Circle' at that time. Trott did not even come close to meeting with Mrs Kollontay until June 1944. In the meanwhile, he never tired of warning of the *danger* of communism in Germany and a Russian hegemony in Europe.⁴⁷ Germany would be susceptible to communism, Saxony in particular was fertile soil for it, Trott told the chief editor of *Svenska Dagbladet*, Dr Ivar Anderson, in Stockholm on 30 October 1943.⁴⁸ Trott himself did not believe in the possibility of a separate peace with the Soviet Union, he said, but there were those in the opposition who talked about capitulation to the Soviet Union in the hope of better peace conditions than the western allies offered. If the western allies failed to assist the German opposition actively by landing troops and by occupying much of Germany, and by an assurance to negotiate, then nothing remained for the opposition to do except to wait, and then the Soviet Union might 'win the game'. Moltke's second Turkish mission must be seen in this perspective. Moltke's propositions were, although more elaborate, in essence identical with Trott's.

Stauffenberg's agreement to the meeting with the communists could have only the purpose of stabilizing the planned *coup d'état* internally as well as externally. It was the opposite of an eastward orientation. Along the lines of Moltke's December 1943 memorandum, a non-communist internal policy had to be coupled with good relations with the Soviet Union.⁴⁹

Gisevius claims first-hand knowledge for his assessment of Stauffenberg's political views, and this requires examination. Gisevius' position concerning the danger of bolshevization before he left Zürich for Berlin on 11 July 1944 has been recorded.⁵⁰ Gisevius arrived in Berlin on 12 July and met Stauffenberg on that day for the first time.⁵¹ Of course there had been strains in the conspiracy when Stauffenberg, regarded by some as coming in too late to be quite credible, had taken the reins.⁵² Gisevius' irritation at the commanding manner of the new-comer is equally understandable. But Gisevius' reports to Allen Dulles after his escape and return to Switzerland, after months in hiding after the failed putsch, on 23 January 1945, cannot be explained in such simple terms.

In his first interviews with OSS persons after his return to Switzerland, Gisevius said 'that Colonel von Stauffenberg, who made the attempt on Hitler's life, had planned to conclude a peace with the Soviets, if the putsch were successful and proposed to announce the establishment of a "workers and

⁴⁶ Freya von Moltke, interview 17 May 1987, also for the statement in the following sentence.

⁴⁷ Dr Ivar Anderson, diary 30 Oct. 1943; generally see Hoffmann, *History*, pp. 228–39; Hoffmann, *Widerstand* (expanded), pp. 283–95; Lindgren, 'Trotts Reisen', pp. 274–91.

⁴⁸ Anderson, diary 30 Oct. 1943.

⁴⁹ Mommsen, 'Social views', pp. 135–40.

⁵⁰ See above, at note 27.

⁵¹ Gisevius, *End*, pp. 493–5, 507.

⁵² Cf. Hoffmann, *History*, pp. 365–6.

peasants" regime in Germany'.⁵³ Gisevius' information to Dulles is reflected in several further dispatches from Bern and in two memoranda by the acting director of OSS, Charles S. Cheston, for President Roosevelt, dated 1 February 1945. Cheston summarized Dulles' cables of 25 and 28 January 1945:

The younger, active leaders [of the July plot] like Colonel von Stauffenberg favoured a pro-Soviet policy. The older and more conservative figures wanted to turn to the Western Allies. The younger men were encouraged to a Soviet orientation by a feeling that Allied policy gave no hope for Germany's future and as a result of alleged assurances from the Free Germany Committee in Moscow that Germany would receive a just peace from the Soviets and the Wehrmacht would not be wholly disarmed.⁵⁴

Dulles cabled on 28 January:

Stauffenberg and his immediate collaborators were determined on Eastern solution and opening front immediately to Russia without even trying to negotiate with them. Stauffenberg claimed he had been in touch with Seydlitz Committee and that he had from Seydlitz Committee through Kollontay assurances that Germany would have fair peace and that German Wehrmacht would not be completely disarmed. Also Trott, who apparently had tried to contact British in Stockholm and had received no encouragement, had himself gone over to Eastern solution and supported Stauffenberg. ... It is significant of situation in Germany then and today that younger men like Stauffenberg and Trott saw in Anglo-American policy or lack of policy no hope for Germany's future and therefore, were prepared to take their chances with Russia. 512 [Gisevius] sees only chaos for Germany. He says Germans expect harsh but realistic policy from Russia, that Russia will need Germany's economic resources and therefore, will permit Eastern Germany to work, although it may only be for Russian's [sic] benefit, whereas Western powers have no interest in seeing any economic life rebuilt in Germany and hence, Germans feel little hope for German[y]'s [economic life] under American and British occupation. He believes that conditions in Germany which

⁵³ Charles S. Cheston, acting director, OSS, 'Memorandum for the President', typescript, 27 Jan. 1945, F.D.R. Library PSF Box 170 OSS Jan. 1945. During the week 4-11 Feb. 1945 Gisevius gave a full report on 'The background and story of the 20th of July' to Mary Bancroft, one of his OSS contacts before 11 July 1944 and a close friend of Allen Dulles; this report, a typescript marked in Mary Bancroft's hand 'From M.B. to AWD.', returned to Mary Bancroft by the C.I.A., is in the author's possession. It reiterates in untempered terms Trott's and Stauffenberg's alleged leanings: 'During the war years, Stauffenberg had gathered around him a circle of men, mostly young "ostelbische" nobles, who toyed with the idea of a revolution of soldiers, peasants and workers. Communistic and religious attitudes were mixed in their imagination with the high esteem, inherited from their fathers, in which they held the old Prussian military castes. They hoped that the Red army would support a militarily strongly ruled communistic Germany and looked towards the East for a solution of their problems... On one of his trips to Stockholm, Trott had established relations with the "Freies Deutschland" Committee through the Russian legation. Out of this contact grew the tacit understanding that the Germans should open the Eastern front and let the Russians march in. Such a gesture - so the Stauffenberg circle believed - would be suitably rewarded by Stalin. Over against this suggestion of letting in the Russian army, the Beck circle who favored the "Western solution", had nothing to propose. Goerdeler's contact in Stockholm and Gisevius' contacts in Bern remained without any reply from the governments in London and Washington.'

⁵⁴ Cheston to Roosevelt 1 Feb. 1945, F.D.R. Library PSF Box 171 OSS Feb. 1945.

American and British occupying forces will have to meet will be so intolerable for persons used to western form of life and culture, that it will be next to impossible to maintain occupying forces there from point of view of morale and living conditions, not of course from point of view of any military opposition. Russians are hardened to such things and in any event, with exception of Berlin, cities in their zone, will have suffered less bombing destruction.⁵⁵

Gisevius had evidently been able to convince Dulles of the dangers of a general German option for the east, and possibly of the merits of those who had given their lives in the anti-Hitler resistance. Indeed, Dulles had been trying to help Gisevius influence American war aims policy for more than a year. In a cable on 27 January 1944 [*sic*], he had reported briefly on the principal opposition groups in the anti-Hitler conspiracy in Germany, saying that in spite of certain differences of opinion among the groups,

these groups keep in touch and are very eager to obtain political ammunition from our side. They consider this to be sadly wanting, and they wish it to reinforce their movement at the present time and following the collapse, as well. Western orientation is preferred by the Breakers over Eastern orientation, but they fear that their nation is being directed by events toward the influence of the East. They are in favor of extensive social changes.⁵⁶

This was an accurate if simplified summary of what Trott and Gisevius had been at pains to convey to western allied governments. Dulles repeated on 15 July 1944 in a report to Washington:

The Breakers group wishes [to] keep as much as possible of the Reich from falling into the hands of the Russians. Consequently Breakers' plan of action would call for an ordered retreat from the West, and the transfer of all the crack divisions to defend the Eastern front.⁵⁷

In his book, *Germany's underground*, Dulles added:

Both Washington and London were fully advised beforehand on all the conspirators were attempting to do, but it sometimes seemed that those who determined policy in America and England were making the military task as difficult as possible by uniting all Germans to resist to the bitter end.⁵⁸

On Stauffenberg's alleged eastward leanings, Dulles wrote:

Later I learned that just before Count von Stauffenberg placed the bomb the conspira-

⁵⁵ Dulles, Breakers cable no. 4377, 28 Jan. 1945, OSS Archive. The phrase completed here to read 'Germans feel little hope for German[y]'s [economic life] under American and British occupation' is given in the original received cable as the apparently corrupted phrase 'Germans feel little hope for Germans under American and British occupation'.

⁵⁶ Allen Dulles' cable no. 1890-3 from Bern to OSS 27 Jan. 1944, OSS Archive.

⁵⁷ [Allen Dulles] to OSS, Breakers cables no. 4110-4114 13 July 1944 and no. 4111-12 15 July 1944, OSS Archive; cf. OSS Research and Analysis Branch Summary L 39970 of 18 July 1944 and L 39971 of 22 July 1944, National Archives, Washington, Record Group 226. Dulles' information was derived from Gisevius, Waetjen, and from Captain Dr Theodor Strünc (of Abwehr) who had come to Switzerland on 9 July.

⁵⁸ Dulles, *Germany's underground*, pp. 172-3.

tors agreed to surrender unconditionally to the Russians as well as to the American and British forces as soon as Hitler had been killed.⁵⁹

The reference is to surrender, not to a preference for one or the other side. This came from Gisevius' reports after his escape to Switzerland in January 1945, and so did the subsequent statement in Dulles' book on Stauffenberg's political leanings:

Gisevius told me Stauffenberg toyed with the idea of trying for a revolution of workers, peasants and soldiers. He hoped the Red Army would support a Communist Germany organized along Russian lines. His views were shared by certain of the younger men of the Kreisau Circle, including the Haefen brothers and Trott.⁶⁰

Again, Dulles' cautious phrasing – 'Stauffenberg toyed with the idea' – does not confirm what he had cabled to OSS from Bern in January and February 1945. In Gisevius' book one will find the identical sort of modification.⁶¹ But there is a better indication of the purpose of Gisevius' alarms and Dulles' transmissions. It is to be found in the very dispatches Dulles had sent in January and February 1945. Immediately after Gisevius' arrival, when Dulles had cabled that Gisevius had told him 'that Stauffenberg who was the active element in July putsch had planned eastern solution if putsch successful and proposed initiate declaration of workers and peasants regime in Germany', Dulles had commented:

Situation on Eastern Front and general drift of German situation leads me to conclude that eastern solution now more attractive to Germany as well as harmonizing with march of events. Not impossible we may find Germany maintaining stubborn resistance in west while Russians are deep in Germany, unless we find way of breaking resistance of Wehrmacht forces opposing us in west. Subtlety and psychology may help our military forces.

Endeavoring explore possibilities of secret line to Rundstedt and already have a line to Kesselring via contact who is seeing 476 today before proceeding to Italy to see Kesselring. Could anything along following lines be given discreetly to out [=our?] outs who have contacts in high Wehrmacht circles? (1) Unconditional surrender remains unaltered policy but problem for German military leaders to face is future of own country in face of inevitable and rapidly approaching military defeat. (2) In both west and east Germany faces the choice of making each German city an Aachen, Warsaw or Budapest, or of facilitating entry of the Allied forces and orderly transfer of authority to forces of occupation under conditions which would (a) spare unnecessary destruction, (b) facilitate distribution of food and raw materials so as to render possible an earlier resumption of economic life, and (c) render possible orderly evacuation of prisoners and foreign workers. (3) Officers of Wehrmacht who contribute to such constructive policy, assuming war criminals not involved, would be treated with

⁵⁹ Dulles, *Germany's underground*, p. 140. According to Julius Leber, *Ein Mann geht seinen Weg: Schriften, Reden und Briefe* (Berlin-Schöneberg, Frankfurt/M., 1952), p. 286, Stauffenberg and Leber had concluded even before the allied landing in Normandy that the attempt to prevail upon the German army commanders in the west to have their troops retreat and allow an allied occupation was no longer feasible. Equally, Stauffenberg and Beck rejected Goerdeler's idea to try such an approach; Goerdeler, *Unsere Idee*, pp. 28–9.

⁶⁰ Dulles, *Germany's underground*, p. 170.

⁶¹ See below, at note 70.

consideration due their rank and in relation to the services they thus render in facilitating liquidation of the Nazi regime and those forces which have supported it.

This is merely rough outline of ideas, but some affirmative program along some such lines may help to drive a wedge into German Army and to facilitate American and British occupation of at least Western Germany before effects of Russian successes in east create situation of complete chaos thruout Germany. Even though Russia may not, and probably does not desire to see a Bolshevized Germany, many Germans believe this would facilitate an understanding with Russia and are working in this direction aided by events, by the distress incident to the slowly creeping paralysis in German transportation and the suffering resulting from air bombardments and the presence in Germany of millions of undernourished and desperate prisoners of war, foreign workers and bombed-out population.⁶²

Dulles' comments put Gisevius' information in proper perspective. There were reasons for worry about Soviet Russian influence in Germany. At the end of December 1944, the American secretary of state, Edward R. Stettinius, and his advisers wanted the president to send Stalin a cable expressing disappointment at Russia's preemptive support for a pro-Soviet provisional government, and the British government had the same objections.⁶³ Fifty German generals in Russian captivity, headed by Field Marshal von Paulus, at about the same time issued a new appeal to the Germans to overthrow Hitler, warning them that they must expect occupation and punishment but that they would subsequently be able to take their place among the free nations.⁶⁴ The French foreign minister, Georges Bidault, indicated that 'the idea of a Soviet dominated government on their frontiers fill[s] the French with terror'.⁶⁵ Dulles, moreover, was already involved, in an operation for the surrender of German forces in Italy.⁶⁶

In his book, *To the bitter end*, Gisevius also modified and in some respects neutralized what he had told Dulles. Gisevius had met Stauffenberg for the first time on 12 July 1944, and the indications are that Gisevius then had his only extended conversation with Stauffenberg.⁶⁷ Gisevius described Stauffenberg and some of his close associates as looking for a conciliation with Russia⁶⁸ and 'the immediate circle around Stauffenberg' as having sought 'an alliance with the extreme Left, the Communists'.⁶⁹ No evidence for these

⁶² Dulles, Breakers cable no. 4077, 25 Jan. 1945, OSS Archive; Cheston, 'Memorandum for the President', 27 Jan. 1945, F.D.R. Library, PSF Box no. 170. As was customary with both diplomatic and intelligence cables received in Washington, Dulles' cables were paraphrased in slightly fuller and re-written sentences.

⁶³ Stettinius Record 24-31 Dec. 1944, *FRUS: the conferences at Malta and Yalta 1945* (Washington, 1955), pp. 436-7; Britain and America continued to support the Polish government-in-exile in London; *The Times*, Late London Edn, 2 Jan. 1945, p. 3.

⁶⁴ Ambassador Harriman from Moscow to secretary of state 10 Jan. 1945, *FRUS... Malta and Yalta*, pp. 453-4.

⁶⁵ Acting secretary of state to secretary of state 7 Feb. 1945, *FRUS... Malta and Yalta*, p. 957.

⁶⁶ Dulles, Breakers cable no. 4077, 25 Jan. 1945, O.S.S. Archive; Allen Dulles, *The secret surrender* (London, 1967); Bradley F. Smith and Elena Agarossi, *Operation Sunrise: the secret surrender* (New York, 1979).

⁶⁷ Gisevius, *End*, pp. 483-572.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.* p. 483.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.* p. 487.

judgements is suggested, they do not form part of Gisevius' record of his conversation with Stauffenberg, nor could they be drawn from it. On the contrary, Gisevius says Stauffenberg, in discussing the Western and Eastern options,

contradicted himself in the same breath; after each statement he added that he did not want me to misunderstand him, that he had not really decided the matter in his own mind, and was for this reason simply taking the role of an *advocatus diaboli*. From the vehemence with which he developed his ideas, I clearly perceived that he had long since made his choice, but that he was not yet sure how he could justify his change of heart to Beck or Goerdeler.⁷⁰

It came down to Gisevius' perception. Gisevius was not able to cite any statement by Stauffenberg which could have supported what he had told Dulles.

No first-hand witness but Gisevius ever claimed that Stauffenberg had shown pro-Russian, pro-Soviet, or pro-communist leanings. The interrogations of Stauffenberg's 'circle' by the Gestapo indicated quite the opposite.⁷¹ Stauffenberg is reported as having said shortly before 20 July 1944 that 'the direction of negotiations would depend on the situation at the time'.⁷² It was understood by the conspirator under interrogation (Lieutenant-Colonel Robert Bernardis) that tensions among the allied powers were to be exploited in some way.⁷³ Stauffenberg was reported to have supported the idea, on 16 July, of negotiations from 'soldier to soldier', including those of the Soviet Union.⁷⁴ Beck had told Hofacker on 11 July 1944 that immediately after a successful *coup d'état*, negotiators would be dispatched to London and Moscow.⁷⁵ These views are recorded not only in Gestapo summaries of interrogations of conspirators after 20 July 1944, but also in such unimpeachable sources as Hassell's diaries, and Trott's memoranda for western allied authorities. In Germany's geographical and military position, indeed, views radically different from the ones expressed would have been surprising.

Despite all that was said about an eastern solution, an attempt to discover if the Soviet Union would negotiate separately with a post-Hitler resistance

⁷⁰ Ibid. p. 509.

⁷¹ Stauffenberg's background and political concepts would exclude any pro-Soviet or pro-communist views, nor are there any positive indications of such views. Cf. Zeller, *Flame*, pp. 395–6 and passim; Müller, *Stauffenberg*, pp. 149–63, 240–80, 330–475. This would be irrelevant, of course, if there were proof that Stauffenberg radically changed his mind. It might be argued that conspirators could only have reduced their chances of survival, after their arrest, if they had revealed any communist or Russian connections to their Gestapo interrogators. But there were on the regime side many who also toyed with the idea of coming to terms with the Soviet Union; of Bernd Martin, 'Verhandlungen über separate Friedensschlüsse 1942–1945', *Militärgeschichtliche Mitteilungen* (1976), no. 2, passim; Fleischhauer, *Chance*, passim. In view of the bias and inconsistencies in Gisevius' and Dulles' information, the thesis has yet to be proven that the Stauffenberg group of younger conspirators, particularly Claus Count von Stauffenberg, had 'opted for the East'.

⁷² *Spiegelbild*, pp. 19–20.

⁷³ Ibid. p. 19.

⁷⁴ Ibid. pp. 19–20, 110.

⁷⁵ Ibid. p. 136.

government was never consummated. Stauffenberg's agreement to Leber's and Reichwein's meeting with the communists could have had only the purpose of stabilizing the planned *coup d'état* internally as well as externally, that is, the opposite of an eastern orientation.⁷⁶ As Moltke's December 1943 memorandum had explained, a non-communist internal policy had to be coupled with good relations with the Soviet Union.⁷⁷

On the other hand, verdicts against dealings with the Soviet Union or the National Committee 'Free Germany' abound. Stauffenberg rejected cooperation with either of them; Mertz von Quirnheim talked about cooperation but never acted accordingly.⁷⁸ The plan to open the front to the western allies had no equivalent for the east, on the contrary. Down to the last days before the *coup d'état*, when even Stauffenberg accepted that Germany must surrender to all the allies, the plan was to stabilize the eastern front.⁷⁹ On 18 July Stauffenberg was realistic enough to tell Goerdeler that East Prussia could not be saved from occupation by the Red Army.⁸⁰

Stauffenberg, like other conspirators, believed that a chance for armistice negotiations with the western allies lay in their concern to keep the Soviet Union out of central Europe. The thought of turning against the Soviet Union together with the western allies came up, too, in the discussions of his 'circle'.⁸¹ Trott met at Stauffenberg's apartment on 16 July 1944 with Claus and Berthold Count von Stauffenberg, their cousin Lieutenant-Colonel Cäsar von Hofacker (liaison to Speidel and Rommel), Fritz-Dietlof Count von der Schulenburg, colonels Hansen and Mertz von Quirnheim, Yorck, and Ulrich Count Schwerin von Schwanefeld, to discuss the possibilities of armistice negotiations.⁸² At this meeting Stauffenberg considered it possible to induce commanders in the west to halt hostilities, to withdraw German troops to Germany's western fortifications, and to create 'the pre-conditions for concerted action by the western powers with Germany against the Soviet Union with the aim of an early conclusion of the war'.⁸³ This was four days after Stauffenberg and Gisevius had had their conversation. Of those present at the meeting, Stauffenberg, Trott, Mertz and Yorck were said in Gisevius's January 1945 relations to Dulles to have favoured an eastern solution and a communist Germany with the support of the Red Army.

⁷⁶ Mommsen, 'Social views', pp. 135–40.

⁷⁷ Balfour, Frisby, *Moltke*, p. 277.

⁷⁸ Nina Countess von Stauffenberg, interview 23 Aug. 1969 and letter 19 Jan. 1973; Mrs Erika Dieckmann, letter 30 Jan. 1979; *Spiegelbild*, p. 507; cf. Hoffmann, *Widerstand*, p. 743 n. 132, pp. 305–6, 744–6 n. 139; Franz Josef Furtwängler, letter to Mrs C. von Trott 8 July 1947 in Trott, 'Trott', p. 240; Roon, *Neuordnung*, p. 585; Lindgren, 'Trotts Reisen', pp. 290–1; *Spiegelbild*, p. 402, confirmed by Col. (ret.) Peter Sauerbruch, interview 9 Feb. 1977 and Dr Gotthard Baron von Falkenhausen, letter to Dr Clemens Plassmann 24 March 1947; cf. *Spiegelbild*, pp. 175, 226; Leber, *Mann* p. 286.

⁷⁹ *FRUS 1944* I, pp. 505–7, 510–13; Leber, *Mann*, p. 286. The plan to open the western front was ascribed to the Beck–Goerdeler group for May 1944.

⁸⁰ Goerdeler, 'Unsere Idee', p. 29.

⁸¹ *Ibid.* pp. 56–7, 91–2, 174–6.

⁸² *Ibid.* pp. 91–2, 175.

⁸³ *Ibid.* p. 175; cf. *Spiegelbild*, pp. 91, 98, 101, 111, 116, 198, 402.

Stauffenberg knew there was no prospect of substantial negotiations except on the basis of Germany's weight as a military factor.⁸⁴ As things stood, negotiations could concern only the modalities of an armistice. Therefore Stauffenberg sought lines of communication 'from soldier to soldier'.⁸⁵ Talk about western and eastern options, as reported by Gisevius,⁸⁶ was just talk. There was no alternative to treating with both the western allies and the Soviet Union as long as they took a united position.

The idea of an unconditional surrender was so foreign to men like Stauffenberg – or Goerdeler – that it was natural for them to hope for ways to avoid it. But there is credible evidence, from Yorck, that Stauffenberg reckoned with the necessity of unconditional surrender as early as the beginning of June 1944.⁸⁷

A mixture of hope and realism pervades Stauffenberg's utterances in the weeks before 20 July, whether they were transmitted through the medium of Gestapo interrogations, through the hostile Gisevius, or through friends and relatives. In mid-June Stauffenberg said: 'Now it is not the Führer or the country or my wife and four children which are at stake; it is the entire German people.'⁸⁸ On 1 July he told a visitor in the home army command offices that the militarily hopeless situation could *not* be changed by a *coup*, but that a great deal of bloodshed and chaos could be avoided.⁸⁹ Stauffenberg had accepted that unconditional surrender involving the total occupation of Germany could not be averted.⁹⁰

Trott's testimony in Gestapo interrogations seems to leave open the possibility that Stauffenberg had 'information [*bestimmte Inspirationen*] from the other side' concerning a possible separate armistice in the west.⁹¹ But Trott would have *known*, of course. Trott also mentioned the alternative, which was fact: in terms of foreign policy, Stauffenberg's *coup d'état* was a leap into the void ('*oder er habe mit seiner Tat aussenpolitisch ins Nichts gehandelt*').⁹² Stauffenberg himself understood this.

The available evidence, taken together, indicates: (1) Allied war aims included the total military defeat of Germany, her unconditional surrender, allied military occupation of Germany, territorial annexations, population expulsions, division of Germany. (2) The anti-Hitler conspirators in Germany were aware of allied war aims. (3) The resistance individuals and groups in Germany who sought to overthrow Hitler's regime tried to establish political

⁸⁴ Ibid. p. 34.

⁸⁵ John, *Zweimal*, p. 159; *Spiegelbild*, p. 101, 111, 174, 506–7. ⁸⁶ Gisevius, *End*, pp. 508–10.

⁸⁷ *Trial of the major war criminals before the international military tribunal: Nuremberg 14 November 1945–1 October 1946*, xxxiii (Nuremberg, 1949), 423; Dulles, *Germany's underground*, p. 140 may have drawn his information from this source.

⁸⁸ Delia Ziegler (Stauffenberg's secretary), 'Bericht über den 20.7.1944', typescript ([n.p., n.d., probably 1946]), p. 2; a similar account is given by Erwin Topf, 'Klaus Graf Stauffenberg', *Die Zeit* 18 July 1946. ⁸⁹ Zeller, *Flame*, pp. 285–6.

⁹⁰ Yorck in *Trial*, xxxiii, 423; Stauffenberg to Goerdeler on 18 July 1944 according to Kunrat Freiherr von Hammerstein, *Spähtrupp* (Stuttgart, 1963), p. 291. Beck had told Gisevius on 13 July 1944 that 'total occupation could not be prevented'; Gisevius, *End*, p. 518.

⁹¹ *Spiegelbild*, p. 111.

⁹² Ibid. pp. 111, 198.

justification for a *coup d'état* in order to win sufficient internal support. (4) Regardless of the political and ethical positions taken by resistance emissaries who sought a modification of allied peace terms, the responses of the allies were uniformly negative. The British response in February 1940 may have been an exception; but it had implications pointing in the direction of a reduction of German territory (Sudeten, Austria), and in the direction of German disarmament and conditions guaranteeing 'security' more effectively than the conditions in the treaty of Versailles had done. On balance, the British and generally the allied position was that the German resistance ought to be able 'to make a revolution without co-operation from abroad'.⁹³ (5) In view of the allied war aims, certainly after June 1940, there was no basis for agreement except unconditional surrender, military occupation, annexations, population expulsions, division. (6) The lack of an acceptable basis meant that the attempts made by the German resistance to do away with Hitler, and particularly the final *coup d'état*, were not motivated primarily by political and power-political considerations. (7) The conspirators despaired of obtaining assurances but continued to seek them; they continued to opt for the western democracies despite the absence of any encouragement from that quarter, and in the face of tempting overtures coming from the Soviet Union in 1943 and 1944; their inclination in the last weeks to explore contacts in the east while pursuing chimeras in the west reveals helplessness and growing confusion, but contradictory positions (Goerdeler – Beck – Trott – Stauffenberg) are explained to a considerable extent simply by the differing views of the conspirators. (8) While, naturally enough, still clutching at straws, Stauffenberg pursued a rational purpose to create communication channels for armistice arrangements which would be needed as long as German forces controlled any large areas, particularly outside German territory. (9) While seeking assurances almost desperately, the individuals in the heart of the conspiracy had never since 1940 made their action or inaction dependent on allied assurances, nor did they do so in June and July 1944; they had carried out numerous more or less hopeless attempts to overthrow Hitler. Stauffenberg's plan to carry out the assassination himself; to try against all odds to leave Hitler's headquarters after the attack; to return to Berlin and to begin the *coup d'état* after a three-hour time gap:⁹⁴ this plan had nothing in terms of technical rationality to recommend it. (10) Stauffenberg's *coup d'état* therefore served only the purpose Tresckow had formulated: 'The assassination must be attempted, at any cost. Even should that fail, the attempt to seize power in the capital must be undertaken. We must prove to the world and to future generations that the men of the German resistance movement dared to take the decisive step and to hazard their lives upon it.'⁹⁵

⁹³ David Astor, 'Why the revolt against Hitler was ignored: on the British reluctance to deal with German anti-Nazis', *Encounter*, xxxii (1969), p. 4.

⁹⁴ Hoffmann, *History*, pp. 397–439.

⁹⁵ Fabian von Schlabrendorff, *Revolt against Hitler* (London, 1948), p. 131.