

German Military Resistance and the Stauffenberg Putsch of July 20, 1944



Adolf Hitler

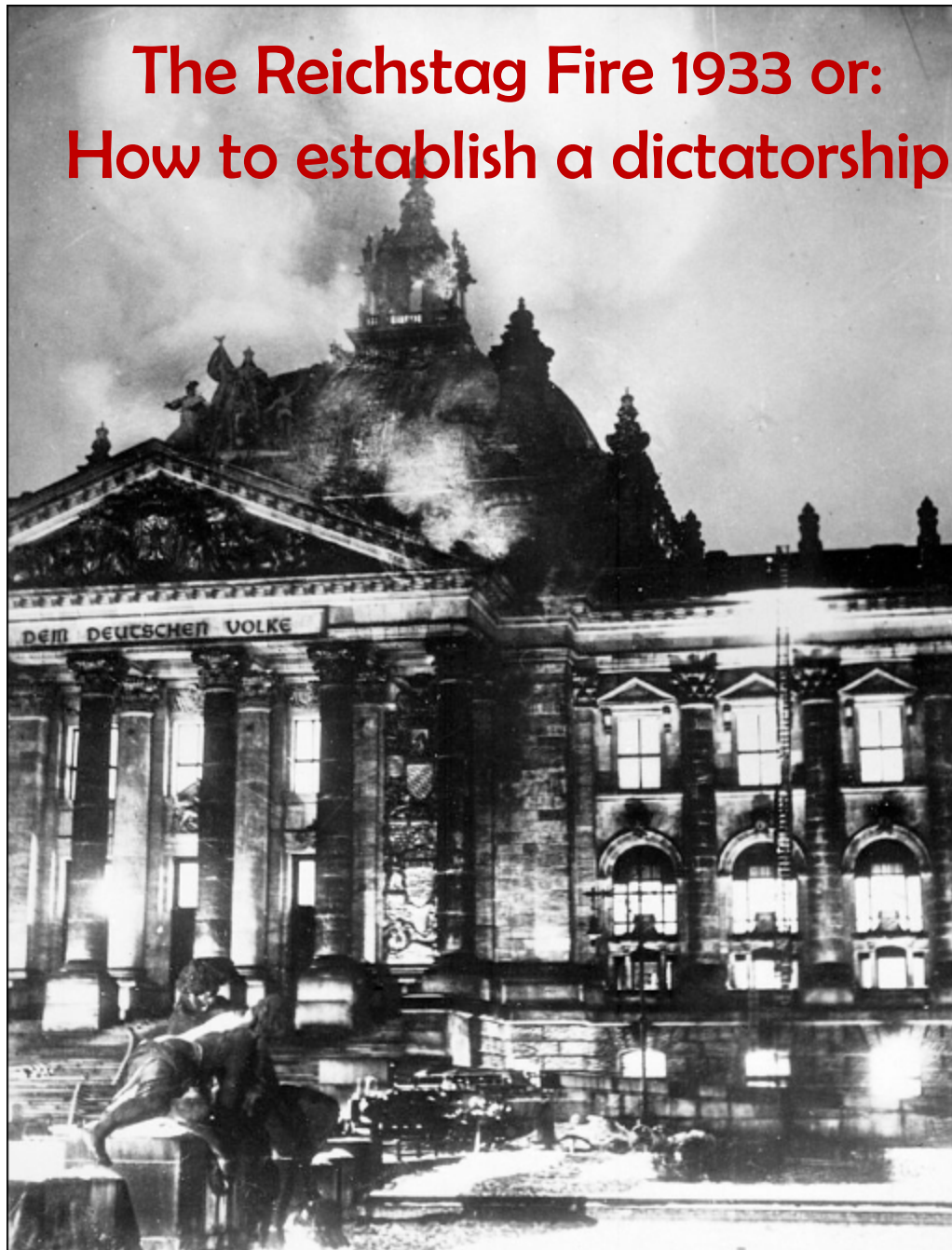
Braunau, April 20, 1939 – Berlin, April 30, 1945

Hindenburg looks like he knows what is coming...



**Hitler becomes Reich Chancellor with Reich President's
von Hindenburg's consent on January 31, 1933**

The Reichstag Fire 1933 or: How to establish a dictatorship



Hindenburg dies on April 2, 1934 and his funeral is organized with much pomp and circumstance. This is to cover up Hitler's power grab to fuse the Chancellor's and the President's offices and becomes "Der Fuehrer".





One of the most frightening pictures demonstrating the extent to which Hitler had established his totalitarian system a few months into his reign (from the Resistance Memorial Museum in Berlin)



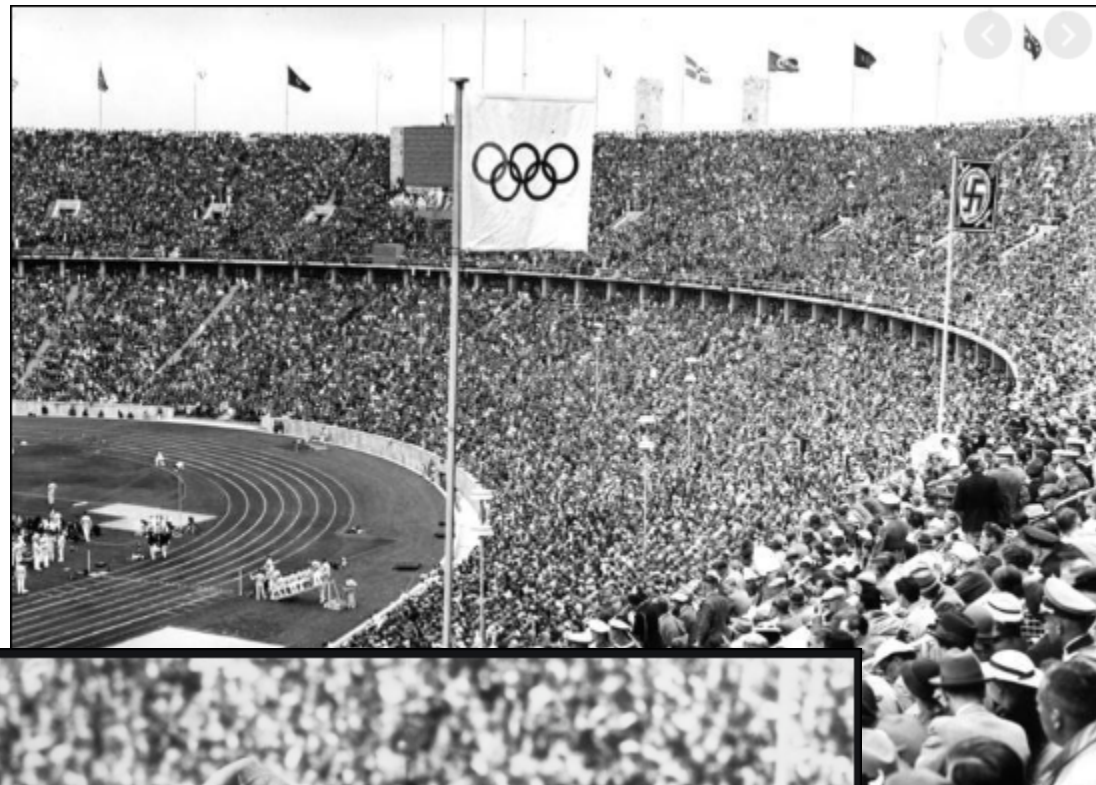
The “Man in the Crowd”, highlighted in Isabel Wilkerson, *Caste*, DMA Book Club November 2020, and at the Widerstand Museum in Berlin



3500 Gestapo prisons, police prisons and concentration camps during the Hitler regime



Perversion of the German Legal System after 1933



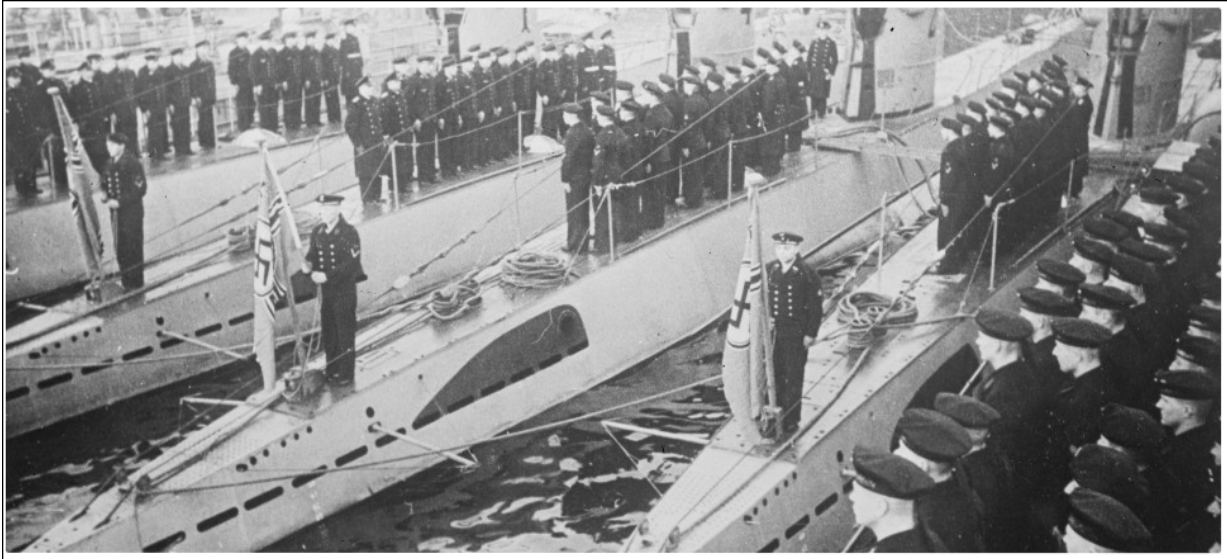
**Olympics 1936 -
awarded to Berlin
before Hitler, but
used by the Fuehrer
to enhance his
popularity.**



1933 to 1938 – an uneasy alliance between the Army and Hitler. Hitler gives the generals their toys because he wants to go to war; the general accept but think they can stop him before that happens.

The Army has the power of men and weapons, Hitler has the political power and the support of the German people – who will win? (Well, we know the answer!)





1935 to 1938: A growing conflict between those generals who want war, and those who don't, divide the military leadership and "the potential unity of the Armed Forces which could have served to restrain Hitler".

(Corelli Barnett, *Hitler's Generals*)

1938 – The Army Command discusses an overthrow of Hitler, Hitler overthrows the Army Command instead, replacing the Reich Ministry of War and the next two highest officers (as well as others)

Before...



OKH – Oberkommando des Heeres (Supreme Command of the Army)

Field Marshal Werner von Blomberg
Reich Minister of War

May 21, 1935 to January 27, 1938

Died March 14, 1946

(Natural causes when serving as a witness in the Nuremberg Trials)



General Oberst Werner von Fritsch
Supreme Commander of the German Army

June 1, 1935 to February 4, 1938

Died September 22, 1939

(Suicide by enemy fire)



General Oberst Ludwig Beck
Chief of the OKH General Staff

July 1, 1935 to August 31, 1938

Died July 21, 1944

(Shot after the failed 1944 Putsch)



1938 – The Army Command discusses an overthrow of Hitler, Hitler overthrows the Army Command instead, replacing the Reich Ministry of War and the next two highest officers (as well as others)

...and after:



Hitler as Supreme Commander

OKW – Oberkommando der Wehrmacht (High Command of the Armed Forces)

Field Marshal Wilhelm Keitel

Chief of the Armed Forces High Command

February 4, 1938 to May 8, 1945

Died October 16, 1946

Executed by Hanging in the Nuremberg Trials

Field Marshal Walther von Brauchitsch

Supreme Commander of the German Army

February 4, 1938 to December 19, 1941

Forced Retirement after the failed attack on Moscow

Died October 18, 1948

of pneumonia while British prisoner of war

General of the Artillery Franz Halder

Chief of the OKW General Staff

September 1, 1938 to September 23, 1942

Forced Retirement after Stalingrad

Died April 2, 1972



Kristallnacht, Programs, Deportations, Death Camps



1938 – The Army Command discusses an overthrow of Hitler, Hitler overthrows the Army Command instead, replacing the Reich Ministry of War and the next two highest officers (as well as others)

The Supreme Command in the Language of the Landser (Common Soldier)



“GröFaZ” - Grösster Feldherr aller Zeiten
(Greatest Military Leader of All Times)
aka “Der Böhmishe Gefreite” (the Bohemian Coporal)



“LaKeitel” as in Lakei (lackey)

The rest of the OKW (Supreme Command): “Nick-Esel”
(nodding donkey) Oder “Ja-Sager” (Yes Men)



...and of course Goering “Lametta Heini”
(Tinsel Heini) or “Meier” (“call me Meier”)



1938er »Septemberverschwörer«



Ludwig Beck
1880-1944



Carl Goerdeler
1884-1945



Wilhelm Canaris
1887-1945



Walther von Brauchitsch
1881-1948



Hans von Dohnanyi
1902-1945



Carl von Stülpnagel
1886-1944



Hans Oster
1887-1945



Franz Halder
1884-1972

**The aborted September Putsch (Operation Green)
(the last time von Brauchitsch and Halder show backbone)**



The wisdom we owe to hindsight gives much support to the thesis that never again in the history of the German Opposition did circumstances so favor it as in September 1938.”

see Harold C. Deutsch, *The Conspiracy against Hitler in the Twilight War*, 1968



“The authority of the charismatic leader who drives the crazy state rests largely on a myth of invincibility. That myth may best be punctuated by the outside. This century has not been kind to the notion that fanaticism must collapse from within. It must be destroyed from without.”

*see “**The Point of it All**”, Chapter “Keeping the World at Bay”, by Charles Krauthammer*

“The Germans are not conspirators. Conspirators require everything they lack: patience, knowledge of men, psychology, tact. No, they will all be locked up, disappear in camps.”

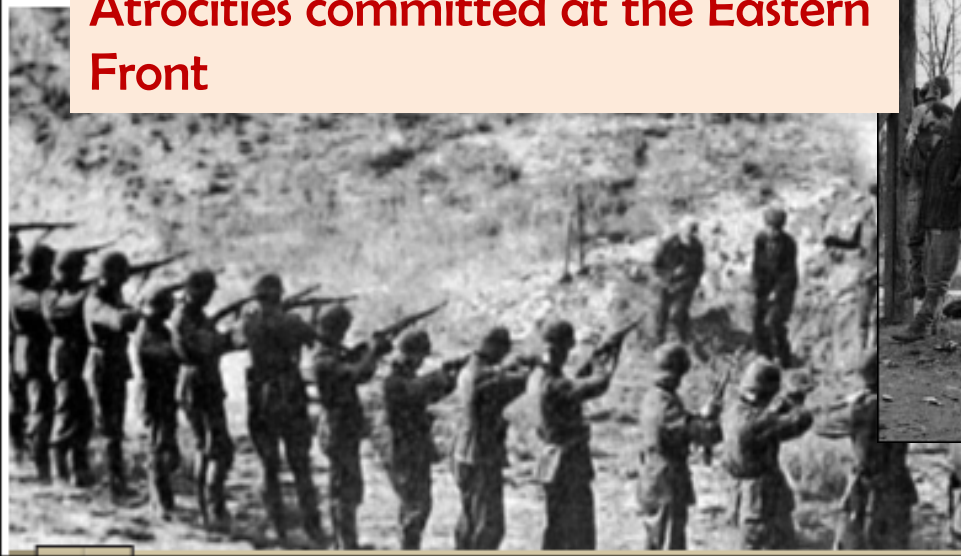
(Italian Ambassador to Berlin Bernardo Attolico in 1939; cit. in Harold c. Deutsch, *The Conspiracy against Hitler in the Twilight War*)



Hitler in Czechoslovakia in 1938



The Kommissar Befehle – German Atrocities committed at the Eastern Front



Management 101: High turmoil at the top invariably leads to a failure of the organization...

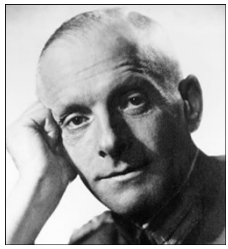


- Until the end of the war, Hitler appointed 17 field marshals, fired 10 and murdered 3 of them (in connection with the Putsch of July 20, 1944).
- Only one field marshal managed to keep his position until the end of the war (Wilhelm Keitel; tried and executed at Nuremberg).



- Of 36 Colonel Generals, 18 were dismissed, 5 died as a result of the Putsch or were dishonorably discharged.
- Only three Colonel Generals survived the war in their positions.

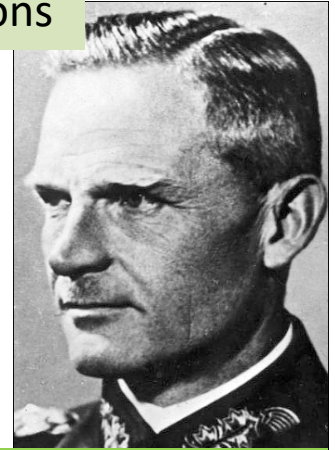
...while in the meantime it prevents dissent in the ranks.



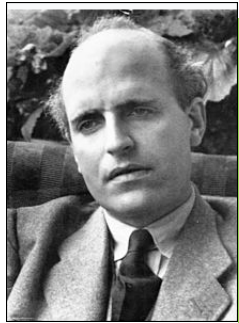
Opposition at Abwehr (Military Intelligence) Canaris and Oster



Former leaders of The Socialist Party And Trade Unions



Kreisauer Kreis: Goerdeler, von Molke, and many other civil opposition leaders



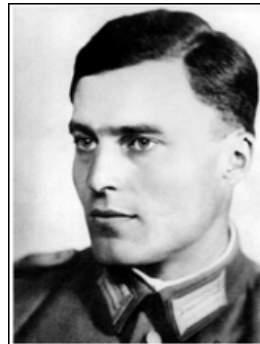
Opposition Group In the Foreign Office, von Trott zu Solz, Bruecklmeier, von Haeften and many others



Former and active members of the Military, Ludwig Beck, Field Marshal von Witzleben, later von Stauffenberg, Olbricht, von Quirnheim, von Haeften Von Stuelpnagel, and many others



Berlin Police and Military Command von Hase Count von Helldorf, and Many others



Given the lack of support by Hitler's newly appointed military leadership, plans of the Widerstand were eventually directed to the *Ersatzheer* (Reserve Army or Home Army).



Number of Personnel in Arms:

Year Army in the Field Home Army Total

Jahr	Feldheer	Ersatzheer	Summe
1939	2.741.000	996.000	3.737.000
1940	3.650.000	900.000	4.550.000
1941	3.800.000	1.200.000	5.000.000
1942	4.000.000	1.800.000	5.800.000
1943	4.250.000	2.300.000	6.550.000
1944	4.000.000	2.510.000	6.510.000
1945	3.800.000	1.500.000	5.300.000

Note: At the end of the war, there were 10 million German soldiers POWs.



The caption says that near the end of the war, some soldiers didn't receive cigarettes and Cognac for valor, but cookies and chocolates (12. German SS Panzer Division).

Der Kommandeur 12. SS Panzerdivision änderte die Versorgung. Mit Weinbrand und Zigaretten konnten die Kindersoldaten nichts anfangen, für sie kamen Kekse und Schokolade.



**My Grandfather's Brother: General d. Inf.
Joachim von Stuelpnagel (1880 – 1968)**



Kronprinz Wilhelm von Preussen

Caecilienhof in Potsdam



Generaloberst Friedrich Fromm

Head of the Reserve Army 1939 to 1944

or: The wrong man, in the wrong place, at the wrong time



**General Major Henning
von Tresckow
Jan. 10, 1901 – July 21, 1944**

**Conspirators from Infantry
Regiment 9 - I.R 9 -
in Potsdam**



Lieutenant Colonel Hasso von Boehmer
Major Axel Freiherr von dem Bussche-Streithorst
Captain Dr. Hans Fritzsche
Lieutenant Colonel Helmuth von Gottberg
Lieutenant Colonel Ludwig Freiherr von Hammerstein
Lieutenant Colonel (res.) Carl-Hans Graf von Hardenberg
Lieutenant General Paul von Hase
Lieutenant Ewald Heinrich von Kleist
Colonel Hans Otfried von Linstow
Captain Friedrich Karl Klausing
Major (res.) Ferdinand Freiherr von Lünick ☞
Major (res.) Herbert Meyer
Lieutenant Georg-Sigismund von Oppen
Colonel Alexis Freiherr von Roenne ☞
Lieutenant Colonel (res.) Fritz-Dietlof von der Schulenburg
Lieutenant Colonel Gerd von Tresckow ☞
Major General Henning von Tresckow
Lieutenant Colonel i. G. Hans-Alexander von Voß ☞
Captain (res.) Achim Freiherr von Willisen
Colonel Claus von Stauffenberg
Captain (res.) Richard von Weizsäcker

Official Valkyrie Contingency Plan

- In North Mythology, Valkyrie is a mystic female figure who takes the fallen warriors to their afterlife.
- The plan was approved and sanctioned by Hitler himself.
- The details of the plan were developed by General d.Inf. Olbricht, Major General von Treschkow, Col. Count von Stauffenberg, Lt. Col. von Voss (son-in-law of General Joachim von Stuelpnagel) and others at *Ersatzheer* (Reserve Army) headquarters at Bendlerblock.
- The title of the Hollywood film “Valkyrie” is misleading since the movie mostly deals with the assassination attempt and not the strategic plan which had long preceded it.
- The plan ensures the continuity of government in case of a putsch against Nazi leadership from forces within Germany. It contemplates a breakdown of government due to allied bombing or an uprising of parts of the forced labor force of 7 million (!).
- In an emergency, prepared orders would be issued to the *Ersatzheer* (Reserve Army) to maintain law and order within the German territory.

The Conspirators' Version of the Valkyrie Plan

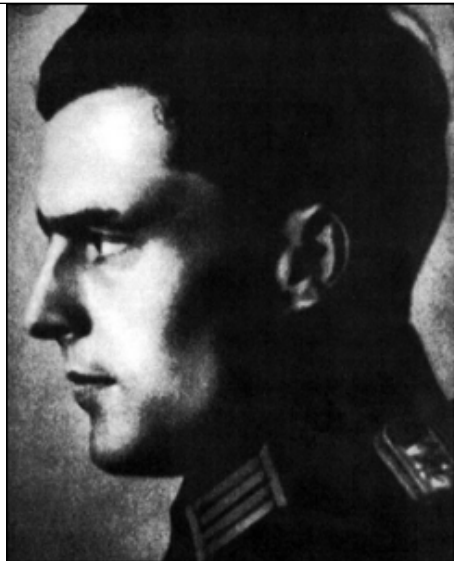
- The officers developing the official contingency plan prepared a secret version to “highjack” the intent and design of the strategy to bring down the Nazi regime.
- Following a planned assassination of Hitler, the putsch would be blamed on the SS and the Nazi leadership.
- The death of Hitler rather than his arrest was required to free German soldiers from their oath to the Fuehrer.
- Via a system of telegrams issued at Bendlerblock, the Reserve Army was to be mobilized throughout the country.
- The mobilized Reserve Army was to arrest local SS and local Nazi bosses and complete the putsch.
- The first attempt at the execution of the plan was made on March 13, 1943. All following assassination attempts as a scheme named by von Treschkow: “**Operation Spark**” (**Operation Flash**).

Assassination Attempts 1939 to 1944

- Preceding the attempts by the Military, on November 8, 1939, at 21.20 hours, a time bomb set by workman Georg Elser exploded at the Buergerbraeu Keller in Munich, killing 7 NSDAP leaders and injuring 60. Hitler had left 10 minutes earlier.
- In the summer of 1941, General Henning von Treschkow with Fabian von Schlabrendorff and others had planned to arrest Hitler on a visit to the Army Group Center, but Hitler arrived with a large escort of SS guards. It is then that the conspirators decided that Hitler needed to die rather than arrested.
- On March 13, 1943, von Treschkow and others in the first comprehensive attempt under **Operation Flash** placed two bombs on Hitlers plane but the bomb failed to explode due to very low temperatures in the cargo area. The bombs were retrieved and used on July 20, 1944.
- Baron von Gersdorff planned to blow himself up with Hitler on March 21, 1943 at an inspection of weapons in Berlin, but Hitler left the exhibition after only 10 minutes and Gersdorff had to deactivate the timed fuse.
- In the Fall of 1943, Axel von dem Bussche was prepared to kill himself with Hitler at a presentation of new uniforms. The meeting was cancelled when the inventory of uniforms was destroyed in an air raid.



Schloss Jettingen



Oberst i.G. Claus Schenck Graf von Stauffenberg
Nov. 15, 1907 – July 21, 1944

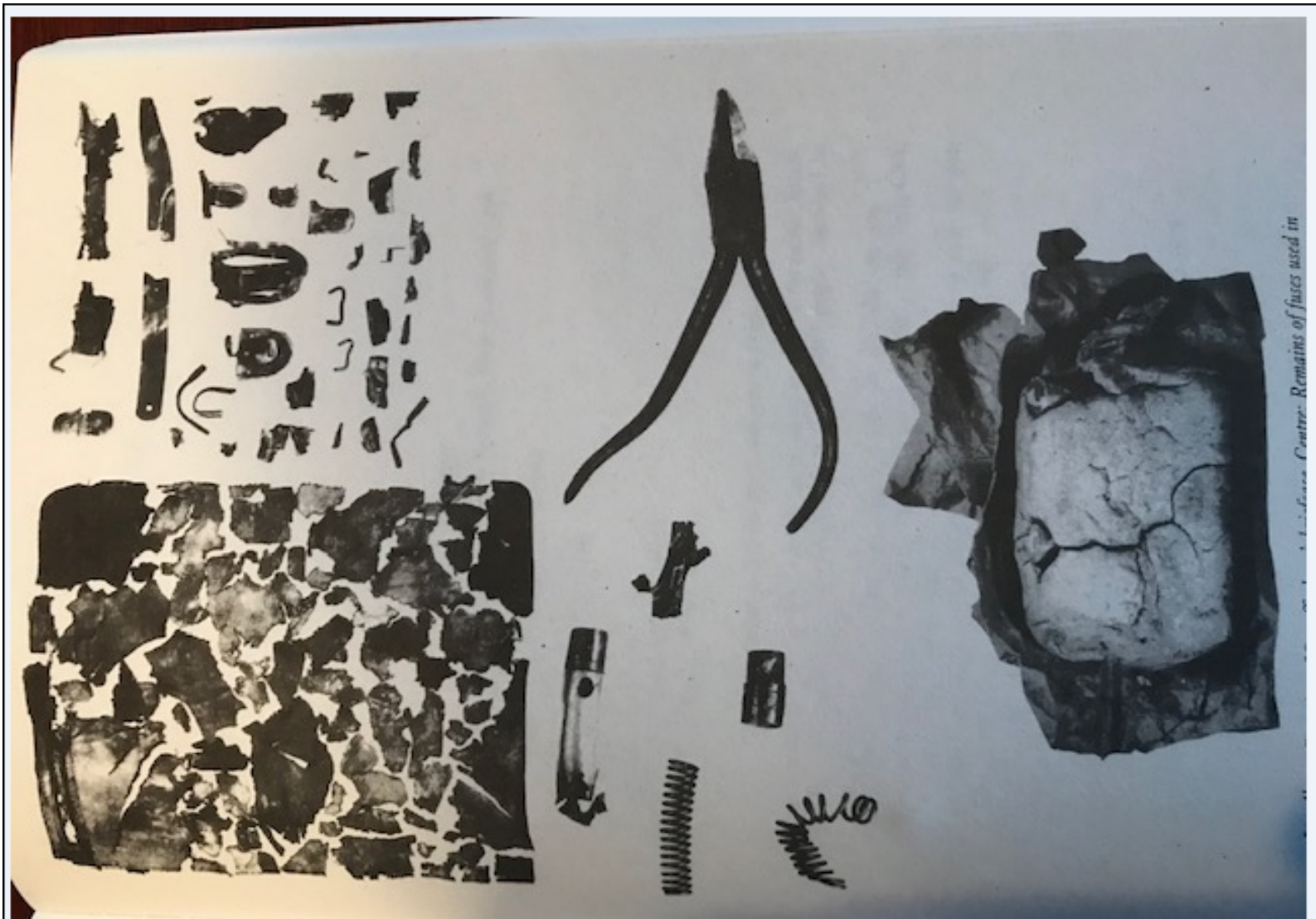


Der alte Öp

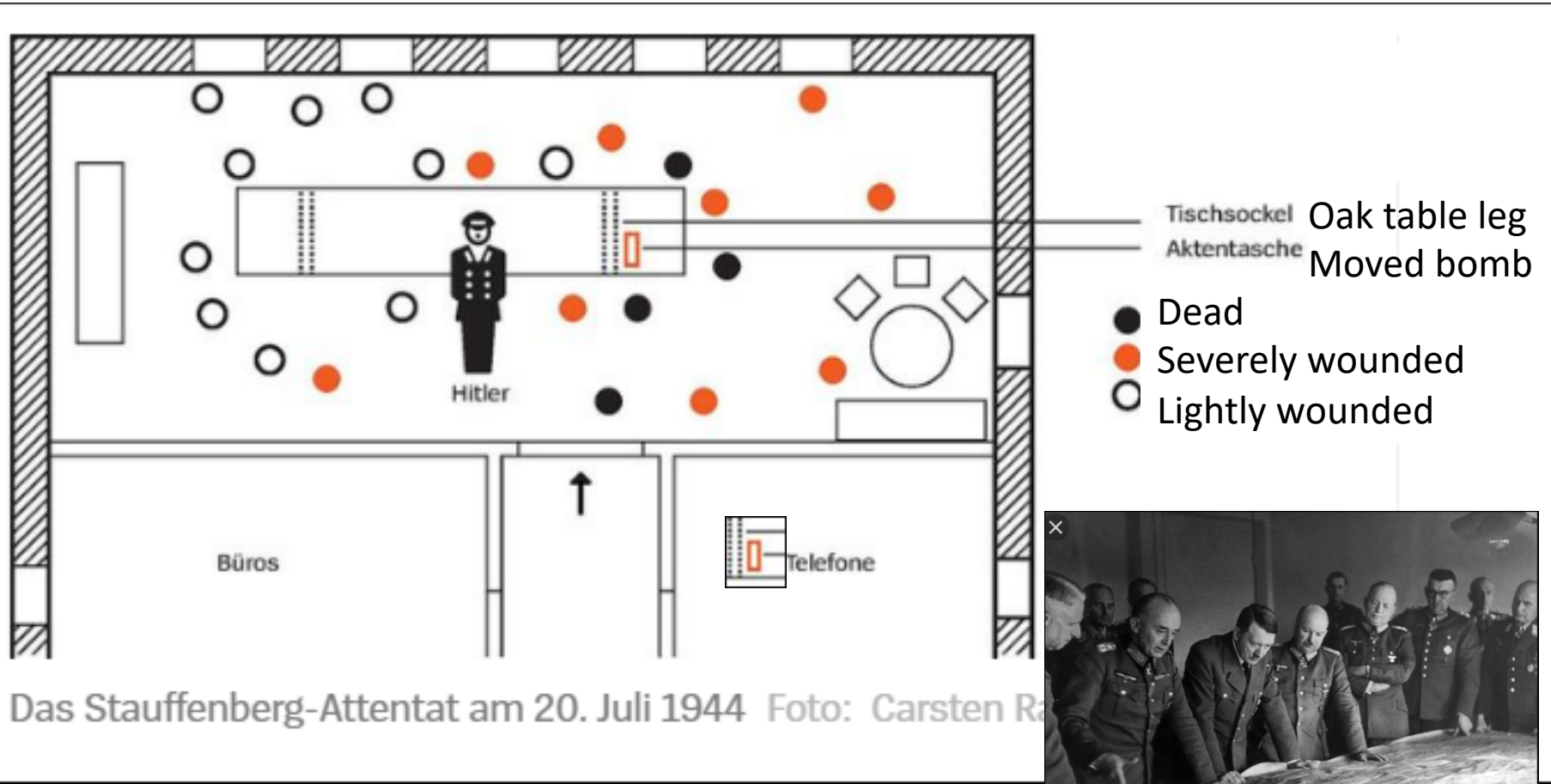
Lelo Reichsgraefin von Ingelheim, nee Schenck Graefin von Stauffenberg



July 20, Wolfsschanze in East Prussia



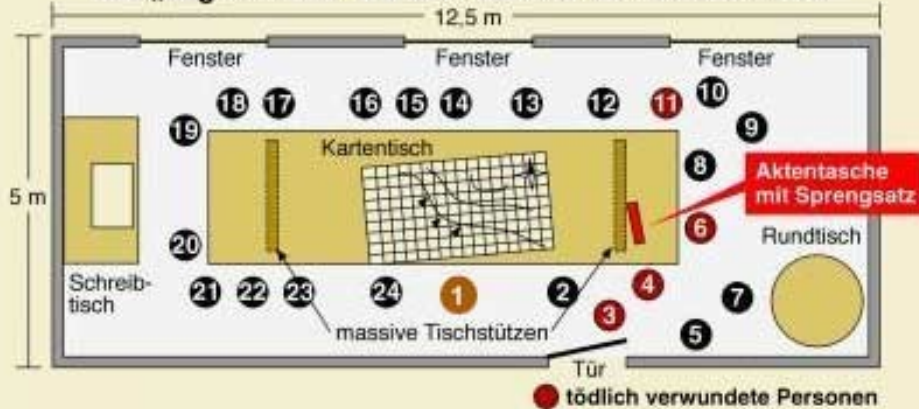
Reassembled by the Gestapo: Briefcase, remains of fuses, and the pliers Stauffenberg used to set the ignition. The discarded second bom to the right.



- Stauffenberg had left the bomb to the left of the oak table leg/partition.
- What we know about the people who died after the bomb was moved, Hitler may very well not have survived.
- Try to image the rest of the 20th Century if Hitler had died on July 20, 1944!

Das Hitler-Attentat vom 20. Juli 1944

Die „Lagebaracke“ auf dem Gelände der Wolfsschanze



- 1 Adolf Hitler
- 2 Generalleutnant Heusinger (Chef der Operationsabteilung des Heeres)
- 3 General Korten (Generalstabschef der Luftwaffe)
- 4 Oberst Brandt
- 5 General Bodenschatz (Verbindungsoffizier Görings bei Hitler)
- 6 Generalleutnant Schmundt (Chefadjudant der Wehrmacht)
- 7 General Buhle (Chef des Heeresstabes)
- 8 Konteradmiral von Puttkamer (Marineadjudant Hitlers)
- 9 Heinrich Berger (Stenograf)
- 10 Generalmajor Scherff
- 11 Konteradmiral Voß
- 12 SS-Hauptsturmführer Günsche (Adjutant Hitlers)
- 13 Ministerialdirigent von Sonnleithner
- 14 General Warlimont
- 15 Generaloberst Jodi (Chef des Wehrmachtführungsstabes)
- 16 Generalfeldmarschall Keitel (Chef des Oberkommandos der Wehrmacht)
- 17 weitere Offiziere von Wehrmacht und SS
- 18 weitere Offiziere von Wehrmacht und SS
- 19 weitere Offiziere von Wehrmacht und SS
- 20 weitere Offiziere von Wehrmacht und SS
- 21 weitere Offiziere von Wehrmacht und SS
- 22 weitere Offiziere von Wehrmacht und SS
- 23 weitere Offiziere von Wehrmacht und SS
- 24 weitere Offiziere von Wehrmacht und SS



Quelle: Bundeszentr. für polit. Bildung



Hitler and Staff at Wolfsschanze (Wolf's Lair)



Wolf's Lair today



© picture-alliance.com



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PAGES

Bendler Block in Berlin,
Reserve Army Headquarters at
Bendlerstrasse, now Stauffenbergstrasse





**Colonel General Fromm, still
the wrong man, in the
wrong place, at the wrong
time**



Heinrich Himmler wurde Befehlshaber des Ersatzheeres

Paris during the 20th of July Coup



**General d. Inf. Karl-Heinrich von
Stuepnagel,
High Commander of Occupied France
1942 to 1944**



**Lt. Colonel Caesar von Hofacker
(Luftwaffe)
on the Staff of von Stuepnagel
and a first cousin of Stauffenberg**

Timeline July 20, 1944, Paris

- July 7 – Stuepnagel’s emissary, Lt.Col. Caesar von Hofacker meets with the Commander East of the German Army, Erwin Rommel at LaRoche-Guyon near Paris to obtain his commitment to the coup.
- July 17 – Rommel is injured by enemy fire in a strafing event.
- July 18 – Rommel is replaced by Field Marshal Guenther von Kluge.
- Afternoon of July 20, Hofacker in Paris receives the code “Uebung” (drill) from Reserve Army Headquarters in Berlin (Stauffenberg) by wire.
- Shortly thereafter – Hofacker telephones Stauffenberg to confirm Hitler’s death, informs Stuepnagel and commences the operation designed to “counteract a coup by the SS” that results in the arrest of 1,200 SD, Gestapo and SS without a shot being fired.
- Evening – Stuepnagel and Hofacker travel 70 km to LaRoche-Guyon to meet with von Kluge and receive his commitment; Kluge telephones Hitler and refuses.
- After midnight, Stuepnagel and Hofacker return to Paris and initiate the release of the SD, Gestapo and SS staff as ordered by von Kluge.
- July 21, Meeting between Stuepnagel and staff and SS and staff with an agreement to declare the events of the last 24 hours “a drill”.
- Stuepnagel departs with his driver to Berlin, stops near Compiègne and attempts suicide. He is now blind, but not fatally injured.
- Driver alerts local authorities and arranges for transport to the hospital and a few weeks later to Berlin to stand trial.



At left, Pierre Laval, Head of the Vichy Government under Petain

with two high ranking SS officers



**The Hotel Majestic, Headquarters of
the German High Command 1942 to
1944 (today the Peninsula Hotel)**



Feldmarschall von Kluge with his boss in early 1944 (Hitler will murder him in a few months)

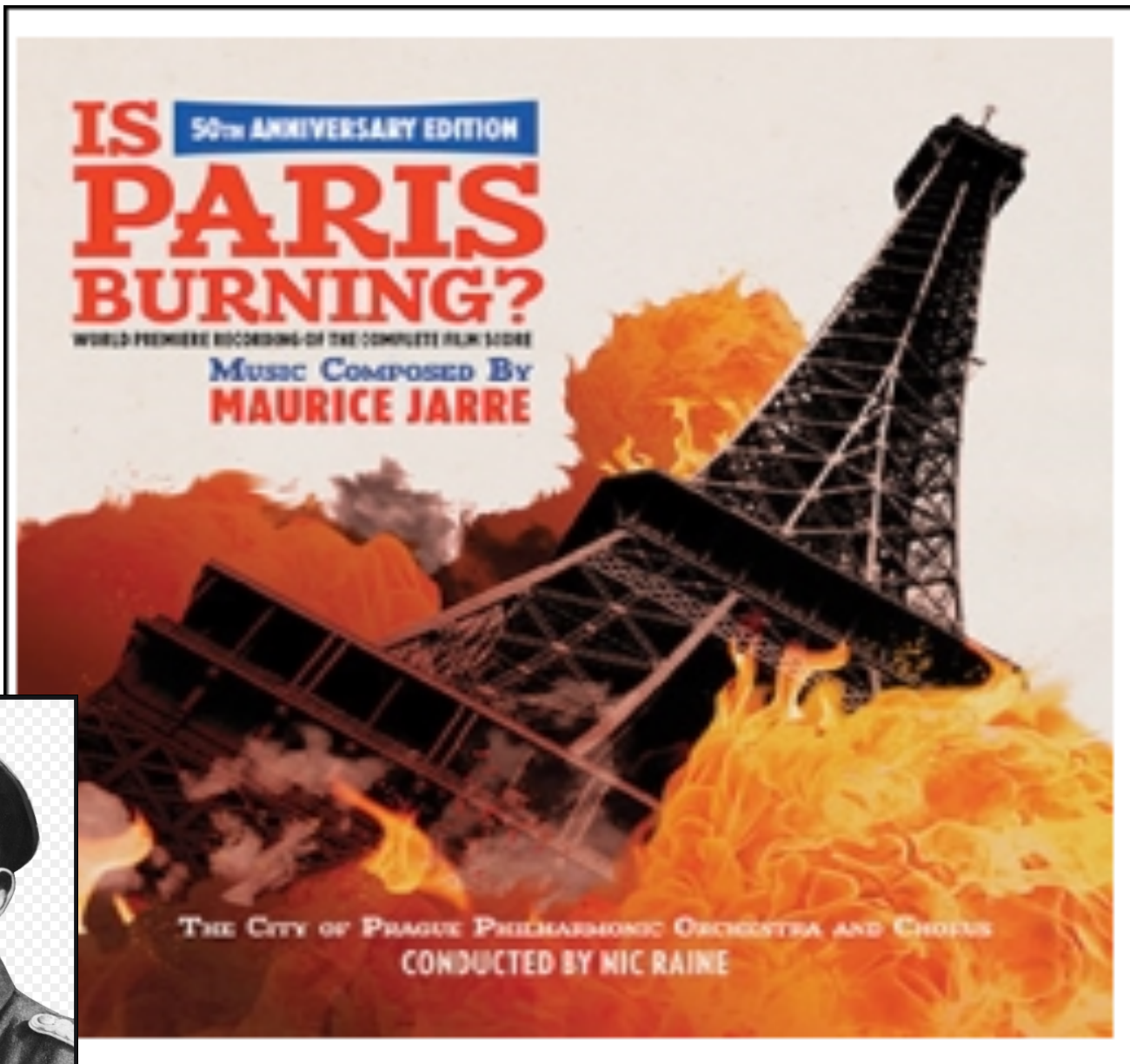


Stuelpnagel with Rommel in France in 1944 (both will die within months after the Putsch)

The 20th Century at Crossroads

We do not know how Rommel would have acted, but we know this:

- Rommel was very popular in Germany and could have moved public opinion in favor of the opposition and against Hitler.
- He was also well respected by the Allies and had already begun to reach out to them. He was ideally suited to sue for peace.
- von Hofacker once estimated that the Putsch had only a 10 percent chance of success, but consider this:
- There had been 2.8 million German casualties (civil and military) during the almost five years between the beginning of the war and the 20th of July 1944. In the remaining nine and a half months, 4.8 million Germans died.
- Joachim Fest has calculated that Germans died at a rate of 1,588 per day during the first five years and at a rate of 16,641 during the last nine and a half months of the war.
- Some have said that of the 60 million civilian victims and soldiers of WW II in all of the countries involved in the European theater, perhaps half - 30 million! - lost their lives after July 1944.



Is Paris Burning? A 1966 French horror movie depicting Hitler's monstrous plan

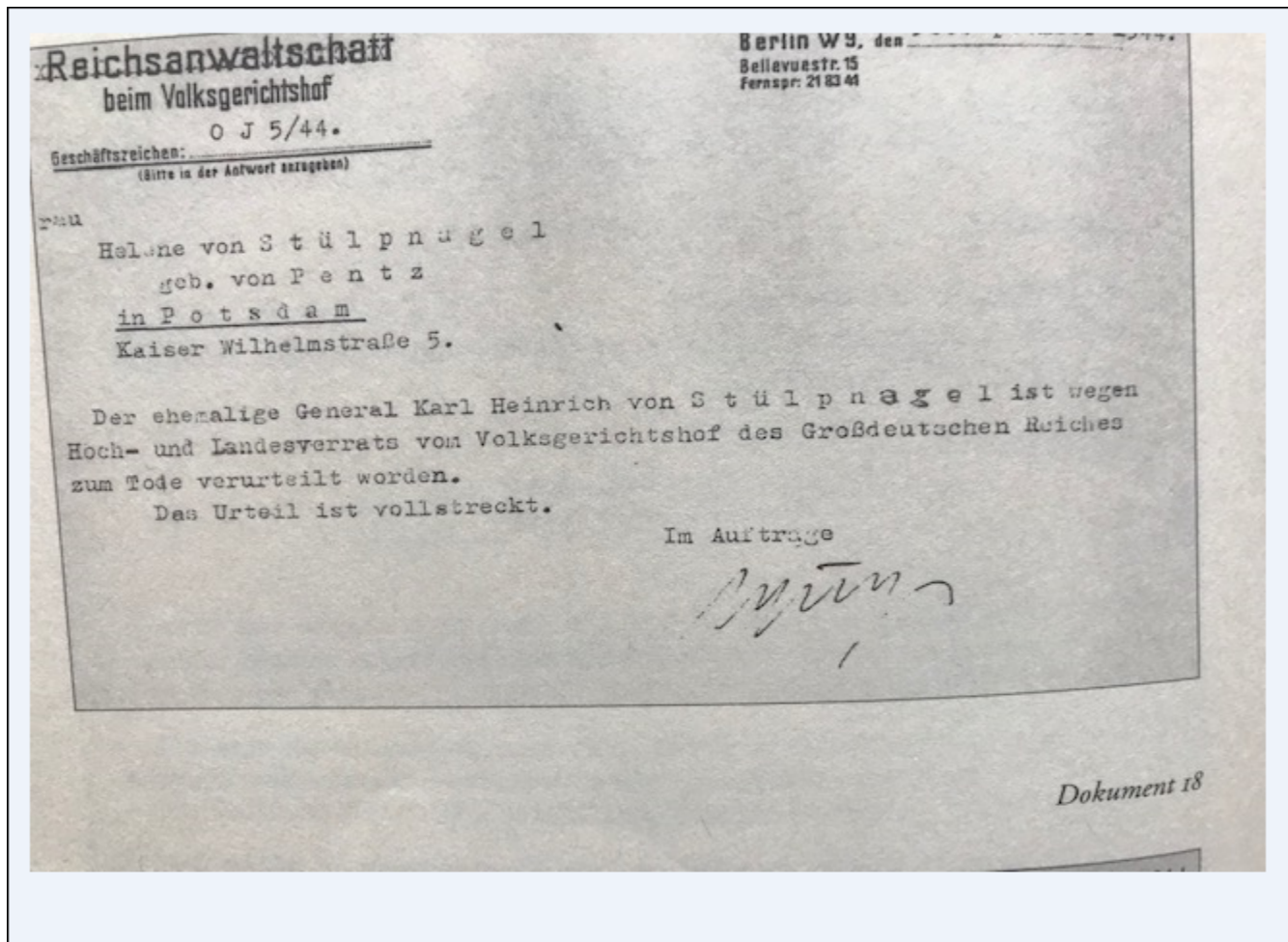


Feldmarschall von Witzleben, earmarked to become the Minister of War after a successful putsch, tortured in prison and humiliated in court.

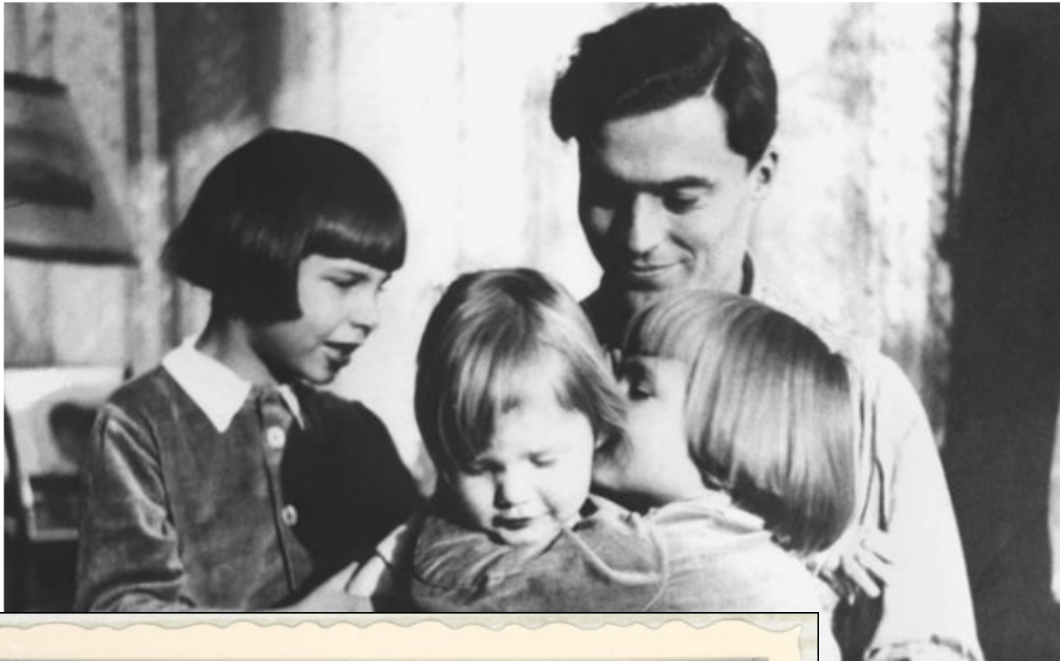




Museum Deutscher Widerstand, Berlin



Letter by the People's Court announcing the execution of the "former general" Karl-Heinrich von Stuelpnagel to his widow (my aunt) Helene. The letter arrives on September 30; unknown to her until she receives the letter, the execution took place on August 30. A bill for "services rendered" by the medical and executioner's staff attending the execution/murder would follow.



Stauffenberg's children and wife Nina



Last picture of the von Hofacker family before the failed coup and his arrest



The Legacies of the 20th of July 1944



Gebirgstruppe (Bavarian Mountain Troops) of the German Bundeswehr, a peacekeeping force



Graf-Stauffenberg Barracks of the Bundeswehr in Sigmaringen, Baden-Wuerttemberg



The Putsch of July 20, 1944 marks the end of Prussian Militarism





Deutsche Olympia-Party in Mexiko, Party-Gäste*: Leberkäs im Souterrain

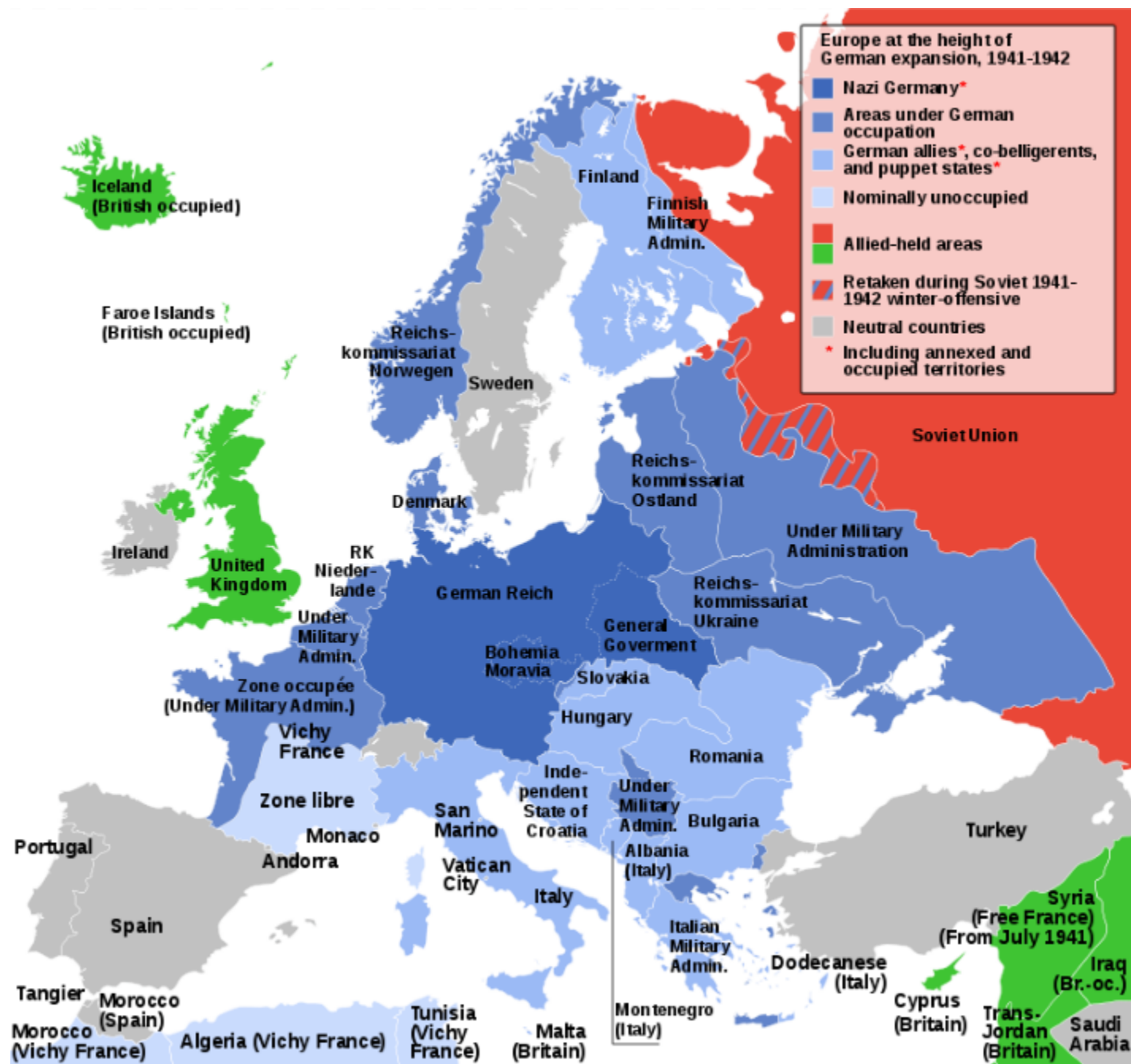
A testimony to the rapid changes of the 20th Century: My father, born under the Kaiser, served in the Wehrmacht (here in Russia), in the German Border Guard (here making headlines as president of its union) and in the Bundeswehr and NATO (here with his friend Jesse Owens)

Then Abraham approached him and said: “Will you sweep away the righteous with the wicked? What if there are fifty righteous people in the city? Will you really sweep it away and not spare the place for the sake of the fifty righteous people in it? Far be it from you to do such a thing—to kill the righteous with the wicked, treating the righteous and the wicked alike. Far be it from you! Will not the Judge of all the earth do right?”

The LORD said, “If I find fifty righteous people in the city of Sodom, I will spare the whole place for their sake.”

Gensis 18:20 23 to 26

- The Following Slides are for the Question and Answer Session **if needed**





- The history of the German military resistance is the history of the endless struggle of the Dedicated Opposition outside of the High Command (OKW) to persuade the officers in the High Command and in commanding positions in the field to conduct a coup-d'état.
- The support of the higher-ups remained almost always conditional (“if Hitler is dead, then yes...”).
- These efforts heated up from time to time immediately preceding Hitler’s next military adventure but never fully succeeded.
- 60 million people lost their lives in Europe because the group of conspirators remained too small and lacked support from the High Command and commanding officers in the field.
- Ultimately all of the Dedicated Opposition and many of the wavering commanders perished.

„Es ist Zeit, daß jetzt etwas getan wird. Derjenige allerdings, der etwas zu tun wagt, muß sich bewußt sein, daß er wohl als Verräter in die deutsche Geschichte eingehen wird. Unterläßt er jedoch die Tat, dann wäre er ein Verräter vor seinem eigenen Gewissen.“

— Claus Schenk Graf von Stauffenberg

“The time for action is now. However, the individual who dares to act now needs to recognize that German history may treat him as traitor. If he fails to act, though, he becomes a traitor to his own conscience.”

Research

Some sources:

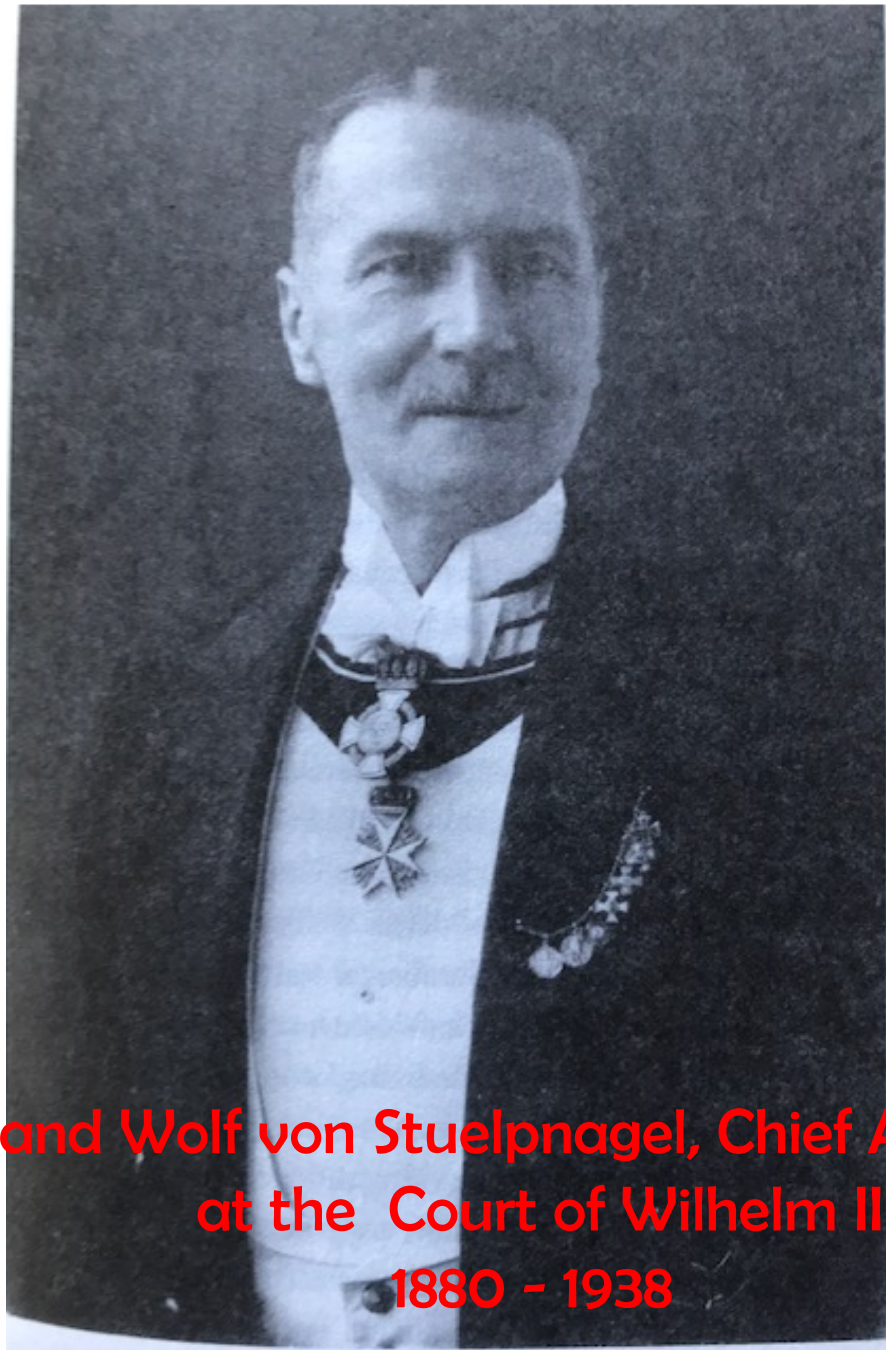
- *The Conspiracy against Hitler in the Twilight War*, by Harold C. Deutsch, 1968
- *Plotting Hitler's Death*, by Joachim Fest, 1970
- *Der deutsche Widerstand gegen Hitler*, by Wolfgang Benz, 2nd Edition 2019 (*German Resistance against Hitler*)
- Gedenkstaette Deutscher Widerstand, Stauffenbergstrasse, Berlin (*Memorial Museum German Resistance*)
- Dr. phil. Ruediger von Voss, Honorary Head of the Society to Remember the 20th of July, currently also Senior Advisor to the Witzleben-Society (son of Lt. Col. i.G. Hans-Alexander von Voss, who committed suicide after the 20th of July Putsch to escape the Gestapo; grandson of General der Infanterie Joachim von Stuelpnagel)



Schloss Greifenstein

**Oma und
Onkel Moppel**





**Ferdinand Wolf von Stuelpnagel, Chief Administrator
at the Court of Wilhelm II
1880 - 1938**



**My Grandfather's boss
Kaiser Wilhelm**



**Gestapo Headquarters at
Rue des Saussaies**



Joachim von Stuelpnagel with his son and son-in-law and conspirator Col. Hans-Alexander von Voss who committed suicide after July 20, 1944 to escape the Gestapo

**Dr. phil. Ruediger von Voss, born 1939 in Potsdam, Germany, Attorney, Author, Historian
Grandson of General d.Inf. Joachim von Stuelpnagel
Son of Co-Conspirator Lt.Col. Hans Alexander von Voss (small picture right corner)
Long time Head of the Association to Commemorate July 20, 1944 and currently senior member of the Field Marshal von Witzleben Society
Cousin, brother-in-law and friend of today's presenter**