

Opposition Annihilated: Punishing the 1944 Plot against Hitler

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No more thorough historical examination of the events and personalities connected with internal opposition to Adolf Hitler is presently available than in Peter Hoffmann's WIDERSTAND, STAATSTREICH, ATTENTAT: DER KAMPF DER OPPOSITION GEGEN HITLER (RESISTANCE, COUP D'ÉTAT, ASSASSINATION: THE OPPOSITION STRUGGLE AGAINST HITLER), published in 1969 by R. Piper & Co. Verlag, Munich, and now about to enter its second edition. The chapter presented here—translated into English for the first time—details the terrible aftermath of the unsuccessful 20 July 1944 attempt against Hitler's life. Professor Hoffmann is in the history department at McGill University.

PETER HOFFMANN

OPPOSITION ANNIHILATED:

Punishing the 1944 Plot against Hitler

1. MARTIAL LAW

After it had become clear on 20 July 1944, that both the attempt on Hitler's life in the Dictator's East Prussian Headquarters "Wolfschanze" by Colonel Claus Schenk Graf von Stauffenberg, and the attempted *coup d'état* using the command machinery of the Home Army in Berlin had failed, a number of officers of the Home Army in leading positions who chose to be loyal to the *Régime* regained control from the conspirators. Some officers of the Home Army in key positions had participated in the conspiracy, some of them taking leading rôles, some of them acting overtly enough at least to be irreparably compromised after the failure of the *coup*. Most of them were drawn into the whirlpool, and they perished in the wave of persecution that followed the *coup*. Hundreds of civilian leaders and supporters suffered the same fate. The military participants served only as the arm and the executive of this essentially non-military conspiracy. But the military action against the National Socialist *Régime* was a necessary first step. Since the attempt never progressed beyond its first, military stage, the uprising has a military aspect, at least superficially, which is misleading. The Headquarters of the conspiracy had to be in military surroundings although even most of the military leaders rejected the idea of a military dictatorship replacing Hitler's *Régime* for more than the first few hours of the *coup d'état*.

Unfortunately for its chances of success, Stauffenberg, as Chief of Staff to the Commander of the Home Army, General Friedrich Fromm, had two functions in the attempt: He was the only one willing and able to assassinate Hitler and he was the only one willing and able to lead the take-over in Berlin. Berlin could be reached from East Prussia, where the attempt on Hitler's life had to be made, in about two hours. It had been part of the plan to inform the conspirators in Berlin of its success immediately after the attempt, so that they could initiate the take-over while Stauffenberg was on his way to Berlin. He would have arrived in time to steer the revolt through its critical phase. But the explosive in Stauffenberg's briefcase had not killed Hitler in the conference room where it had been planted. Hitler escaped with minor injuries, although several others in the room were killed. The news that reached the conspirators—more precisely only one of them, General Thiele—was not that Hitler was dead but that the explosion had occurred, and though the assassination had failed, it was nevertheless necessary to go ahead with the uprising now that the conspiracy had shown itself openly.

After the mishap in East Prussia, the revolt could still have succeeded if Berlin had acted at once and energetically. The Chief of the Signal Corps, General Fellgiebel, had seen to it that "Wolfschanze" would be cut

off from all outside communications for a few hours at least, so that the *Régime* could neither know of nor prevent what was happening in Berlin. Even if two or three hours later the news of Hitler's survival had leaked out, the insurgency would have progressed so far that it would have been extremely difficult to halt it. But General Thiele in Berlin, who had received the news of the explosion from General Fellgiebel in "Wolfschanze", did not think it wise to act with Hitler still alive—partly because he believed that as long as Hitler's spell and his automatic hold over the Army as Supreme War Lord was not broken, the Home Army would not carry out the orders of the conspirators. Thiele said nothing to the other conspirators, but toward three p.m. on this day, while Stauffenberg was about to land in Berlin, convinced that he had been successful and that Hitler was dead, they gradually learned of the failure of the assassination attempt.

When Stauffenberg arrived at the Headquarters of the Home Army in Bendlerstrasse, at approximately four p.m., he told his associates he had seen with his own eyes how the dead Hitler had been carried off, and they believed him. With all possible speed the *coup d'état* machinery was set in motion, but then other breakdowns occurred. Since the *Régime* had really remained intact it was impossible for General Fellgiebel to maintain the communications blackout beyond four p.m. and Field-marshal Keitel and General Jodl were able to countermand all orders that the conspirators issued from Berlin. From 6:30 p.m. on the news of the assassination attempt and of Hitler's miraculous survival was broadcast by radio all over Europe. Although some district and field commanders willingly followed the orders they received from the conspirators in Berlin, the uprising never really gathered momentum, and it collapsed completely before midnight of 20 July.

In Home Army Headquarters in Bendlerstrasse some officers had tried to keep one foot on each side until it should be clear who was winning, and some of them managed to draw the "wrong" foot onto the "right" side in time to survive. But not all were equally successful. General Fromm had been informed of the conspiracy, and he was willing to cooperate if he could be certain that Hitler was dead. But he had learned of Hitler's survival, and when Stauffenberg returned and requested Fromm's participation in the uprising, Fromm refused and was

placed under arrest by the conspirators. Although he could have telephoned, or even left the building, Fromm made no attempt to escape or to thwart the revolt.

However, after some other anti-conspiracy officers had taken the initiative to arrest Stauffenberg and his friends, Fromm decided that for him, too, it was time to act. He reappeared in his office which had been taken over by the conspirators, and he declared under arrest the leaders of the coup: Generals Beck, Hoepner and Olbricht, Colonels Graf von Stauffenberg and Ritter Mertz von Quirnheim, and First Lieutenant Werner von Haefsten. All were asked to hand over their pistols. Those present and not under arrest were declared by Fromm to constitute a court martial, with himself acting as presiding judge.

General Beck asked to be allowed to keep his pistol "for private use"; Fromm gave him permission and then told him to get on with it. Beck raised his weapon; while he made ready to shoot himself, he tried to say a few words about his long years of military service together with Fromm, but Fromm interrupted him brusquely and again told him to hurry. Beck fired, wounding himself in the temple. He stumbled and was supported by Stauffenberg; then he fired at his head again and collapsed, but he was still alive.

General Fromm asked the arrested conspirators if they had any last wishes. General Hoepner declared himself uninvolved in the *coup*, and he wanted a chance to defend himself. Fromm reluctantly allowed him to write down a statement. Olbricht wanted to write something, too, and was given permission to do it. The writing dragged on, close to half an hour, and Fromm became quite impatient. He wanted the leaders of the *coup* shot as soon as possible. When he was told that a detachment of the Berlin Guard, the *Wachbataillon* "Grossdeutschland", had arrived, he announced: "In the name of the *Führer*, a court-martial set up by me has passed this sentence: Colonel von Mertz of the General Staff, General Olbricht, the Colonel whose name I will not mention, and First Lieutenant von Haefsten are sentenced to death."

Stauffenberg, who had stood by in angry silence, now spoke briefly. With a few short, precise words he assumed full responsibility for everything. All others including those now sentenced to death had acted as soldiers and had only followed his orders. Fromm, who was standing in the doorway, said nothing. Then he stepped to the

In preparing the bomb which was to have killed Hitler, Stauffenberg made use of only half of the plastic explosive he had brought to "Wolfschanze"; the remainder he threw from the car while he and his aide, von Haefsten, were being driven to a nearby airfield to return to Berlin. Stauffenberg's failure to use all of the explosive remained for many years a matter of some speculation among historians. There has never been any doubt that the psychological pressure on Stauffenberg was considerable—the 20 July attempt was, after all, his third in a short period of time—nor that his physical handicaps (he had lost an eye, his right hand above the wrist, and two fingers of his left hand in the North African campaign) made a special problem for him in setting the bomb's chemical fuse. What is now clear, as the statement on the following page reveals, is that Stauffenberg and von Haefsten were interrupted in the act of fusing the explosive. In correspondence with Professor Hoffman, Werner Vogel—in 1944 an NCO on Fieldmarshall Keitel's personal staff—made the accompanying statement, which is included in the second edition of Hoffmann's book.

THE MAN WHO INTERRUPTED STAUFFENBERG

On 20 July 1944 at approximately 11:40 a.m. I walked over from the bunker of the Chief of *OKW* [*Oberkommando der Wehrmacht* - Armed Forces Supreme Command; Fieldmarshall Keitel was the Chief] to the office barracks. I met First Lieutenant von Haeften in the guest sitting-room of this office barracks. The guest sitting-room was opposite the door connecting the office barracks with the bunker.

As I walked on down the corridor, I noticed, a few steps from my own office door, an object wrapped in a piece of camouflage cloth, on the floor. Since this was unusual (the corridor was always empty), I went back to Haeften and asked him if the package was his. He said, yes, it was, and explained that Colonel Graf von Stauffenberg would need it for his scheduled report to the *Führer*. Thereupon I went to my office, and while I was doing some work I noticed a certain nervousness about our guest: First Lieutenant von Haeften was constantly moving about, walking up and down before the open door of the guest sitting-room.

Shortly before 12 noon I looked down the corridor from my office, and I did not see the object mentioned above, but I did not want to ask First Lieutenant von Haeften about it again.

Soon afterward, as I remember it, the Chief (Fieldmarshall Keitel), Lieutenant-Colonel John von Freyend, General Buhle and two other gentlemen came down the corridor from the office of the Chief of *OKW*. They went toward the exit, passing my office and the guest sitting-room. In this room at that time were Colonel Graf von Stauffenberg and First Lieutenant von Haeften. They were whispering and working on an object, as I could see when I stepped across into the bunker for a moment. When I came back into the office barracks, the five gentlemen I mentioned earlier were standing before it, and Lieutenant-Colonel John von Freyend told me to ask the two gentlemen in the guest sitting-room to hurry. The door of this room was closed now, and I opened it and asked the gentlemen, Stauffenberg and Haeften, to come along because Fieldmarshall Keitel was waiting for them. Both were still working on the same object. Graf von Stauffenberg reacted very nervously and abruptly to my request, and he said he would come immediately. At this moment Lieutenant Colonel John von Freyend called from the exit: "Stauffenberg, you really must come now!"

I left the door of the guest sitting-room open and waited in the corridor. When Colonel Graf von Stauffenberg finally came to the exit, Lieutenant Colonel John von Freyend tried to carry his briefcase for him that weighed heavily in the three fingers of Stauffenberg's left and only hand. But the Colonel virtually tore the briefcase from Lieutenant Colonel John von Freyend and gave him an almost insulted

look. I admired the energy and the pride of Colonel Graf von Stauffenberg who had been wounded and maimed very badly.

During this incident First Lieutenant von Haeften had left with the remark that he was going over to the Guest Barracks [where Hitler's daily situation conferences were held].

After all the gentlemen had left, I locked the guest sitting-room in which I did not notice any strange objects now, and I also locked the office barracks door. Then I went to the messhall for lunch.

After lunch, while I was talking with some other soldiers who worked in this Headquarters compound, there was an explosion not far away, but we paid no particular attention to it. [Animals often stepped on mines of which there was a great number along the outer fences.] But soon we heard people shouting "explosion in the Situation Barracks!" At this I ran back to our office barracks immediately and unlocked the door. A short time later, Fieldmarshall Keitel and Lieutenant-Colonel John von Freyend arrived. These gentlemen were rather excited, and they were a bad sight. Lieutenant-Colonel John von Freyend was forced to lie down at once, and I think he was given an injection somewhat later.

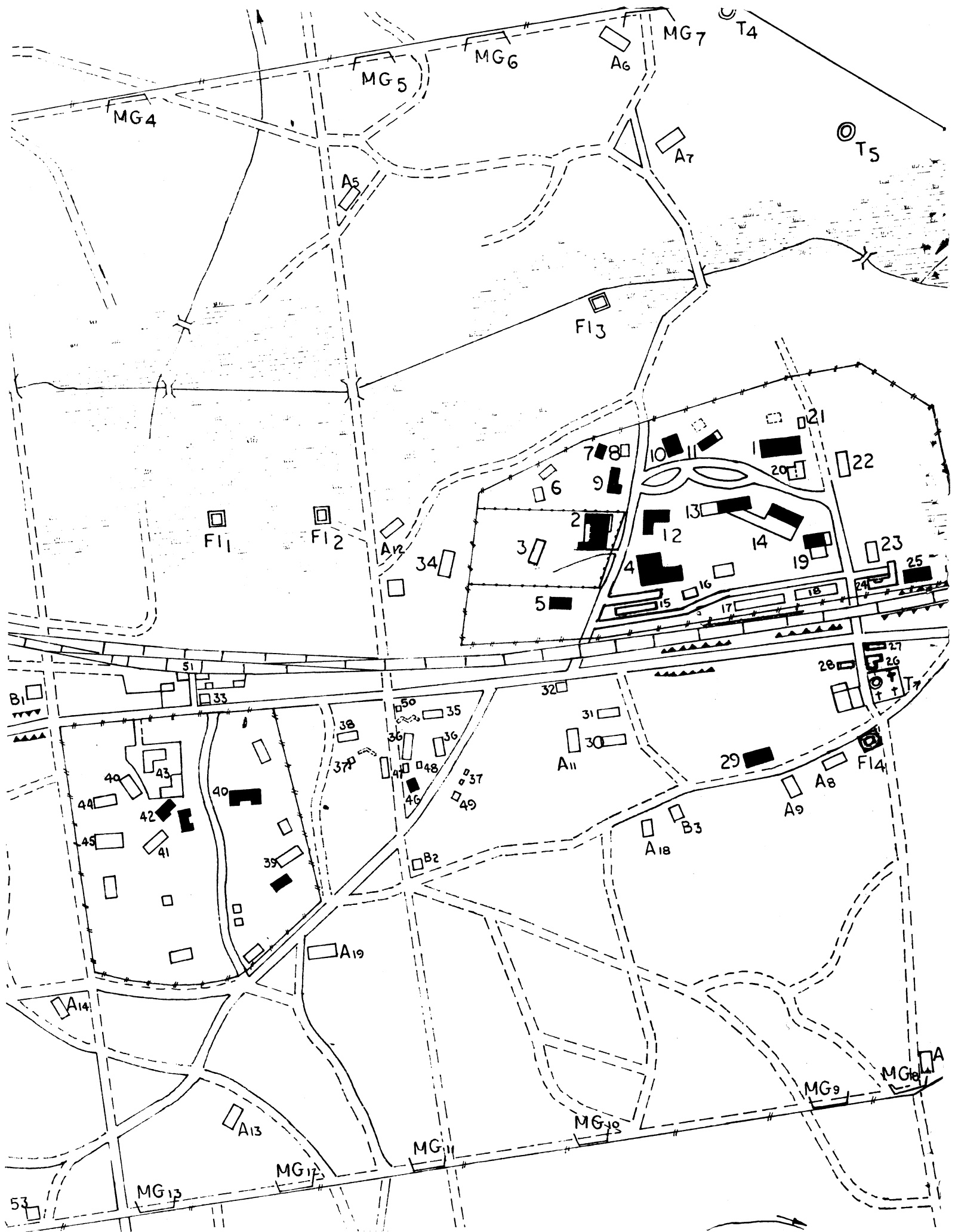
Fieldmarshall Keitel, whose uniform coat had been spattered with blood, and torn, demanded a fresh shirt and uniform. He washed, and later he had some of his wounds dressed. (Regarding this, I cannot remember the details because I had to carry out several orders and make a number of telephone calls immediately.)

Soon a number of gentlemen arrived in the office of Fieldmarshall Keitel, and hectic activity set in. Our compound was sealed off almost hermetically by SS guards. Sentries patrolled rooms and walks. The precise details of the arrangements escaped my attention.

Later, I talked over my experiences on 20 July 1944, which I have described above, only with our adjutants [of Fieldmarshall Keitel]: Lieutenant-Colonel John von Freyend and Major von Szymonski, who was outside of Headquarters this day on some official business. The *Gestapo* never questioned me.

Finally, I fully remember the following incident: *Reich* Leader of the SS, Himmler, was appointed Commander-in-Chief of the Home Army by the *Führer* on this day. Keitel drafted the order, and I typed it. I was forced to type out this *Führer* order five times because I made a serious typing error every time. Fieldmarshall Keitel was standing in the door of my office, waiting for the order so that he could take it directly to the *Führer* for signing. But, unconsciously, and without being nervous in any way, without realizing it at the moment, I was led to make the same typing error again and again. It was a peculiar incident.

[signed] W. Vogel



2. ARRESTS

side—the gesture could not be mistaken. Stauffenberg, Mertz von Quirnheim, Olbricht, and Haeften walked out past him quietly, showing no emotion. An hour earlier Haeften had given Stauffenberg's driver, Schweizer, instructions for an escape; but he was quite controlled now. Hoepner was to be shot with the others. He pleaded with Fromm, but Fromm shook his head. Then Hoepner requested an interview with Fromm alone. Fromm agreed, and both went into Stauffenberg's office. What was said there is not known, but when Fromm came back, he gave orders to guard Hoepner. He, Fromm, would now go to see Dr. Goebbels.

While Beck had fired at his head twice without killing himself, Fromm had ordered his adjutant, Major Bartram, to make ready a firing squad of ten men under the command of an officer. Bartram had hurried down to the guard room, but on the way he had met Lieutenant-Colonel Gehrke and First Lieutenant Schlee of the *Wachbataillon*. He passed Fromm's order on to Schlee, and Schlee in turn ordered Lieutenant Werner Schady and ten non-commissioned officers to serve as a firing squad. Schady went to Fromm to receive specific instructions, such as whom to shoot, and he was told to take Hoepner to the military jail in Lehrter Strasse. As Beck was still alive, Fromm ordered a General Staff officer to relieve him by shooting him. This officer ordered a member of the *Wachbataillon* to shoot Beck.

As Haeften was walking downstairs to be shot, he was overcome once again by the will to live, and he tried to tear himself free. But when the condemned men arrived in the courtyard of the Home Army Command building where they were to be shot, he was quiet and under control again.

One by one the officers to be shot were led before a small mound of sandy earth that had been dug in some construction work in the courtyard. Drivers of cars parked in the yard were instructed to turn on their headlights and place their vehicles so that the scene was lighted. General Olbricht was the first to be shot. Then followed Stauffenberg; he shouted: "Long live holy Germany!" The salvo was heard, but Haeften had thrown himself in front of Stauffenberg and caught the bullets. Only the next salvo killed Stauffenberg. Mertz von Quirnheim was shot last. It was just past midnight.

After the executions General Fromm got onto a military vehicle and made a brief speech, addressing with stentorian voice all who happened to be present in the courtyard. He mentioned the beloved *Führer* and Providence, and in conclusion he led three thunderous cheers of "Sieg Heil" to the *Führer*. Then he had himself driven over to Goebbels's Propaganda Ministry.

A number of other officers and some civilians had been arrested with Beck, Hoepner, Stauffenberg, Olbricht, Mertz, and Haeften—particularly Graf Yorck von Wartenburg, Fritz-Dietlof Graf von der Schulenburg, Graf Schwerin von Schwanenfeld, Berthold Schenk Graf von Stauffenberg, Lieutenant Colonel in the General Staff Bernardis, Lieutenant Colonel von der Lancken, the uninvolved aide of Olbricht, Captain of the Reserves Barnim von Ramin, and Dr. Eugen Gerstenmaier.

Dr. Otto John, who had come to Bendlerstrasse in the afternoon to take part in the *Putsch*, had become impatient with the lack of progress, and he had left a little before the counter-insurgency movement had gotten under way. Owing to his position with the Lufthansa airline, he was able to get on a flight to Madrid on 24 July, and he escaped. Olbricht's son-in-law, Air-Force Major Friedrich Georgi, had been able to leave the house after Olbricht had put in a word for him with the *Wachbataillon* guards who had already sealed off the building. Also, he was able to leave because he wore the *Luftwaffe* uniform and was therefore not automatically linked with the conspiracy in the Home Army. Later, however, he was arrested on grounds of his in-law relationship with Olbricht. Hauptmann Klausning, who had accompanied Stauffenberg on one of his two earlier assassination attempts in Hitler's Headquarters, also managed to leave the building about 11 p.m., before the arrival of Kaltenbrunner's SD, the Security Service of the SS. Another young conspirator, First Lieutenant Ludwig Freiherr von Hammerstein, who knew the building quite well from his childhood days when his father was Chief of the Army Command there, got out, too. And so did Captain Dr. Hans Fritzsche, who offered assistance to a helpless-looking, very old Austrian Colonel of the *Wehrmacht* Propaganda Branch. He got past the guards by passing himself off as the Colonel's adjutant. Lieutenant von Oppen got out by simply accompanying an SS officer whom he had arrested with great tact during the afternoon. Fritzsche and Oppen, however, were finally arrested, though somewhat later, while Hammerstein went underground and managed to stay in hiding until the end of the war. Lieutenant Ewald Heinrich von Kleist, who had volunteered on the advice of his father for one of the many abortive assassination attempts against Hitler, had been sent during the afternoon on a liaison mission to the Commandant of the City and to the Presidium of Police. When he returned, he found the house in turmoil. He made two unsuccessful attempts to escape, knocking down an officer and a soldier who was guarding

A partial map of "Wolfschanze" in East Prussia, where the 20 July assassination attempt occurred. The base was well fortified, with anti-aircraft batteries (Fl) near its center, machine gun nests (MG) around its perimeter, and machine gun towers (T) arranged at irregular intervals (including one inside a cemetery at far right center). The terrain was generally one of forests and swampland; solid figures represent concrete bunkers, while barracks appear in outline. Hitler's personal bunker (1) was still under construction in July 1944, and he was quartered in the Guest Bunker (2); the Communications Bunker lay just to the southeast. Stauffenberg fused the bomb at the OKW building (19); the explosion took place in the so-called "Situation Barracks" (3).

him with bayonet mounted, but in his search for a window through which he might jump from the building he barged into a room full of SS men.

Dr. Gerstenmaier had the distinct impression that all those arrested were to be shot at once. With Yorck, Schulenburg, Schwerin, Berthold Graf Stauffenberg, Bernardis and Lancken he found himself in Claus Graf Stauffenberg's office and held in check by some men with guns. But the group managed, perhaps with the tacit approval of the guards, to burn on the floor all papers and documents they could get their hands on, thus removing traces of the events of the afternoon and evening which might have embarrassed some of the officers on the "right" side, too. An attempt to break through the guards in the hallway, however, failed. Gerstenmaier and others were now put in the custody of the commando in charge of the executions. Then, about half an hour past midnight, a detachment of SS burst into the Home Army Command building. They were led by Otto Skorzeny, who had snatched Mussolini from captivity on the Gran Sasso in September, 1943.

When the troops of Major Remer, Commander of the *Wachbataillon*, had surrounded the government district and the SS Headquarters, still acting under orders of one of the conspirators (the Commandant of the City, General von Hase), the *Gestapo* had initiated counter-measures and prepared for defense against a possible occupation of its buildings. But only when it was approximately 8 p.m., and after the *Wachbataillon* Commander had recognized the situation and had ceased to carry out orders of the conspirators, did the Government branches located in the center of the city regain freedom of movement. It was only then that the defensive steps taken by the *Gestapo* reached any useful level. During the afternoon it would have been quite easy for the conspiracy to take control of all *Gestapo* and most SS installations in Berlin.

At the *Reichssicherheitshauptamt*, (*RSHA*), the great police center for the entire *Reich*, it had been learned quite early that an assassination attempt had been made on Hitler; the news had gotten through even before the communications black-out ordered by General Fellgiebel had taken effect. As early as 1:45 p.m., approximately, a special detachment of the Sabotage Group led by Criminal Counselor Kopkow had been dispatched by plane to Rastenburg, about seven miles west of "Wolfschanze". In the course of the afternoon suspicion centered on Stauffenberg as the perpetrator of the attempt, and a *Gestapo* officer, Dr. Achamer-Pifrader, was sent to Bendlerstrasse to arrest him. At this time no one thought the attempt more than an isolated act, but even though the truth—the fact of a well-prepared *coup d'état*—must have been clear between six and seven p.m., it still took quite some time until energetic counter-action was taken by the SS and the *RSHA*. Not until approximately 6:45 p.m., did SS-General Heinrich Müller ("*Gestapo* Müller") give the order to put the *RSHA* in defense readiness; then a platoon of the 2nd Tank Repair Company of the SS-Body-Guard Division "Adolf Hitler", 51 men in all, took

up positions. But it was approximately 10 or 11 p.m. before the protective troops and the available supply of weapons and munitions could be considered sufficient; and it was only at one a.m. on 21 July, when it no longer mattered, that a tank and an armored reconnaissance car of the police arrived. About five a.m. most of these precautions were rescinded by Heinrich Himmler, the Commander-in-Chief of all SS and, since the afternoon of 20 July, Commander of the Home Army. If any disloyal motives played a rôle in this extremely slow reaction of the SS—the most feared, and, presumably, the most swift of the private armies at the disposal of Hitler—Himmler never talked about it, naturally. At any rate, the SS seem to have been greatly surprised, and after the first surprise it could be seen that Remer and his *Wachbataillon* had turned against the revolt. And in Berlin at least the *Putsch* was put down by the Army itself, a fact much better for its morale than any intervention by the SS. Any bloodshed between the SS and the Army would certainly not have helped internal unity or the war effort, and had to be avoided if possible.

SS-General Walter Schellenberg, Chief of the Foreign Intelligence Office of the *SD* in *RSHA* (*Amt VI*), received the first news of the events in Berlin late in the afternoon of 20 July. Skorzeny had just left to take a train to Vienna, but Schellenberg managed to have him called out of the train. About seven p.m. Skorzeny was back in *Amt VI* in Berkaer Strasse, and Schellenberg gave him orders for some reconnaissance missions in Berlin. After Skorzeny had personally checked conditions at *SS-Leibstandarte* "Adolf Hitler", and after he had talked with paratroop General Student, he returned to Berkaer Strasse. Then he was told to take an SS Company to Bendlerstrasse to assist Major Remer.

Skorzeny turned into Bendlerstrasse shortly before one a.m. on the morning of 21 July, and he met Kaltenbrunner and Fromm, who said he was going home but actually went to see Goebbels. Major Remer greeted Skorzeny at the gate of the Home Army Command building. Skorzeny went to the second floor and received a report on the evening's events from the leaders of the counter-insurgency action. It was about half an hour after the executions.

Skorzeny had no thought of continuing the shootings or of allowing them to be continued. First of all he had to find out who was who in this *melée*. He went through the building and chanced upon Kleist, who was handcuffed and waiting to be taken away. Skorzeny bowed slightly and introduced himself: "Skorzeny." Kleist got up, bowed slightly, and said: "Kleist." It was only then that Skorzeny noticed the handcuffs, murmured "oh", and turned away. Skorzeny decided that all those present in the building and not under arrest were to go back to their offices and to resume their work which had been interrupted in the afternoon of the previous day. This would bring some order into the house. But the heads of the various departments were missing. They were either at home, or arrested, or shot, and at a time of such uncertainty no one was very willing to make on his own

decisions that were made by his superiors even in normal times. Thus Skorzeny was constantly requested to make decisions about replacement and supply problems which he did not understand at all. Only gradually during the early hours of the morning of 21 July did relative calm and order return to the building, as Kaltenbrunner, General Reinecke of the General Armed Forces Office (*Allgemeines Wehrmachtsamt*), General Thiele (who pretended not to be involved in the *coup*), and SS-General Jüttner arrived as deputy for Himmler. Jüttner especially soon managed to take the reins with efficiency.

Meanwhile, the corpses of the five dead leaders of the *coup*—Beck, Olbricht, Stauffenberg, Mertz, and Haef-ten—had been loaded onto a truck and taken to the Matthäi church cemetery in Schöneberg. There they were buried during the night with the uniforms and medals of the dead men. But on the following day Himmler had them exhumed, identified, and cremated. The ashes were cast over some fields.

In Bendlerstrasse more arrests were made, and in the continuing confusion harmless bystanders were arrested while some conspirators were never even interrogated. An Army captain, who had nothing whatever to do with the events of 20 July, was arrested and taken to the notorious *Gestapo* cellar in Prinz-Albrecht-Strasse merely because he had made a telephone call to his wife during the night. After four days he was released without explanation, and he returned to his office in Bendlerstrasse where he was received with some astonishment. When he had been arrested, he was convinced that he would be set free as soon as his harmlessness was established, and he had tried to shake hands with his comrades who carefully overlooked his outstretched hand. Of course, not only the *Gestapo* made mistakes. During the night and on the day following the *coup*, Fromm's Operations Officer, Lieutenant-Colonel Sadrozinski, was arrested, as were Major Freiherr von Leonrod, who had guarded Fromm during the afternoon, and Captain Helmuth Cords. The *Gestapo* were quite bewildered at first; they hardly knew how and where to begin their investigation because there was such an endless number of suspects and possible suspects. But, as the head of the processing office for the Special Commission investigating the conspiracy, Dr. Georg Kiessel, recalled: "The manly attitude of the idealists immediately shed light on the matter. . . They did try to cover up for their comrades, but for experienced criminal investigators it was easy to put the mosaic together [from what the arrested did not conceal of their own involvement]." Jails and concentration camps were filling up.

In view of the great number of arrests in connection with the *coup* of 20 July 1944—Kiessel mentioned 600—it is not possible to relate even a great part of the names and circumstances in detail. Besides, not nearly all the names of those arrested are known, nor even all the names of those who were executed. The purpose of this and the following portions of the chapter is to give a survey of the consequences of the *coup d'état* for the Resistance Movement, and of the extent and methods of the persecution of the Movement. A few more details about the reaction

of the *Régime* at some focal points of the revolt may also be helpful.

Fromm, who had decided to "put down" the rebellion after it had failed, found himself arrested almost at the same time as the first conspirators. He had gone to Goebbels, who was in his apartment in Hermann-Goering-Strasse during the afternoon and evening, to demonstrate his loyalty to the *Régime*, but was placed under arrest. Later he was tried and convicted for cowardice.

In the Headquarters of the City Commandant, Unter den Linden 1—the Commandant was already under arrest at Goebbels' apartment—Remer's *Wachbataillon* troops had found it impossible to distinguish between conspirators and loyalists; they had ordered everyone to remain where he was, but some of the conspirators behaved with such authority and self-assurance that the often lower-ranking *Wachbataillon* officers did not always succeed. Major Hayessen, who had served as a liaison officer between Hase and Bendlerstrasse, was arrested during the night by a co-conspirator, Lieutenant-Colonel Schöne, who soon was arrested himself. Another conspirator, a department head in the City Command, Major Adolf-Friedrich Graf von Schack, who had been burning papers with Hayessen under the eyes of Schöne (who did not try to stop them), was also arrested during the night. Several others managed to walk out, secretly or on pretexts of one kind or another.

At the Military District Command Headquarters on Hohenzollerndamm, the first to be officially suspected of complicity in the plot were General von Thüngen and Major von Oertzen. Thüngen was able to leave without difficulty during the night, and General Herfurth, the Chief of Staff of the District Command who was also involved, was not arrested immediately. But Oertzen was detained and interrogated, and he tried to deny some facts which could easily have been proven—such as his assignment with the District Command in the fall of 1943, when he was assisting Stauffenberg with the preparations for the *coup d'état*. Thüngen had conducted this first interrogation of Oertzen under orders from the District Commander, General Kortzfleisch, who had been arrested in Bendlerstrasse by the conspirators but had returned about 11 p.m. Colonel von Wiese, the Adjutant of the District Command had participated in the interrogation. Shown the result of the interrogation, Kortzfleisch decided that Oertzen had obviously had nothing to do with the conspiracy, that he had been involved only accidentally; yet he did not want to release Oertzen, and Colonel von Wiese took Oertzen's pistol. Early on the morning of 21 July, when Oertzen had been given permission to use the toilet, he succeeded in burning and flushing down some incriminating papers and in hiding a pair of high-explosive rifle grenades (his person had not been searched) in two of the sandbags that were kept all over the hallways for fire-fighting purposes. About 10 a.m. Oertzen again requested permission to use the toilet, and afterwards he wanted to get some fresh air by walking in the hallway. No one noticed as he pulled one of the grenades from the sandbag and detonated it close to his



head. The lieutenant who had been guarding Oertzen tried to dash toward him at the last moment and was wounded. Oertzen himself collapsed with horrible headwounds. He was thought to be dead; a physician was called, and the scene was sealed off by guards. But Oertzen, who was still alive, dragged himself to the next sandbag, took out the other rifle grenade, put it between his teeth and pulled the igniter. The explosion blew off his head, and the guards and officers standing nearby barely escaped serious injury. A few moments later General Kortzfleisch, the loyal National-Socialist, appeared at the scene and remarked that Oertzen had died like a decent man.

Fieldmarshall von Witzleben had been willing to act against Hitler even in 1938, during the Sudeten Crisis, and he had been involved in almost every plot since then. On 20 July 1944, he had shown up in two of the centers of the conspiracy in Berlin, but he had been disgusted by the confusion he found, and by the failure of the conspirators to kill Hitler. After he had made some acid remarks about the lack of military organization (as he saw it), he returned to the estate of Graf von Lynar, in Seesen, where he had been staying. He was arrested there on 21 July.

Not all arrests, of course, were made on appearances or because someone happened to have been present at a center of the conspiracy. As soon as the extent of the *coup d'état* was known even in rough outline, the *Gestapo* had begun arresting people whose opposition to the *Régime* had long been known to them, regardless of their involvement in the *coup*. Thus they arrested, among many others, the former Economics Minister, Dr. Schacht; the former Chief of Staff of the Army, General Halder; the Prussian Finance Minister, Professor Popitz, former Armed Forces Minister Noske, and General Oster and Admiral Canaris, who had been dismissed from their Intelligence posts several months earlier over an affair that had come perilously close to uncovering the entire conspiracy. All were interrogated, but without any conclusive results at first. Witzleben, for his part, denied any connection with the conspiracy. He did not know how far the plotters had gone nor how much they had revealed themselves by their actions. It would have been unwise, he felt, not to try and save one's own life when it seemed possible—though many others had rigid concepts of the “honor of an officer” and refused to lie. Open ad-

mission of involvement, however, more often than not led the police to the discovery of, or proofs against, other conspirators.

General Eduard Wagner had helped prepare the uprising with Fellgiebel and Witzleben. He had a key position as Quartermaster General, and his participation had been of the utmost importance to the other conspirators, only partly because he provided air transportation for Stauffenberg between Berlin and “Wolfschanze”. Witzleben had visited him twice on 20 July, in Zossen near Berlin, at the Army High Command Headquarters, and when Wagner learned that several of his co-conspirators had been arrested, he realized it was only a matter of hours before his turn would come. He shot himself at his Zossen Headquarters at 12:41 p.m. on 23 July.

The teletype messages which the Opposition leaders in Bendlerstrasse had sent out during the afternoon of 20 July, to bring about the take-over of power in the provinces and in the military districts, had named certain persons trusted by the plotters who were to serve as liaison officers between Bendlerstrasse and the military districts, and certain others who were to serve as political advisors to the district commanders. These teletype messages had been only partially destroyed in Bendlerstrasse, and in any case they could be found in most of the district headquarters and in a number of other military command posts where they had been sent by mistake or as a means of sabotaging the plot. These messages, of course, were a ready-made arrest list. But beyond these, the *Gestapo* found no lists—such as rosters for a post-*coup* government—as some legends have it. On the contrary, the *Gestapo* had to spend many weeks interrogating and torturing hundreds of arrested suspects to put together even an incomplete list of persons who had been slated by the conspirators for some government position, sometimes without the knowledge of the person concerned. Even a large haul of documentary material collected by Hans von Dohnanyi, Hans Oster, and Dietrich Bonhoeffer, which the *Gestapo* stumbled onto in Zossen in September of 1944, did not help them beyond confirming what the investigation had already brought to light. If anything, the Zossen documents served to further implicate persons against whom there was already more than enough material to justify the death sentence, according to standards then prevailing. Even the most compromising group of documents discovered at Zossen—those which concerned clandestine negotiations of the conspirators with the British Government, through the Vatican, in 1939 and 1940—did not help the *Gestapo* because these negotiations had been disguised as intelligence operations. In this field it is often impossible to distinguish between deceit of the enemy and actual treason, unless it can be determined what the intentions of the operators were and whether the enemy had derived significant advantages from the contacts. At any rate, it was impossible to use this kind of material in a trial before the notorious “People’s Court”.

In the Headquarters near Rastenburg, in East Prussia, one of the first to be arrested was General Fellgiebel. He

Probably the last photograph ever taken of Colonel Claus Schenk Graf von Stauffenberg, far left, on 15 July 1944—five days before the bomb blast which laid bare the conspiracy. This picture was made at the entrance to the “Wolfschanze” headquarters building. Shaking Hitler’s hand is General Bodenschatz; Fieldmarshall Keitel stands at the right. In the background, beyond the camouflage netting, is the bunker—its walls seven yards thick—where the Führer stayed during the conferences.

had collaborated closely with Stauffenberg, who had stood and watched with him shortly before 1 p.m., until the explosion in the conference room had occurred; then he had telephoned Thiele in Berlin and ordered the communications blackout. His presence in "Wolfschanze" had been insufficiently motivated (his own Headquarters at this time was located some 10 miles to the east, at "Mauerwald"), and he had also been conspicuous in the company of Stauffenberg before and after the assassination attempt. When Stauffenberg began to be suspected, Fellgiebel, who had gone back to his own Headquarters between one and two p.m., was asked to drop in at "Wolfschanze" to answer a few questions but was allowed to return once more to his Headquarters. Late in the evening, however, Fieldmarshall Keitel had him come over to "Wolfschanze" again; the order was passed on to Fellgiebel through Lieutenant-Colonel Sander, a special liaison officer in Hitler's Headquarters for the Signal Corps and matters of communications, and through Major Wolf, who commanded the special Headquarters Communications Detachment in "Wolfschanze".

Fellgiebel knew now that his rôle must have been discovered, though he still had time to avoid the sufferings he was to undergo. Yet very few of the conspirators were prepared for Hitler's sadistic cruelty; most of them took it for granted that, according to ancient traditions, those convicted of high treason would at least be considered worthy of a bullet. Perhaps it was difficult to imagine that a German Government could barbarically torture and finally hang such high-ranking officials and officers as Fellgiebel, Witzleben, Popitz, Adam von Trott zu Solz, or Helmuth Graf von Moltke; it was their lower-ranking assistants and comrades who knew better what the powers-that-be were capable of. Fellgiebel's *aide-de-camp*, First Lieutenant Dr. Arntz, asked "his general" whether he had a pistol, but Fellgiebel replied: "One stands; one does not do that." He did not want to miss the opportunity of telling his interrogators—surely they would be officers in a court-martial—the truth about the criminal leadership of the *Reich* under Hitler. So he went back to "Wolfschanze" to be arrested. In parting he told Arntz: "If I believed in another world, I should say 'Until we meet again.'" Late that evening Fellgiebel's driver came back to "Mauerwald" alone—with tears running down his cheeks.

The single fact that Fellgiebel's Chief of Staff, Colonel Hahn, who had collaborated with him closely in the conspiracy, was not arrested until 12 August, 23 days after Fellgiebel's arrest, speaks volumes for the fortitude of the General. In the French *Résistance*, for example, it was taken for granted that anyone caught by the Germans could not be expected to protect his comrades-in-arms for more than 24 hours, since the methods employed by the *Gestapo* were well-known; it was up to those possibly compromised by the arrest to disappear and to extinguish any traces. Of course, this was easier for Frenchmen in German-occupied France who were fighting a foreign oppressor than it was for Germans in Germany where

they were committing high treason against their own government in wartime. Fellgiebel was tortured terribly, but for at least three weeks he did not reveal the names of any of his co-conspirators, although he was quite truthful about his own rôle. In fact, the evidence against him and against Hahn, Thiele, and Colonel Hassel, another high-ranking Signal Corps officer in Berlin, was so overwhelming that no amount of silence or lying on the part of Fellgiebel could protect them. Other plotters, particularly Lieutenant-Colonel Bernhard Klamroth, revealed that Thiele and Hahn had participated in preparatory conversations, and the rough outlines of the involvement of high-ranking Signal Corps officers in the conspiracy began to emerge.

General Thiele had become Fellgiebel's successor after 20 July, and had moved to "Mauerwald". Taking charge of Fellgiebel's staff, he made a speech that was repulsive to most of those who heard it because it was so untruthful and undignified. Thiele described Fellgiebel as a blot of shame on the shield of the German Army and the Signal Corps—yet everyone knew how closely Fellgiebel and Thiele had co-operated, and how much Thiele owed to Fellgiebel in his career. Thiele was avoided by most of his staff. He was extremely nervous, defensive, and irascible; he constantly thought he was being suspected, and would fly into a rage at what only he would consider provocation. Naturally, these reactions did not help him; they only contributed to the discovery of his rôle as conspirator, and he sought an escape in drink. There can be no doubt that Thiele regained his composure after his arrest on 11 August, and that he conducted himself quite bravely during the interrogations and during the subsequent trial, for the many other confidants of his and of Fellgiebel's—Burchardt, Degner, Arntz, Hoepfner, Hassel, and Koellner, to mention only the most prominent ones—remained relatively unmolested. Some of them—for instance, Lieutenant-Colonel Hassel—were arrested, detained for several weeks and ill-treated, but eventually released without a trial. Thiele's successor, General Albert Praun, appointed by the new Chief of Staff of the Army, General Guderian, on 12 August, immediately made remonstrances with Kaltenbrunner against further arrests and persecutions among those under his command. He said it was impossible to keep the communications networks functioning if key staff members were arrested without warning, and he had to be allowed to keep all those whom he still had. Even the mere threat of arrest might paralyze operations. On the day after Praun's appointment, Lieutenant Colonel von der Osten, who was in charge of the important signal intelligence control station at Lötzen, a few miles east of "Wolfschanze", had committed suicide. Praun went to Kaltenbrunner to protest any suspicions concerning Osten, and he was told to see the *Gestapo* Chief, Heinrich Müller. Müller said Osten's suicide was "unnecessary" because there had not been any proof against him, and he promised that no other Signal Corps staff members would be investigated.

It should be emphasized here that the persecution of those plotters who had worked under Fellgiebel and



The conference room at "Wolfschanze" following the bomb blast of 20 July. Seated at this end of the table, Hitler was leaning forward when the explosion occurred; the table top shielded him, although four officers near him were killed—two of them instantaneously. The statement printed on page 13 confirms the fact that von Stauffenberg was interrupted as he prepared the bomb, and was obliged to use only half of the explosive material.

Thiele was halted not only because their expertise was indispensable for the war effort. Many staff members escaped with their lives because Fellgiebel had been careful not to tell them any more than they needed to know for their rôles, and most of all because Fellgiebel, Thiele, and Hahn, who knew all of them, did not give them away even under torture. Others, such as Hitler's adjutants, Lieutenant Colonel John von Freyend and Major von Szymonski, and the Headquarters Communications Officer, Lieutenant Colonel Sander, also kept from the *Gestapo* much of what they knew, although they were not sympathetic toward the conspirators.

Another of those arrested in the Headquarters area in East Prussia during the first hours after the *coup d'état* was the Chief of the Organization Section in the General Staff of the Army, Brigadier General Helmuth Stieff. He was arrested in "Mauerwald" about midnight on 20 July. In Stieff's case, as in other cases, the *Gestapo* were

aided by the astonishing frankness with which some conspirators answered questions. As Praun put it to Guderian: "They were used to giving evidence as officers in military courts-of-honor before their peers, not before the investigators of the *Gestapo*." Thus, the *Gestapo* learned from Stieff as early as 22 July that he had discussed the assassination of Hitler with Major General Heusinger, General Wagner, and General Lindemann. But it still took another six days during which Stieff was tortured before he gave details of the preparations. In the *Gestapo* report to Martin Bormann and Hitler dated 28 July, one finds the revealing phrase: ". . . the confession that Brigadier General Stieff finally made, as well as the interrogations of Schulenburg and various others, [provide] *significant insights*". Naturally not everyone was able to withstand torture for long; but Stieff still implicated primarily himself and comrades who were dead, such as Wagner or Brigadier General von Tresckow.

By 25 July, the *Gestapo* were fairly well informed on how the explosive material for the assassination attempt had been procured. There was evidence of the involvement in this phase of the preparations on the parts of Stieff, Oertzen, First Lieutenant Albrecht von Hagen, Lieutenant Colonel Klamroth, and Major Kuhn. Except for Oertzen and Kuhn, who was on the Russian front and escaped arrest and death by deserting to the Red Army, all of them were already under arrest. But now, others who had helped provide explosives had to reckon with their detection and arrest: Lieutenant Colonel Werner Schrader took his own life in his quarters in Zossen on 28 July, and on the table he left a note with the words: "I will not go to jail, I will not let them torture me!"

The Chief of the Army Affairs Section in the *OKH*, Colonel Wessel Freiherr von Freytag-Loringhoven, had already committed suicide, on 23 July. Yet it took until

the last days of July, and the first days of August, before the *Gestapo* reports could list any new names in this connection. The *Gestapo* gained clues not so much from interrogations as from the private diary of Captain Hermann Kaiser of the Staff of the Home Army which contained some easily decipherable cover names, and from the hints provided by suicides.

For long weeks the investigation was confined—by reason of lack of information—to a relatively small group of persons. But the discovery of some documents, intensive analysis of interrogation results, and finally the statements made by Dr. Karl Goerdeler, who had been arrested on 12 August after weeks of successful flight, at least took the *Gestapo* a few steps further. According to the *Gestapo* reports, Goerdeler made "extremely far-reaching statements" during his interrogations. His biographer, Gerhard Ritter, has convinced himself that Goerdeler was not tortured and that he was not concerned with

In this photograph, taken on 21 July—the day after the assassination attempt—the atmosphere of apprehension at "Wolfschanze" is apparent. Seated at left, behind a bit of wreckage, is Goebbels; Goering is standing at right.



prolonging his life; nor did he want to inundate the *Gestapo* with so much (often irrelevant) material that the war would be over before they could cope with all of it. According to Ritter, Goerdeler's motive was simply to reveal the full truth. He wanted the *Gestapo* and, thus, the *Régime* to see exactly of what kind and how widespread the Opposition really was. He was an inveterate optimist, and he still hoped to be able to induce Hitler to make peace by being given a chance to try persuasion in an interview with Hitler or, at least, with Himmler. On the other hand, the exactness of detail in Goerdeler's statements often concealed very successfully a strategy of deception, to which the *Gestapo* fell victim the more easily the more they believed that Goerdeler was simply blurting out everything he knew. A similar case of successful deception by seemingly minute preciseness in giving detailed information was the official report submitted by Theiele's office on the events in the communications center in Bendlerstrasse on 20 July. Actually, Goerdeler managed to protect several of his closest friends and co-conspirators against arrest entirely, although he knew exactly where they might have been found. This was true for Goerdeler's friends Jakob Kaiser, Dr. Elfriede Nebgen, Hans Walz, and Ernst Lemmer.

The mass arrests—"Gewitteraktion"—of 22 August 1944, during which some 5000 former *Reichstag* members and functionaries of the old political parties (including Konrad Adenauer and Kurt Schumacher) were arrested and thrown into concentration camps, were not directly connected with the investigations following 20 July; they had been planned by the *Gestapo* long before the *coup d'état*. However, they were indirectly connected with the larger investigation, and they should be noted because they have influenced the estimates of the number of arrests as a result of the *coup d'état*. Such a massive arrest action, of course, must be seen as a sign of some helplessness on the part of the *Gestapo*, who had difficulties in determining exactly who was and who was not a conspirator, but the possible rationale that this was a collective arrest action against well-defined groups from which a number of conspirators had come is not applicable. A repetition of the conspiracy was impossible for lack of an executive, arrest in itself did not yet reveal participants, and, most important of all, the same method would have had to be used against clergymen, Foreign Office officials, lawyers, professors, General Staff officers, etc.—a strategy which obviously would have been absurd.

The difficulties of the *Gestapo* will be even more appreciated in light of the success with which very prominent fugitives managed to escape arrest for a long time. General Fritz Lindemann was not arrested until 3 September, after weeks of intensive search and investigation, in Berlin. When the *Gestapo* caught up with him, he tried to jump out of a fourth-floor window, but shots which hit him in the stomach and in the legs stopped him. He was immediately operated on so that he might be tried in court, but he died of his wounds on 21 September.

The other side of Lindemann's escape and final fate, however, was tragic. Five of those who had put him up

in various places during his flight, between 22 July and 3 September, were sentenced to death by the "People's Court" on 27 November and 1 December, respectively. Two of them were so-called "Jewish-mixed persons of the first degree", and another was the widow of a Jew. Their heroism is underlined by the fact that they themselves were of course constantly in acute danger of being deported to a death camp because of their Jewish connections or "Jewish blood". Moreover, they had hidden a fugitive before—a fact that could only aggravate the case against them, should it be discovered. Now they had shared their apartments with General Lindemann, who passed as a retired major and a journalist by the name of Exner. Needless to say, Lindemann's protectors did not waver for a moment, even when in the middle of August a prize of \$125,000 was offered for information leading to Lindemann's arrest.

Arthur Nebe, Director of the Central *Reich* office of the Criminal Police, similarly managed to hide out with the skill of a criminal investigator, aided by the willingness of friends to help him stay underground. In the first days after 20 July, he appeared eager to help round up the conspirators, but he had to abandon this ruse and take flight after one of his closest collaborators in the conspiracy, Berlin Police Chief Graf von Helldorf, was arrested on 24 July. Nebe left behind suicide notes, and, at the place of his pretended suicide, food items, identification papers, ration cards, and other valuables that no sane man could be expected to leave behind unless he had really decided to depart from this life. He also colored his hair, used assumed names, and accepted shelter from friends. He was not arrested until 16 January 1945. Dr. Gisevius, a member of the fledgling *Gestapo* in 1933, but actively involved at least since 1938 in almost every single conspiracy against Hitler, had gone underground together with Nebe; he managed to cross into Switzerland, on 23 January 1945, by using forged papers.

In the military districts and in the areas of the military commanders in the occupied territories there were far fewer arrests than the ratio of participation in the conspiracy would have led one to expect.

In Vienna, the provincial National-Socialist Party boss, Baldur von Schirach, had been on a trip on 20 July; when he returned and received a report of the events, he went up to the City Commandant, Major General Sinzinger, and tore the Golden Party Badge off the General's uniform. Sinzinger had carried out orders from Bendlerstrasse, and he had arrested SS-officers. The Chief of Staff in the District Command, Colonel Kodré, was arrested several times by the *Gestapo* for some extremely unpleasant interrogations, and finally he found himself in the Mauthausen Concentration Camp where he remained until the end of the war. General von Eisebeck had been in charge of the District on 20 July, in the absence of the Commander, and Eisebeck suffered a fate similar to that of Kodré. The political liaison men, and many nationalist-Austrian politicians were arrested, of course, and the situation was perhaps more serious in

some other districts where the milder attitudes so well established in Austria did not prevail. But hardly any of those arrested in this category, even if they carried out the orders of the Berlin conspirators during a few hours, lost their lives.

Even in the staffs of the Military Commanders of Belgium and Northern France, and of France, where conspiratorial participation had been widespread, arrests and persecution did not reach any proportionate level. General Freiherr von Falkenhausen, Military Commander in Belgium and Northern France, was arrested on 29 July. His Chief of Staff, Colonel Bodo von Harbou, took his life in his cell after his arrest. In Paris, the leaders of the *coup* action there agreed with the SS and SD to

declare the whole thing an exercise publicly. Internally it was declared a misunderstanding. The Higher SS and Police Leader Oberg; the SD Chief, Dr. Knochen; and the Chief of Staff of the Supreme Commander West, General Blumentritt, agreed on this tenor for their reports to their superiors. The Army officers had carried out the Berlin orders with great dispatch and diligence; and the SS officers had thought those orders "genuine" and had submitted to their execution almost voluntarily, so that in France, both sides were interested in as little exposure of these circumstances as possible. Without this rare community of interests between Army and SS, the arrests among members of the German Army would have gone into the hundreds.



Hans Bernd von Haeften, Legation Councillor in the Foreign Office. After a month of imprisonment and torture, his clothes scarcely fitted him; he was hanged on 15 August 1944.

Flanked by police, Dr. Berthold Schenk Graf von Stauffenberg—brother of the man who planted the bomb at "Wolfschanze"—is led into the courtroom. Himself a judge, he was hanged in Plötzensee on 10 August 1944, at the age of 39.

A few officers, of course, had revealed themselves as conspirators on 20 July, and some of the most prominent could not be saved. The Military Commander in France, General Karl-Heinrich von Stülpnagel, had been relieved of his command by Fieldmarshall von Kluge during the night of 20/21 July, and he was too compromised to be reinstated, or to be protected against a formal investigation. General Blumentritt attempted to protect Stülpnagel, but Kluge, who was overly eager to dissociate himself from the conspiracy, had already reported on Stülpnagel to *OKW*. On the morning of 21 July, Stülpnagel was ordered to report to Berlin to answer questions. Members of his staff—Lieutenant Colonel Dr. von Hofacker, Dr. Horst, Dr. Teuchert and Dr. Thierfelder—meanwhile destroyed all documentary traces of the *coup d'état* and warned others who had been involved and informed.

Stülpnagel started to Berlin by car. When he reached the old World War I battlefield on the Maas river north of Verdun, he told his driver to stop. He got out, walked up to the Maas Canal, and shot himself through the head, but without killing himself. His driver and his *aide-de-camp* ran up to the Canal, found Stülpnagel floating in the water, fished him out, and took him to a field hospital in Verdun. During the same night Stülpnagel was operated on, and the doctors saved his life, though he remained blind. Those who had been with Stülpnagel on the trip did not know anything about the conspiracy or

Stülpnagel's involvement, and they believed that he had been shot by members of the French *Résistance*. But it was soon clear that Stülpnagel had tried to commit suicide. From the time of Kluge's report to *OKW*, no one really believed the version of a "misunderstanding" in Paris, and Stülpnagel's suicide attempt could only be seen as an admission of guilt. Stülpnagel's Chief of Staff, Colonel von Linstow, had at first asked the driver to stick to the version of a *Résistance* attack; he had appealed to the driver's loyalty to "our General". But after hours of interrogation the driver admitted during the night of 22/23 July, that he had been asked by Linstow to give this version.

Now it had become impossible even for the most benevolent *SS* and *SD* chiefs in Paris to pretend there were no grounds for suspicion. Linstow was interrogated on 23 July and placed under house arrest, and he was definitively arrested on 27 July. Hofacker was arrested on 25 July. Other arrests in France included the Quartermaster West, Colonel Finckh, Captain Dr. Gotthard Freiherr von Falkenhausen, Dr. Ernst Röchling, Geheimrat Kreuter, and Freiherr von der Osten-Sacken—all officials in the economic administration of occupied France. Subsequently, the wave of arrests in France subsided. General Blumentritt and, at first, even Fieldmarshall von Kluge remained in their respective positions. The City Commandant of Paris, Major General Freiherr von Boineburg-Lengsfeld, and his deputy, Brigadier General Brehmer, were transferred; but the Commander of the Paris Security Regiment, Colonel von Kraewel, who had carried out the arrests against *SS* and *SD* on 20 July, was neither arrested nor transferred.

After a few weeks, however, the investigation was reaching into France again, and Kluge's involvement in the conspiracy for several years gradually came to the attention of the *Gestapo*. Kluge also believed that his good name as a soldier was being destroyed by his inability to halt the invasion of the Allies in Normandy. On 15 August, Kluge had himself driven into the semi-encircled area of Falaise, probably to seek death. On the way to the front his cars were pinned down for some time by Allied fighter bombers, and he lost his signal truck, so that for a number of hours the Commander-in-Chief of the German front in France had disappeared and his own Headquarters and *OKW* were unable to locate him anywhere. By evening, Hitler believed that the Fieldmarshall had deserted to the Allies (which says more about Hitler's mentality than about Kluge's desperation). Without waiting any longer Hitler appointed Fieldmarshall Model as Kluge's successor. Kluge returned to his Headquarters during the night of 15/16 August, but he was not informed of the change of command until an hour before the arrival of Fieldmarshall Model on 17 August. Kluge was ordered to return to Germany; on his way back on 19 August, during a stop near the old World War I battlefields where Stülpnagel, too, had stopped, Kluge took cyanide.

The figures given here and there for the total number of those arrested in the wake of 20 July—for instance,



the 600 cited by the *Gestapo* investigator, Dr. Kiessel—are certainly impressive. But they are only vaguely representative of the true extent of the Opposition movement against Hitler. In fact, the *Gestapo*, after half a year of large-scale investigations, were still far from anything approaching adequate information about the Opposition, as the investigation reports clearly show. The reason for this lack of information was not laxity, and only in the last three months of the war did the investigation really lose momentum—in part because of constant Allied bombings with the resulting evacuations of offices and agencies, in part because of the approach of the front-lines, and in part because many *Gestapo* officers wished to avoid compromising themselves unnecessarily during those last weeks, when they could see that they themselves might have to answer charges before long. This last-mentioned consideration did not automatically save any of the arrested conspirators. On the contrary, from the point of view of many *Gestapo* men, prudence now required the “elimination” (murder) of those who might have unpleasant things to say about them.

On the other hand, in view of the attitudes of many conspirators, and in view of the methods with which the *Gestapo* tried to extract confessions, it is still surprising how little they learned about the Opposition. Many who might have escaped with false papers, or who might have gone into hiding, refused to endanger their friends. The fate of those who helped General Lindemann illustrates the point. Ulrich von Hassell, for example, refused to seek shelter. He wandered about the streets of Berlin for days and finally awaited his arrest at his desk.

Those who did try to escape, however, not only endangered everyone who helped them, but also endangered their own families. The National-Socialists, pretending to revive ancient “heroic” customs of those they claimed as their Germanic forbearers, had devised a diabolic system of “clan arrests” (*Sippenhaft*). Himmler explained it in a speech to the provincial Party bosses of 3 August 1944: “When they [the Germanic forbearers] put a family under the ban and declared it outlawed, or when there was a vendetta in the family, they were unbelievably consistent about it. When the family was declared outlawed and put under the ban, they said: ‘This man has committed treason, the blood is bad, there is treasonous blood in it, this will be exterminated.’ And in the vendetta they exterminated even the last member of the entire clan. The family Graf Stauffenberg will be exterminated down to its last member.”

Thus, not only the wives of Claus and Berthold Graf von Stauffenberg, their uninvolved brother, Alexander Graf von Stauffenberg, and the small children of the brothers (aged 2 to 8), but also cousins, uncles, aunts, and even in-laws in great numbers (who had no “bad, treasonous blood”, presumably) were arrested. Besides the small children, the *Gestapo* arrested the octogenarian father of a cousin of Claus Graf von Stauffenberg, his mother, and many other relatives and friends. (Stauffenberg’s mother, incidentally, was unimpressed by her arrest. After she had been released later in 1944, she told

people who had the courage to visit her: “I knew of my son’s deed beforehand, and I still approve of it.”) Arrests included relatives of families such as those of Goerdeler, Lehdorff, Schwerin von Schwanefeld, Tresckow, Seydlitz, Hagen, Freytag-Loringhoven, Hase, Lindemann, Bernardis, Hansen, Hofacker, Finckh, Yorck von Wartenburg, Moltke, Hoepner, Oster, Dohnanyi, Bonhoeffer, Haushofer, Trott zu Solz, Leber, Leuschner, Jakob Kaiser, Hammerstein, Popitz, Harnack, Kleist, Haeften, Haubach, Schulenburg, to mention only a few. The application of the principle of family arrest, however, remained unsystematic, under Himmler’s express orders.

The prisoners arrested under the family-arrest “system” were often dragged from one jail or concentration camp to another as the Allied fronts moved in on Germany, and they were often transported in cattle cars. Such notorious camps as Stutthof, Lauenburg, Buchenwald, Dachau, and Sachsenhausen were among the stations of their undeserved odyssey of suffering. Many of these prisoners were taken to Tyrol with the VIP group from Dachau which included the former Austrian Chancellor, Dr. Kurt von Schuschnigg. There they were to be shot by the SS before they could be liberated by American troops, but General Heinrich von Vietinghoff

Dr. Julius Leber. Leber was a leading Social-Democrat and a journalist; he was hanged in Plötzensee, 5 January 1945, at the age of 53.



genannt Scheel, Commander-in-Chief Southwest, heard about the prisoners and freed them by having the SS guards disarmed.

Not only were those who had committed or tried to commit the unlawful act against the *Führer* to be persecuted and punished, but also the very spirit of the action was to be punished. The spirit of *humanitas*, of peace, and of justice was to be exterminated. The family, where the spirit of freedom and the resistance against injustice and arbitrariness is often inculcated and cultivated first, was to be exterminated. For the purposes of the *Régime* it would have been necessary physically to destroy entire social strata, and such a radical social revolution had been seriously envisioned by Hitler. But he had put it off again and again for the sake of short-range aims, especially the satisfaction of his desire for a war. The war, of course, caused such profound disruption of social and political structures that the extermination of those groups whom Hitler considered his enemies would have entailed an impossibility. In the present situation, too, the *Régime* could not afford to act with the thoroughness that was thought appropriate.

As a threat and as a form of torture family arrests were quite effective even if they remained relatively

spotty. The suspects who had been arrested could be threatened with the arrest and mistreatment (the words *concentration camp* were enough to convey the point) of their wives and children, of their parents, of brothers and sisters, and of other relatives. No one can fully appreciate the horrible decisions which had to be made between giving away co-conspirators and friends on the one hand, and having one's wife and children thrown into one of the murderous concentration camps on the other. Not all those arrested by the *Gestapo* managed to say just enough to satisfy their interrogators (and so protect their families), but not enough to endanger any collaborators who were still free.

There were other kinds of torture, too. They were officially sanctioned, and no amount of lying on the part of *Gestapo* officials who were tried after the war can change that. This torture was officially termed Intensified Interrogation. No one felt quite at ease about it, however, and those who inflicted it without many scruples nevertheless were bashful when it came to calling a spade a spade. Reinhard Heydrich, who was then Chief of the Secret Police Office in Prussia, wrote to all office heads working under him on 28 May 1936: There was reason "to point out that the application of Intensified Interro-

A wider view of the courtroom, as Leber faces the trial judge. Defense counsel are seated along the table at the defendant's left; toward the rear of the room are "listeners" and some representatives of the press.



gation may in no case be documented." Even as late as 1941, Heydrich wrote his office heads that he had cause to remind them that certain regulations must be followed in the application of Intensified Interrogation. What must the conditions have been if a man like Heydrich thought it necessary to restrain *Gestapo* interrogators! Intensified Interrogation, Heydrich continued, was permissible only in dealing with "Communist or Marxist functionaries, Witnesses of Jehovah, and saboteurs." "If an Intensified Interrogation should be justifiable and required in other particularly important cases," Heydrich's specific permission had to be requested, though not for Poles and Russians. But a year later, after Heydrich's assassination, the Chief of Security Police and *SD*, Heinrich Müller ("Gestapo Müller"), changed these regulations. Under the date of 12 June 1942, he wrote to all officials concerned, "in order to simplify" the Decree on Intensified Interrogation of 1 July, 1937: Intensified Interrogation might only be applied if it was clear that a suspect *could* give information "about important facts concerning hostility to state and nation," but does not *want* to. Even at that time this relaxation was limited to "Communists, Marxists, Witnesses of Jehovah, saboteurs, terrorists, members of the resistance movements [in the occupied territories], parachute agents, a-social types, and Poles or Soviet-Russians who refused to work or who loafed." Permission could be granted for exceptions, and this also applied to the following regulation: "Intensified Interrogation may not be used to bring about confessions of acts committed by the person subjected to Intensified Interrogation . . . For exceptions, my permission must be obtained in advance."

Müller at least hinted at the methods of Intensified Interrogation in his letter: "the most modest food (water and bread), hard beds, dark cell, withdrawal of sleep, fatigue exercises" could be terrible tortures. One must imagine that under these regulations people could be (and were) forced to go without sleep for many days and nights, or to stand upright for ten, twelve, or fifteen hours (fatigue exercise). "Dispensation of strokes with a stick" could be used, too. For more than twenty strokes a physician had to be brought in; but who was counting, and who checked on the interrogators? And the concentration-camp trials since 1945 have shown what some doctors were capable of.

Once one is familiar with these official regulations, one will more readily understand many a strange phrase in the *Gestapo* interrogation and investigation reports produced after 20 July 1944. If one of them states: "Only after a pause of several days in the interrogations did Schlabrendorff openly reveal . . .", it is not difficult to guess (correctly) what had happened during this pause. Fabian von Schlabrendorff was tortured so cruelly, in fact, that he was forced to abandon his initially total refusal to talk. He made extensive "confessions" in which he implicated himself and conspirators he knew were dead. This seemed to him the only way to avoid tortures during which he might lose control of what he wanted to say. The *Gestapo* had discovered contacts between Schla-



Dr. Peter Graf Yorck von Wartenburg, a lawyer and Government Councillor who was hanged on 8 August. Behind him, half-hidden, is General Hoepner; at far right are von Witzleben and von Hase.

brendorff and Graf von Lehnendorff (who was to be one of the Liaison Officers between the conspirators and one of the military districts); Lehnendorff could not deny that Schlabrendorff and Tresckow, one of the leading conspirators who had taken his own life on 21 July 1944, had co-operated closely, and Schlabrendorff had been arrested on 17 August. But the Investigating Commission could not report any statements or confessions made by Schlabrendorff until 18 September. In the interval Schlabrendorff had been tortured, and others held in the *Gestapo* cellar of Prinz-Albrecht-Strasse 8 in Berlin saw him brought back from "interrogations" bloody and unconscious several times. Schlabrendorff's case is particularly useful as an example for illustrating exactly what was meant by torture and what the real meaning of Intensified Interrogation was, because the torture to which Schlabrendorff was subjected was documented in the People's Court even before the collapse of the Third Reich. The *Gestapo* officials could not deny it then or later.

As a first step, Schlabrendorff's hands were tied behind his back and each of his fingers separately were



Dr. Adam von Trott zu Solz, a Rhodes Scholar and a Legation Councillor in the Foreign Office, hears the conspiracy charges read against him. He was condemned and hanged in Plötzensee, 26 August 1944.

put into an apparatus where each finger tip was met by an iron thorn. By the turn of a screw, the thorns were made to penetrate deeper and deeper into the fingers and down to the bones. When this did not result in a "confession", Schlabrendorff was strapped to a cot, and his legs were put in pipes which had a great number of sharp metal thorns on the inside. Again, a mechanism was set in motion by which the thorns penetrated more and more deeply into the flesh of the legs. Schlabrendorff's head was put in a kind of metal hood and also covered with a blanket, so that the "interrogators" did not have to hear the screams of the victim. All the while, and also between turns of the screws, Schlabrendorff received beatings with bamboo sticks and leather whips. In the third stage of this torture, still by the use of the versatile cot apparatus, the body of the victim was stretched either briefly and strongly, or gradually and increasingly. As often as Schlabrendorff fainted, he was revived with cold water. When none of these extreme cruelties produced any statements from Schlabrendorff, another method of torture was used. He had to stand bent over forward, and shackled, so that he could move neither backward nor

sideways, and he was beaten from behind with heavy sticks. Under every stroke he fell forward onto his face with the full weight of his body. He was put on his feet again and beaten again.

All of these methods of torture were used on Schlabrendorff on one and the same day with the only result that he lost consciousness. On the following day he suffered a severe heart attack and was paralyzed for several days following. When he had recovered somewhat, the torture was resumed. Finally, after weeks in the *Gestapo* cellar, Schlabrendorff decided to admit something. He said he had known that Tresckow had often talked about a bloodless, or, if necessary, a violent elimination of Hitler, that Tresckow had been busy in unusual ways just before 20 July, and that he had sent Oertzen to Berlin. This information, Schlabrendorff said, was all that he had known, and he claimed that at the time he had not understood what it meant. The *Gestapo* seemed satisfied with this result of the "interrogation" for the time being. It was enough to have Schlabrendorff sentenced to death for complicity by the People's Court, which was not fussy about such paraphernalia as proof of guilt. For a time, at least, Schlabrendorff was left alone. The *Gestapo* never found out that he, Tresckow, Gersdorff, and a number of other members of the Staff of Army Group Center had made several assassination attempts against Hitler—including the famous bomb-on-the-airplane attempt of 13 March 1943—and Schlabrendorff remained the only one of the group who was ever arrested.

Many others were beaten and tortured in the same and similar ways, usually by notorious thugs like Criminal Commissar Stawizki, who belonged to the Special Group of a *Gestapo* thug named Leo Lange. Admiral Canaris, for instance, had his hands and feet tied and was tortured by constantly-lit bright lights and by denial of privacy (his cell door was open day and night). General Fellgiebel, Dr. Walter Bauer, Dr. Carl Langbehn, Graf von Bismarck, Walter Cramer, former State Secretary Erwin Planck, and Dr. Eugen Gerstenmaier, among many others, were badly beaten and tortured. In several cases, such as that of Adam von Trott zu Solz, the execution of a death sentence was postponed in order to extract more information. The *Gestapo* reported: "Since Trott doubtlessly has kept back a great deal of information, the People's Court's death sentence has not been carried out, so that Trott is available for further clarification."

In view of such conditions, and in view of the great number of those arrested, it is astonishing and admirable that so many of those involved in or informed about the conspiracy were saved and protected by suffering, silence, and by misleading of the *Gestapo*. This resistance, even after the total collapse of the Opposition as a group and as a movement that hoped to overthrow the *Régime* of Adolf Hitler and his henchmen, can be explained and understood only by reference to those sources that had nourished the Opposition against National-Socialism and against Hitler from the very start: the conviction of an ethical responsibility to fight injustice, crime, and destruction in general, even at the price of one's own life.

3. PEOPLE'S COURT, EXECUTION, CONCENTRATION CAMP

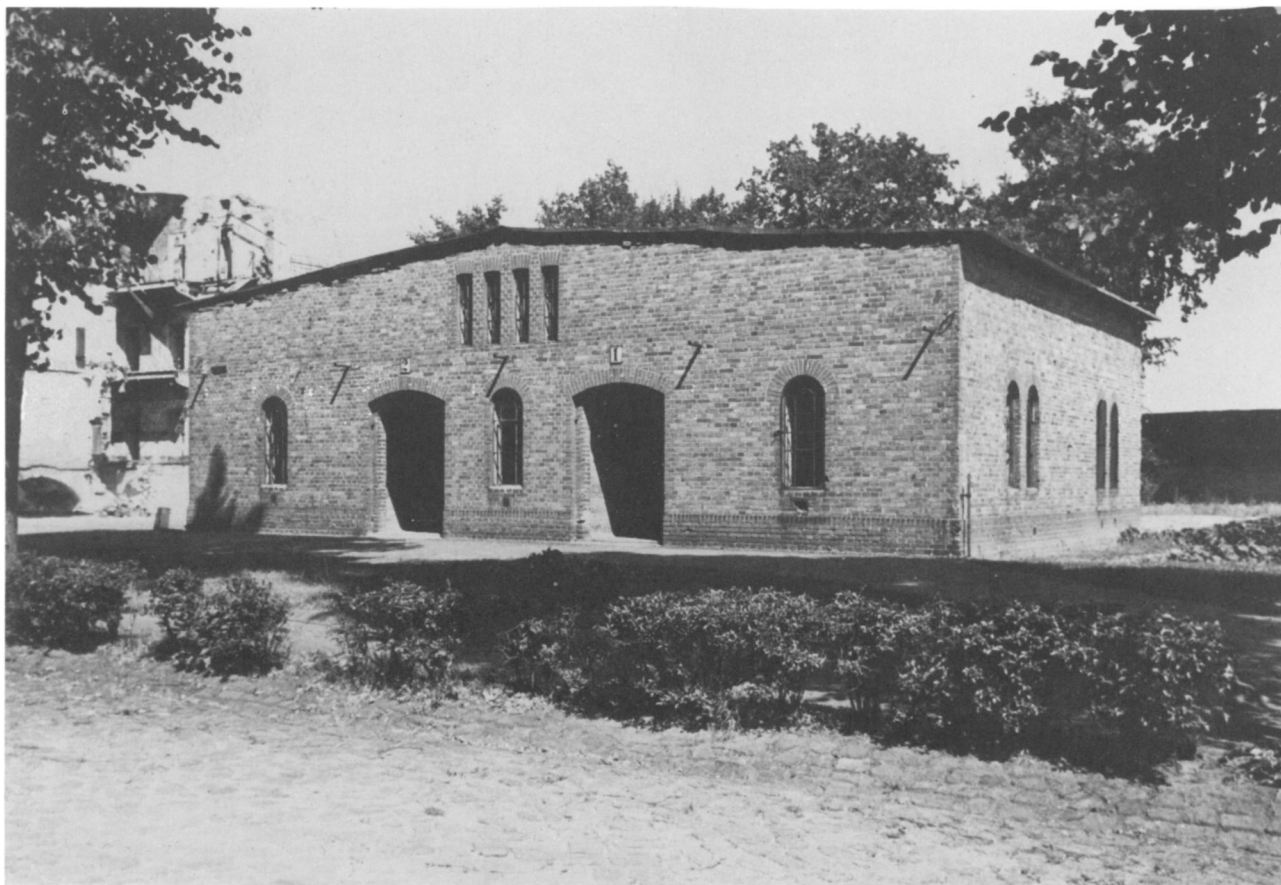
The "People's Court" was first formed in 1934, in order to give an effective instrument to what was called the "sound sense of the people" (*"gesundes Volksempfinden"*) against the enemies of the people. In reality there was not one aspect of this mandate that was not dubious: the stated intention; the claim that the sense of the people was indeed sound on such intangible points of law as to who was and who was not an enemy of the people; the contention that the judgments of the Court would reflect that sense whatever it was; and the assumption that those convicted by the Court would indeed be enemies of the people. The truth was that the People's Court from its very beginning was meant to be a political instrument of rule for the *Régime* of the National-Socialists and for their concept of "National-Socialist Law"—a law of terror and oppression of all opposition and dissent, and the exact opposite of all humanist, liberal principles and traditions of justice. Long before 20 July 1944, the judgments of this Court were arbitrary and contrary to existing statute laws. In many cases they were decided before the trial had even begun, or were repealed or commuted by the Government when they did not suit it.

On 11 August 1944, Vice-Consul Dr. Sonnenhol, Section Chief of *Inland II* in the Foreign Office in Berlin, received the following report in writing: "During today's meeting with SS Brigadier General Panzinger the following developed: 1) von Trott zu Solz will be sentenced to death at the next session of the People's Court, probably Tuesday or Wednesday of next week." Usually the trials of conspirators after 20 July 1944 lasted less than a day, and conviction, sentencing and execution usually took place on the same day. Trott's trial, of course, had not even begun when the official communication just cited was written.

On 22 December 1942, SS Major General Heinrich Mueller wrote Himmler that he had learned from Mr. Lehmann, an official in *OKW*, that the death sentences passed against members of the Schulze-Boysen group (they were part of the espionage organization *Rote Kapelle*) had been confirmed by Hitler, but that "The *Führer* has not confirmed the sentences [of 6 and 10 years in the penitentiary, resp.] against Mrs. Harnack and Gräfin Brockdorff. The *Führer* has decreed that both must be sentenced again by another group of judges of the Court." This sentencing was done, and the two women were duly hanged.

Military courts were still competent for offenses committed by members of the Armed Forces until September

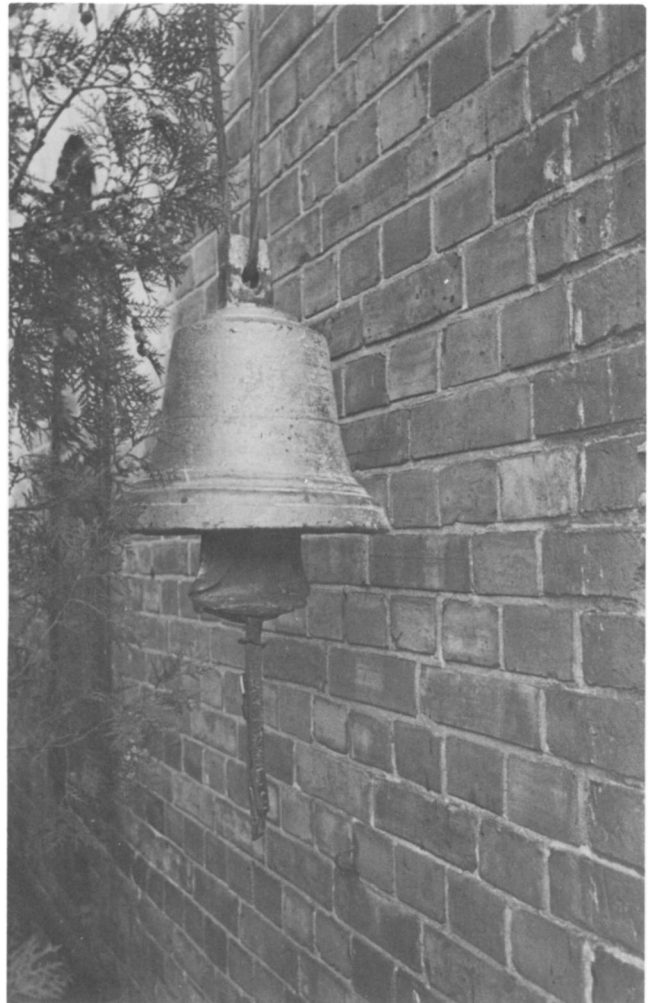
The Death House in Plötzensee Prison, Berlin, where many of the conspirators of the 20 July plot were executed.



1939. But after that time members of the Armed Forces could be tried by the People's Court if civilians had been accomplices or parties in whatever the military men were being accused of. This was the case, of course, with the conspiracy of 20 July 1944. The law of 1939 also added: "The *Führer* and Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces can order a retrial even if a trial has been legally completed and the judgment and sentence have become final." The trial could be repeated as often as necessary until it had reached the result desired by the Government. This method was said to be in conformity with the "leader principle" (*Führerprinzip*). The *Führer*, it was claimed, personified in some mystical way the vital interests, the spirit, and the justice of the people. In reality, this was arbitrariness, pure and simple, hardly covered up with "legal" regulations. In September 1944, the competence of the general (as opposed to special, such as military) judicial system was extended to all political offenses committed by soldiers; and this extension, too, was not meant to promote justice but merely to tighten controls over the Armed Forces, which had preserved until then a degree of independence.

But enough remained of the military judicial competence, and the procedures were so complicated, that Hitler's Government preferred not to exhaust the possibilities of the legal tools just described. The Government also preferred not to risk any acquittals it might not agree with, but instead relied on a more formal transfer of suspects from military to regular jurisdiction. This transfer procedure turned out to be yet another perversion of justice. A military Court of Honor was formed, with instructions to recommend to the *Führer* the expulsion of suspects from the Armed Forces—without a hearing of the accused, without the examination of evidence, without hearing witnesses, and without determination of guilt or innocence—merely on the basis of a report of investigation results submitted by the *Gestapo*. This method was much easier than that of having to prove in some "difficult" cases that military men and civilians had indeed acted together and therefore had to be tried by a non-military court—the People's Court. Members of the military Court of Honor were Fieldmarshall Keitel, General Guderian, General Walter Schroth, General Karl Kriebel, and later also General Karl-Wilhelm Specht, Major General Heinrich Kirchheim as deputy for Guderian, and Fieldmarshall von Rundstedt as Presiding Judge. Brigadier General Ernst Maisel and Major General Wilhelm Burgdorf of the Army Personnel Office also participated in the sessions of the Court of Honor.

The first group of 20 July conspirators was tried before the People's Court on 7 and 8 August 1944, in the Great Room of the Chamber Court in Berlin, with Dr. Roland Freisler presiding. He wore a red robe, the walls were decorated with swastika flags, and the carefully selected "public" was dominated by the black, brown, and green uniforms of the SS, the SA and the police. The intention was to hold a show trial that could be used by Dr. Goebbels for propaganda purposes, and that would



The Death Bell at the Plötzensee Prison. It was rung before executions.

give satisfaction to a vengeful *Führer*. Behind the flags were soundtrack-film cameras, and Freisler, who conducted the trial practically alone, would give a brief knock as a signal whenever he wanted the cameras started. Every time he gave this signal, he would begin shouting at the accused unrestrainedly, and often obscenely, in order to demonstrate what pitiful, morally worthless criminals driven by lowly motives the accused were, and in order psychologically to destroy the accused.

The propaganda purpose was not achieved, and only excerpts from the films were later shown in public. Even these excerpts had an effect quite opposite to the one intended. All the accused were seen as upright, courageous men. Through their obvious integrity, and because of what they said in court, they really appeared as the accusers. Their quiet dignity, rather purified by the sufferings of *Gestapo* captivity, was emphasized by the contrast with the screaming, shouting, grimacing, gesticulating, and undignified judge.

The first group of defendants consisted of Fieldmarshall von Witzleben, General Hoepner, Brigadier Gen-

eral Stieff, First Lieutenant von Hagen, Major General von Hase, Lieutenant Colonel Bernardis, Captain Klaus- ing, and First Lieutenant Graf Yorck von Wartenburg. Especially Witzleben spoke without fear before Freisler, but the others were not impressed by Freisler's shouting either. Witzleben's suspenders had been taken away, and Hoepner was forced to wear a knit jacket in court. Neither was allowed to wear a decent uniform. Even a man like Freisler was embarrassed by this outward indignity, and during a recess he gave orders to provide the two defendants with the means for a more dignified appearance. Occasionally Freisler tried to make certain that only authorized persons were present, but in view of the great number in the audience, a good deal of information about the trial could not be prevented from becoming known outside the court. Thus, it was widely reported that Witzleben had told Freisler: "You can hand us over to the hangman. In three months the maltreated and suffering people will hold you accountable, and they will drag you through the dirt of the streets alive."

Freisler tried, usually successfully, to prevent the defendants from stating their motives. Stieff made several attempts to speak, which Freisler suppressed, but many managed to say briefly why and for what end they had acted. Graf Schwerin von Schwanefeld mentioned "the many murders in Poland" before Freisler interrupted him. Stieff: "For Germany!" Yorck: "The essential connection of all these questions is the state's claim of total authority over the citizen and the exclusion of his religious and ethical obligations to God." During the entire trial Yorck showed a particularly fearless and upright attitude, no doubt mindful of his famous ancestor who, in 1812, had also given the voice of conscience precedence over the written laws that seemed to him senseless. Hans-Bernd von Haeften said: "In my opinion, the world-historic role of the *Führer* is that of a great executor of Evil."

The lawyer Josef Wirmer, who was to have become Minister of Justice in a post-coup government, told Freisler during his trial: "If I am hanged, it is not I who is afraid, but you!" And when Freisler chided him: "You'll be in hell soon!" Wirmer shot back: "It will be a pleasure, if you'll follow me soon, *Herr Präsident!*" Ulrich von Hassell, the former German Ambassador in Rome, also seemed more of an accuser in Freisler's Court than a defendant. Hermann Maass, who had been interrupted twice by Freisler's inarticulate, wild shouting, demonstrated his contempt for the Court and for the judge by refusing to plead for his life. Fritz-Dietlof Graf von der Schulenburg heaped all the sarcasm of which he was capable upon Freisler; and Fellgiebel told the Judge to hurry with the hangings, or he would be hanged sooner than the men on trial. At times the conduct of the trials by Freisler was so undignified that even the National-Socialist trial observers and the Minister of Justice, Dr. Thierack, complained about it to Bormann, Hitler's powerful Secretary.

The trials continued into the last weeks before the end of the war. At a time when nothing could prevent or

conceal the collapse of the *Régime* and its military defeat, Hitler's rage was so unbridled and unpredictable that judicial officials only rarely dared to prolong or slow down some of the proceedings in order to save some lives, or in order to collect points for their own justification when the time of reckoning came for them. Sometimes a judicial official could be persuaded by the relatives of a defendant to put his dossier at the bottom of the pile; and if this was done in February, the chances were that this dossier would not come up before the war was over. Logically this might have cost the life of someone else who might otherwise have survived.

Fabian von Schlabrendorff was put on trial in the People's Court with five other defendants on 21 December 1944, but because the Court could not handle all these cases at once, Schlabrendorff and three others—former *Reich* Minister Dr. Andreas Hermes, former State Secretary Dr. Franz Kempner, and Colonel Wilhelm Staehle—were not tried on this day. Schlabrendorff's trial was set for 3 February 1945. As it began, the air raid alarms went off, and the entire Court, including the defendant, had to go to the air raid shelter. During the raid the People's Court building was hit, the shelter ceiling partially collapsed, and a falling beam fell on the head of Freisler, who was still wearing his red robe. Schlabrendorff's defense counsel told him afterward that the Presiding Judge had still clutched Schlabrendorff's dossier as he lay on the floor, more dead than alive. He died a short while later.

A new trial date was set for Schlabrendorff—16 March 1945. Schlabrendorff managed to describe in detail the tortures he had been subjected to, and he pointed out that torture had been abolished and forbidden in Prussia by Frederick the Great, two hundred years ago. The *Gestapo* officials who were present at the trial did not deny the tortures, and so the Court, now presided over by Dr. Crohne, acquitted Schlabrendorff on these grounds and set him free. As he walked out of the Court into the street, the *Gestapo* re-arrested him at once. A few days later he was told that obviously the People's Court had passed an incorrect judgment. He would not be hanged then, but he would be shot instead; Schlabrendorff had to acknowledge the receipt of this information with his signature. After several more days he was taken to Flossenbürg Concentration Camp where he was to be shot after the executions of Canaris, Dohnanyi, Oster, Bonhoeffer and others who had been members of the German Military Intelligence and whom the Government had not wished to have tried in the semi-public way by which the People's Court operated. The Canaris group were hanged, but Schlabrendorff was saved again when the camp was evacuated before the approaching Russian troops. With other prisoners he was taken to Dachau Concentration Camp, and from there he was eventually taken to South Tyrol where he was liberated at the last moment with the rest of this group by a German Army general.

General Fromm, too, was tried in March 1945. He was accused of having violated regulations of martial law when he had the leaders of the *coup d'état* shot dur-

ing the night of 20/21 July. But he was sentenced to death for cowardice. Legally, this accusation was very shaky ground on which to base the sentence against Fromm. As Dr. Hopf, one of Bormann's trial observers, reported, it was "lucky" that the presiding judge had not stumbled over this point. The possibility could not be excluded that Fromm had been passive not because he was cowardly but because he was sympathetic towards the conspirators, and because he wished to be on the right side in case of their success. If Fromm had acted out of such motives, he would have had to be sentenced for high treason.

Hitler himself decreed that the method of execution for the conspirators was to be hanging, but later in 1944 the use of the guillotine, which had been the predominant practice until 1942, was revived. Before 20 July 1944, soldiers had usually been shot. The first eight to be tried in the wake of 20 July, on 7 and 8 August—Witzleben, Hoepner, Stieff, Hagen, Hase, Bernardis, Klausning, and Yorck—were hanged on the afternoon of 8 August, in the Plötzensee Penitentiary. They all died with courage and without complaint, though it was by no means easy for all of them. Hanging is a cruel and barbarous method of execution. One has only to recall the horrible photographs of the Nuremberg executions after the war, or those of the hangings of alleged Jewish spies in Baghdad,

in 1969. But the procedure in Plötzensee was especially barbaric and cruel, by order of Hitler. In the tiny, barren room in which the executions took place the guillotine was still in full view. The hangman and his assistants were drinking brandy from a bottle and glasses that were standing on a little table in the room, and sound-track film cameras were mounted in the room so that Hitler might see how his enemies, who were stripped naked, had died. The condemned men were hanged with ropes that were attached to butcher hooks, which in turn were fastened onto a metal beam that went through the room from one end to the other just below the ceiling. The execution shed has survived the bombs of the war and, except for the guillotine, it is still as it was in 1944 and is now a memorial. The film of the hangings was taken straight away to Hitler's Headquarters "Wolfschanze", and it was shown to anyone who cared to see it in the Headquarters Cinema. Still photos of the hanged men were lying about on the great map table in Hitler's conference room until, at least, 18 August.

Death by hanging can always be slow and painful, even if the suffering is not intended. It is reported credibly, however, that at least for the first series of executions the order was to prolong the dying of the victims. A prisoner would be lifted up with the noose around his

The Execution Room in the Plötzensee Prison Death House, as it looked to those executed here between August 1944 and April 1945. In the right foreground is the guillotine; the hooks along the girder in the background were used to suspend the ropes of the hanged.



neck, and the other end would then be attached to the hook. If the assistants of the hangman then let the prisoner fall with the full weight of his body, he had a good chance of breaking his neck immediately, or of losing consciousness at least. But if a man was hanged carefully without a fall, he suffocated slowly. (It is most revealing in this connection that, regardless of the method of hanging, regulations the world over require that the hanged may not be taken down for at least twenty minutes after the hanging.)

The conspirators who were hanged after 20 July were usually hanged in groups, as on 8 August. After the first one was hanged, a black curtain would be drawn before his body before the next to be executed was led into the room. Then the next one would be hanged beside him, and the curtain drawn further to cover him—and so forth. The time that elapsed from the moment the condemned entered the execution room to the actual execution was usually very short. The protocols give times from 7 to 20 seconds. Decapitation was even faster, and the end of suffering more certainly coincided with the execution. This method was resumed late in 1944, after there had been mass hangings about every two weeks for several months. But in March 1945, Nebe was hanged, not beheaded, because hanging was considered worse punishment and more degrading. On the other hand, Fromm was shot on 12 March, 1945, perhaps as a sign of some clemency, or perhaps because this seemed appropriate for his crime—cowardice in a soldier.

Many of the convicted conspirators of 20 July were executed on the day on which they were sentenced. Thus, even if the sentence had not been agreed on beforehand, execution on the day of sentencing alone would have been illustrative enough of the violation of procedure. Obviously, there was no appeal; there could be no motions for re-trial, review, or revision; and there could be no clemency procedure. No one could read, review, and evaluate the voluminous trial records in the two or three hours between sentence and execution. Some executions were postponed, not to allow time for review, but to allow time for further interrogation and torture. A man sentenced to death might be led to believe that if he gave a great amount of information, if he made himself valuable to his interrogators, he might save his life by drawing out the investigation to the end of the war which many expected to be more imminent than it turned out. Major Hans-Georg Klamroth and Adam von Trott zu Solz were sentenced to death on 15 August 1944—and the sentence was confirmed on the same day—but it was not carried out until 26 August. Fellgiebel, Colonel Georg Hansen, and Lieutenant Colonel Sadrozinski had to wait for about a month each between sentence and execution. Dr. Julius Leber was sentenced on 20 October 1944, and the sentence was confirmed the same day, but it was not carried out until 5 January 1945. Dr. Karl Goerdeler had to wait from 8 September 1944 until 2 February 1945. Stülpnagel, Linstow, Hofacker, and Finckh were sentenced to death on 30 August 1944, but Hofacker was not executed until 20 December.

As Kluge's role in the conspiracy had become clearer, the participation of Fieldmarshall Rommel could not be concealed either. He had joined the conspiracy early in 1944, but on 20 July he was in a field hospital with near-fatal wounds he had received when his car was strafed by Allied fighter bombers on 17 July. Kluge had taken his own life, but Rommel was recuperating in Herrlingen, near Ulm, at his home. Hitler wished to avoid putting on trial this most popular of all of his generals, and he decided to try to get rid of him in another way. On 14 October 1944 he sent Brigadier General Maisel and Major General Burgdorf to Herrlingen, and they had to give Rommel the choice between poisoning himself, in which case he was assured of a great public funeral in state, or being tried by the People's Court, in which case the consequences for his family, too, would be most regrettable. Rommel was probably convinced that he would not reach Berlin alive in either case. During the conversation in his home with Maisel and Burgdorf, the village of Herrlingen and, of course, Rommel's house were completely surrounded by SS troops. Rommel decided for poison in the hope that his family would be left in peace. He said good-bye to his family, and he told his wife: "In a quarter of an hour I shall be dead." Then he got into the waiting car with Burgdorf and Maisel. On the road to Ulm the car stopped, Burgdorf and Maisel got out and turned around discreetly, and Rommel took the poison. He was pronounced dead of an embolism upon his arrival in Ulm. The state funeral that had been promised was held in due course, with officials making sad faces and the widow wearing a heavy black veil so that her expression could not be seen.

The officially-recorded executions of conspirators ended only in April 1945, when the Red Army was about to occupy Berlin. In the Brandenburg Penitentiary the last 28 executions took place on 20 April, the *Führer's* birthday. An estimate of all executions in 1945 (four months), based on official records, gives a figure of 800 which is certainly much too low. (The Ministry of Justice recorded a total of 5,764 executions for 1944, and 5,684 for 1943.) The number of executions connected with 20 July 1944 is estimated at about 180.

Even while the official executions were still taking place, there were semi-official and unofficial ones which continued to the last day of the war. An example is the execution of the group around Canaris which seems to have been ordered by Hitler personally when Canaris' diary, whose contents greatly angered Hitler, was discovered in April 1945. On 7 April, SS Major General Huppenkothen arrived in Flossenbürg Concentration Camp with orders for the "elimination" of certain inmates and for the relocation of others, among whom were General Halder, Major General Thomas, Dr. Schacht, Dr. von Schuschnigg, General Freiherr von Falkenhausen, Captain Best of the British Secret Service, Lieutenant Wassilij Kokorin (Molotov's nephew), and Colonel von Bonin. On 6 April, Huppenkothen had stopped off at Sachsenhausen Concentration Camp where Dr. Hans von

Dohnanyi had been taken early on the same morning. Dohnanyi had managed to contract a serious infection with the aid of some food his wife had sent him, and he had been taken to a police hospital in Berlin. The physician there gave him drugs in order to incapacitate him completely so that a trial could not be held and his life might thus be saved. But such minor details made no difference now, and Dohnanyi, only half-conscious and lying on a stretcher, was "tried" by Huppenkothen in a few minutes. He was executed on 9 April. After the "trial" Huppenkothen had proceeded immediately to Flossenbürg near Weiden. SS Judge Dr. Otto Thorbeck, of Nuremberg, had been ordered to go there, too, and he was obliged to bicycle the last 16 miles from Weiden to Flossenbürg.

The memorial to Colonel von Stauffenberg, on the Bendlerstrasse in Berlin; annual commemorative services are held here, in the courtyard of the former Home Army Command Headquarters. The unsuccessful assassin was shot here, at a spot approximately in the lower left of this picture, on the night of 20 July.



Here everything was ready for what was euphemistically termed a court-martial. On the evening of 8 April, Canaris, Oster, the Military Judge Dr. Sack, the Intelligence Officers Captain Strünck and Captain Gehre, and Dr. Dietrich Bonhoeffer were sentenced to death. During the trial, at least Canaris was beaten severely, as he had been on earlier occasions. Early in the morning of 9 April 1945, the prisoners were hanged. On the same day, as the sound of artillery was coming closer, another group of prisoners was taken first to Schönberg Concentration Camp and then to Dachau. From here they began their trek to South Tyrol.

If Huppenkothen's operation could be termed semi-official, the method of disposing of a number of inmates of Moabit Prison in Berlin's Lehrterstrasse would have to be called unofficial. Dietrich Bonhoeffer's brother, Klaus, was being held here, and he had been waiting two months for his execution together with Dr. Rüdiger Schleicher; both were tortured frequently during this time. Many others in the special *Gestapo* section in this prison were also awaiting their fates, among them Dr. Andreas Hermes, Dr. Theodor Steltzer, Dr. Hans John, Friedrich Justus Perels, Wilhelm zur Nieden, Carl Marks, and Hans Ludwig Sierks. Eleven prisoners, who were suspected of lesser offenses or who had not been sentenced to death, were released on 21 April. Russian artillery shells were already hitting the building. Among those released were Dr. Walter Bauer, Arnold Bistrick, Georg Stöhr, Hermann Schilling, Dr. Plewe, Dr. Holm Erttel, Ferdinand Zeh, Dr. Heinz Haushofer (brother of Professor Albrecht Haushofer), and Theodor Baensch. Dr. Bauer went at once to the Ministry of Justice and sought out Councillor Dr. Eggensperger whom he knew well and beseeched him to order the release of all political prisoners still held in Lehrterstrasse.

It appeared that Minister of Justice Dr. Thierack had left Berlin during the night of 20/21 April, and that according to his instructions the Prosecutors' offices connected with the various courts in Berlin were to be responsible for acts of clemency. The Attorney General in Berlin was at the same time Special Assistant for judicial matters to Goebbels, who was still alive in the Bunker with Hitler. It was extremely dangerous in these last few days to do anything that Hitler, Goebbels, and others might not approve of since people were shot or hanged very quickly for very little—such as the expression of a desire for the end of the war. Dr. Eggensperger nevertheless went out of his way to save some of the prisoners. During the afternoon of 23 April, he managed to persuade a deputy of the Minister of Justice, Dr. Hesse, to drive over to Moabit Prison with him where they brought about the immediate release of all political prisoners. From there they tried to get to Lehrterstrasse, but most streets were impassable and the tank barriers were said to be closed. To be sure, they would have been too late to prevent the massacre which had already taken place there.

During the evening of 22 April, the *Gestapo* had begun dissolving its section in Lehrterstrasse Prison. To begin with, they released twenty-one prisoners, among

them Kraft Freiherr von Palombini, who had given Dr. Goerdeler shelter after 20 July, and Lothar Francke of Lufthansa, who had collaborated with Dr. Otto John and his brother Hans. Then, about 11 p.m., another sixteen prisoners were called up, and they were told that they were to be taken back to Prinz-Albrecht-Strasse to be released. Toward midnight, SS men led the sixteen away from Lehrterstrasse Prison in two groups of eight each. In the first group of eight were seven who had been sentenced to death—Dr. Rüdiger Schleicher, Dr. Klaus Bonhoeffer, Dr. Hans John, Carl Marks, Friedrich Justus Perels, Wilhelm zur Nieden, and Hans Ludwig Sierks—and one, Dr. Richard Künzer, who had not.

Toward one a.m. on 23 April, the two groups were taken to a nearby fair ground (*Ulap*). An SS man with pistol or submachine gun was walking behind every prisoner. A command was given, and simultaneously all prisoners were shot in the back of the neck.

In the second group of eight had been Colonel Wilhelm Staehle, Lieutenant Colonel Ernst Munzinger, Major Hans Victor von Salviati, Professor Albrecht Haushofer, a Russian prisoner of war named Sergej Sossimov, Carlos Moll, and the Communists Max Jennewein and Herbert Kosney. Kosney turned his head at the moment the SS man behind him fired. The bullet penetrated his neck and cheek, and he collapsed without losing consciousness and pretended to be dead. When the SS had left the scene, Kosney dragged himself to a dressing station of a militia unit. Upon his report the bodies of the first group of eight were found, but it took three weeks—Berlin was the front then—before the other group of eight could be located. Albrecht Haushofer was found, too, by his brother Heinz, still clutching a notebook with poems he had written in prison. (The poems have been published under the title *Moabit Sonnets*.)

For those who had remained behind in Lehrterstrasse Prison the uncertainty about their fate was not yet over. The former trade union leader Johannes Albers had been sentenced to death on 20 April 1945; on 23 April he was taken to Plötzensee for execution, but the Red Army freed him there. An engineer named Kurt Sorge, one Wilhelm Schmidt, and Captain Dr. Paul van Husen had the same experience. Some others were released on 23 April: Dr. Joachim Wrede, Hermann Moritz, Carl Bassen, Paul Herpich, and a Swedish SS second lieutenant. Then the entire Prison was turned over to the Justice Ministry officials—a bad omen, because the SS believed that they could not be made responsible for the murder of persons who were officially in the custody of someone else. The *Gestapo* and SS men left, and the worst seemed over; but a group of SS returned about one a.m. on 24 April. They took with them three of the prisoners—Albrecht Graf von Bernstorff, Karl Ludwig Freiherr von Guttenberg, and the trade union leader Ernst Schneppenhorst—whom they murdered just as another group of prisoners who had been held in Prinz-Albrecht-Strasse had already been murdered between 20 and 22 April.

Finally, on 25 April, the remaining Lehrterstrasse Prison inmates succeeded in persuading the Director of

the Prison that he could and should set them free. They told him that he would otherwise probably be shot by the Red Army.

Many of the children who had been imprisoned as members of the families of conspirators had to wait even longer for their liberation. Some fifty of them, including babies, had been taken to Bad Sachsa by the SS, and they were forbidden to use their own names there. After a time the older children learned that the original plan had been to keep them in Bad Sachsa for about two months while their parents and elder brothers and sisters were being “liquidated”; then they were to be placed in SS schools. The youngest ones would be put in SS men’s families. This plan had since been given up. A few of the children were released to boarding schools, and some of them were allowed to return home in October; but the others stayed. During February 1945, the grandchildren of Dr. Goerdeler were brought to Bad Sachsa: Rainer, 4, and Karl, 9 months. Rainer was weeping, and he told the young daughter of Dr. von Hofacker he wanted to go home.

On 12 April 1945, U.S. troops occupied Bad Sachsa, and the children were still there because an air raid had prevented their transfer to Buchenwald Concentration Camp. But they still could not go home. On 4 May, the new mayor took charge of them with the words: “You can use your real names again, and you must not be ashamed of them and of your fathers because they were heroes!”

Those of the children’s relatives who were still alive usually could not return home immediately either, or they did not know where the children were. There was no transportation, and travel between zones of occupation was generally prohibited. During the first weeks of occupation many local commanders prohibited trips of more than two miles from citizens’ homes. The mother of the Stauffenberg brothers was released by the *Gestapo* in Balingen in the fall of 1944, and she returned to Lautlingen, as did an aunt of the brothers, Gräfin von Uexkuell-Gyllenband. But they had to remain in Lautlingen under *Gestapo* surveillance until French troops occupied the village and it was not until June 1945 that Gräfin von Uexkuell-Gyllenband finally succeeded in bringing the children from Bad Sachsa back to Lautlingen. It was a lucky coincidence that a former French prisoner-of-war, who had been treated decently in Lautlingen, was now the local occupation commander, and that he made available a military vehicle, for the U.S. and French Military Government (as well as the International Red Cross) had declared themselves not competent for *German* children. Since Gräfin Uexkuell had some information about where she might find the children, she was now in a position to look for them. She arrived in Nordhausen near Bad Sachsa with the French military car, on 6 June, a day before the Red Army was expected to take over the occupation of Nordhausen. On 7 June, Gräfin von Uexkuell and the children travelled westward to be re-united with the other survivors of the families of the 20 July conspirators.