

CPYRGHT

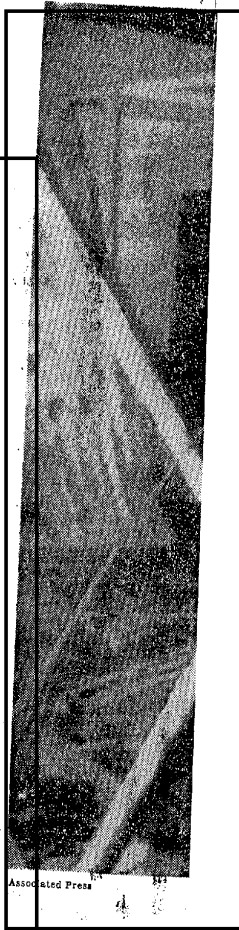
Anti-Hitler Plot Still

Many Able Democrats Eliminated

CPYRGHT

By Ernest S. Pisko

Staff Writer of The Christian Science Monitor



Associated Press

ON JULY 20, the Germans will commemorate the 11th anniversary of the unsuccessful bomb attempt on Hitler, as the result of which, according to an official tabulation, 30 persons were executed.

There will be speeches and newspaper articles prominently featuring the names of the three leaders of the bomb plot: former Chief of the General Staff Col. Gen. Ludwig Beck; Col. Claus Count Schenk von Stauffenberg; and former Lord Mayor of Leipzig, Dr. Carl Goerdeler.

But that does not mean that all, or most, Germans are aware of the significance of this event of 11 years ago. Nor does it mean that those who are aware of it are all of the same opinion.

Quite the contrary. While the majority of Germans appear fairly well-informed on the main facts of the bomb plot, most of them seem inclined to consider it under the angle of whether it was justified and patriotic or unjustified and criminal.

It is safe to say that more Germans tend toward the former interpretation than toward the latter. But the number of those who condemn the bomb plot as criminal and liken it to the legendary stab-in-the-back of the German front in World War I is by no means negligible.

After 1918, German generals alleged that a rebellion in the "hinterland" had forced them to sue for peace.) Most of them are former Nazis or former nationalistic; but their ranks also include non-Nazis of high ethical standards who oppose assassination under any circumstances.

Arrest and Trial Sought

There was, for instance, that young officer to whom Colonel Stauffenberg spoke of the necessity to eliminate Hitler and who reacted sharply with: "Count, you cannot solve a deep historical crisis through a bullet."

Dr. Goerdeler himself, who had done more than anybody else in building up the German anti-Nazi resistance, in keeping it going and providing it with a program, counseled to the last against Hitler's assassination. He wanted him arrested and tried. He felt that such a trial in the German people would get a first-hand view of Nazi criminality and corruption, and be the most effective means to make millions of deluded Hitler supporters realize their mistake and, by the same token, to restore Germany's good name abroad.

During the six months Dr. Goerdeler spent in prison after his arrest in August, 1944, he kept asking the question whether the failure of the plot was not a just punishment for violation of the Sixth Commandment.

But a study of the chief sources on German anti-Nazi resistance shows that a combination of political, moral, and practical factors determined the extension of Hitler's rule and of the war for another 10 months.

under the excuse that he had to take a telephone call from his Berlin office.

But while he waited outside the bunker for the explosion, one of the officers inside the bunker shifted the brief case so that it was now at a point farther removed from Hitler. This accidental shift, together with the thickness of the oaken table top and the fact that the wooden walls of the conference bunker were hurled away under the force of the explosion and thus reduced the blast impact, saved Hitler and most of the others present.

The brief case shifting was only the last in a series of moves that contributed to the thwarting of the bomb attempt. Perhaps equally, if not more, decisive was that the July 20 conference took place at the lightly built Rastenburg bunker instead, as originally planned at Hitler's conference bunker at Berchtesgaden, where the blast effect would have been enormously greater.

Transfer of the Fuehrer's headquarters from Berchtesgaden to Rastenburg had taken place unexpectedly a few days before July 20 on account of the Soviet advance toward East Prussia. Soviet forces, on July 20, stood only 100 miles from Rastenburg.

'Valkyrie' Orders Delayed

Earlier in July, Colonel Stauffenberg had twice gone to Berchtesgaden with the bomb in his brief case. Both times he had to return with the bomb unused. On July 11, Himmler had failed to attend the conference, and since the intention was to kill Hitler, Himmler, and Goering at the same time, Colonel Stauffenberg did not activate the fuse. On July 18, Himmler and Goering were present, but Hitler left the conference room almost immediately after he had entered it.

Mere mechanical factors, however, cannot be held solely responsible for the failure of the attempt.

It also is evident that despite Hitler's escaping almost unscathed from the attempt, the plot still might have succeeded. Even if unable to overthrow the Nazi regime it could have caused so much internal unrest that front-line resistance, at least on the western front, would have ceased and the war have ended much earlier and with much less of Germany destroyed.

Far more decisive for the outcome than the mechanical mishaps at Hitler's headquarters was the strange mental atmosphere in the former War Ministry building at Berlin's Bendlerstrasse.

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Arrest and Trial Sought
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... the six months Dr. Goerdeler spent in... after his arrest in August, 1944, he kept... the question whether the failure of... was not a just punishment for violation... of the Sixth Commandment.
... study of the chief sources on German... resistance shows that a combination of... moral, and practical factors deter-... the extension of Hitler's rule and of the... for another 10 months.

Officer Shifted Brief Case
... the mechanical side there was the shifting... of Colonel Stauffenberg's brief case in which the... was hidden. Colonel Stauffenberg, attend-... the Führer Conference, July 20, had placed... the heavy oaken table, covered with... maps over which Hitler was leaning. ... minutes before the chemical fuse was to... of the explosion, the colonel left the room...



Colonel General Beck



Dr. Goerdeler

... the mass appeal, saved Hitler and most... of the others present... The brief case shifting was only the last in a... series of moves that contributed to the... more decisive was that the July 20 conference... took place at the tightly built Rastenburg bunker... instead, as originally planned at Hitler's con-... crete bunker at Berchtesgaden, where the blast... effect would have been enormously greater... Transfer of the plotters' headquarters from... Berchtesgaden to Rastenburg had taken place... unexpectedly a few days before July 20 on ac-... count of the Soviet advance toward East Prussia... Soviet forces, on July 20, stood only 100 miles... from Rastenburg.

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Documents Remained Locked

For the conspirators, assembled there around... Colonel General Beck, first believed that Hitler... had been killed. According to their plans they... should have immediately issued the so-called... "Valkyrie" orders, the prearranged signal for ar-... restng government members, disarming SS... units, and seizing radio stations and other com-... munication centers.

Yet instead of prompt action there was hesi-... tation. Dispatch of the "Valkyrie" orders was... held up for three hours.

Why did this happen?
Why did the group of determined, brilliant, and... highly trained Prussian officers fail to act?
All the documents that had been drawn up for... "the day" remained locked in desk drawers and... safes—Colonel General Beck's "Appeal to the... German Nation"; the Cabinet list; the program of... the new government to replace the Nazi regime;... the indictment against the Nazi criminals; the bill... order to open the concentration camps; the bill... for indemnification of the Jews; the pledge for... restoration of justice and civic rights.

At the critical moment courage deserted the... conspirators—not the courage to sacrifice them-... selves but the courage to act boldly.

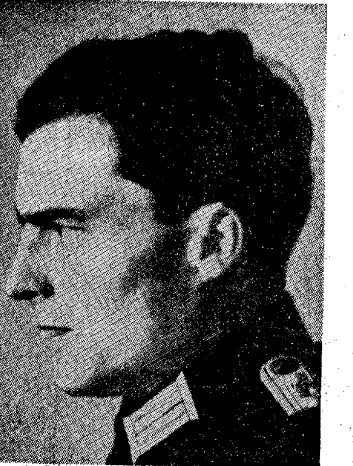
Prof. Gerhard Ritter, in his recently published... book, "Carl Goerdeler and the German Resis-... tance" (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt),... quotes Col. Gen. Franz Halder, successor to Col-... onel General Beck as chief of staff in 1938, as... remarking once: "The German Army is no Balkan... army; it is not used to indulging in officers'... plots."

Indeed, one has to go back to the Thirty... Years War and Count Wallenstein to find a Ger-... man Army leader who was killed by his own... subordinates, and to the Napoleonic wars and... York von Wartenburg to find a German general... who disobeyed the orders of his chief of state.

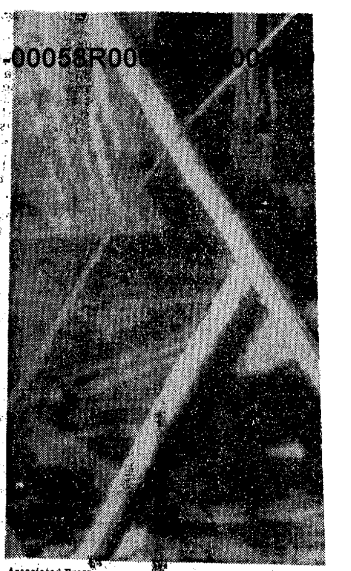
Consciously the conspirators had freed them-... selves from the ingrained habit of obedience. But... it is safe to assume that in many of them there... still were voices that whispered and warned... and slowed them down.

Conspirators in a Vacuum

Another inhibition must have come from the... oath they had taken to Hitler after President... Hindenburg's passing in 1934. Again, rationally... they had explained away the validity of the... oath. As Capt. Axel von dem Bussche declared, the... oath was no longer binding since it had been... broken "a thousand times" by Hitler's criminal... actions. Yet it is known from testimonies that... many of the conspirators grappled until the end...



Colonel von Stauffenberg



Associated Press

with their consciences about the right to break... their oath however gravely they might have been... deceived by the man to whom they had pledged... themselves.

Apart from these moral scruples, the con-... spirators were far too intelligent not to sense the... heavy odds against the success of their under-... taking. There probably was not one among them, including... fiery Count Stauffenberg, who did not... at one time or another realize that they were... working almost in a vacuum. Though their inner... circle was composed of representatives of the... armed forces as well as of civilian groups—of... Conservatives, Liberals, and Socialists, as well... as of Protestants and Roman Catholics—the... Germans at large, whether in or out of uniform, were... ignorant of their efforts. And the conspira-... tors must have been painfully aware that the... majority of the people would have opposed them, had they known of the conspiracy.

People Deluded by Goebbels

This applied in equal measure to soldiers and... civilians. Though a handful of marshals and a... score of generals were resolved to overthrow the... Nazi regime, more marshals and many more gen-... erals took a wait-and-see attitude, ready to... join with the winner, while a considerable num-... ber remained loyal to Hitler. And the farther... down one went in the ranks—to the majors, captains, lieutenants—the more unconditional... supporters of Hitler one found.

Among the civilian population there was... hardly anyone—outside the concentration camps—who... thought of revolution. The mass of the Ger-... man people were ignorant of the precarious... military situation, still deeply impressed by the... successes of the first three years of the war, de-... luded by the Goebbels propaganda and unshaken... in their belief in Hitler's "genius."

Beck, Goerdeler, and Stauffenberg, the chief... figures in the conspiracy, tried to persuade them-... selves and their friends that the power of their... proclamations, coupled with full disclosure of the... Nazi crimes, would swing the majority of the... Germans over to their side. But one wonders... whether they must not have had second thoughts... about their ability to tear their compatriots away... from the "Fied Piper" in the brown shirt.

Another thought must have been even more... disturbing to them. This was the problem how... the Allies would react to an overthrow of the... Hitler regime; whether it would enable the new... German government to liquidate the war under... terms more favorable than "unconditional sur-... render." Both Dr. Goerdeler and Colonel Stauf-... fenberg were optimistic about the outcome. But... all the evidence indicates that their optimism... was unfounded.

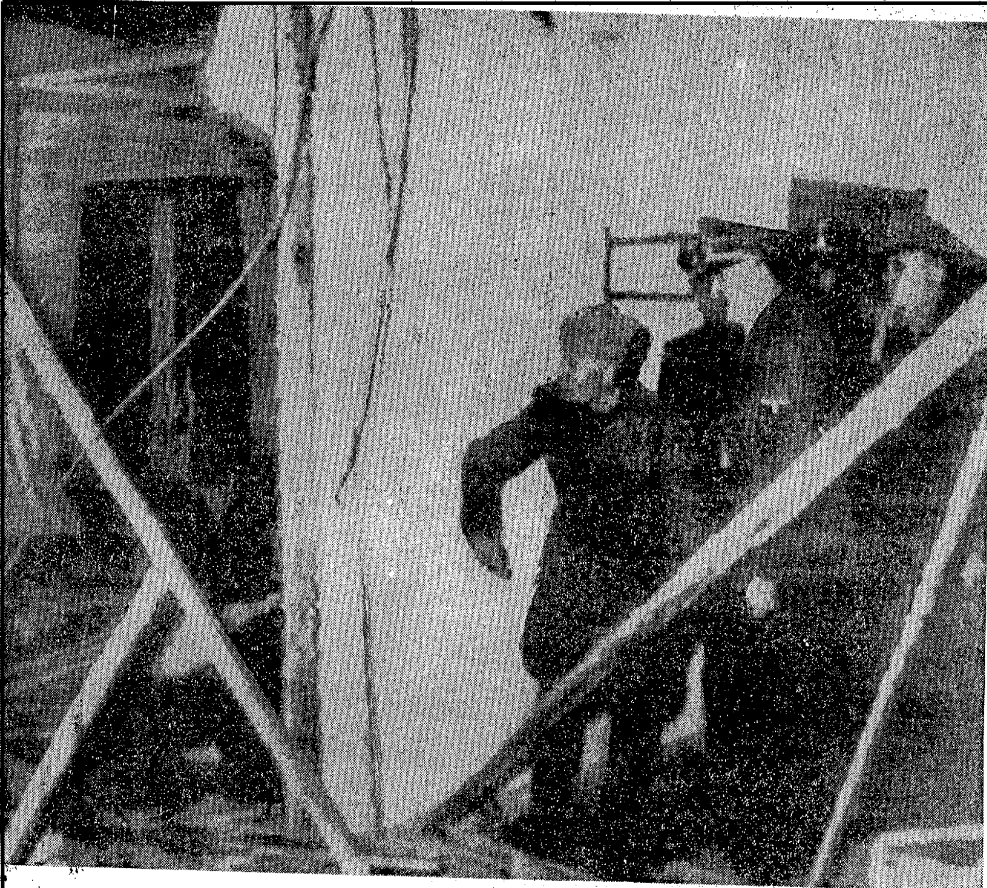
The Missing Echo

Documentary evidence makes this one of the... saddest chapters in the history of the German... resistance movement. It is a chapter that ought... to be headed "The Echo That Was Not There"—... the echo, that is from across the Channel and... across the Atlantic.

From the beginning of a serious anti-Hitler... opposition, in the spring of 1938, until July, 1944, resistance members risked their lives and took... the odium of committing "Landesverrat" (treason... against the country) in order to keep Britain and... later on the United States informed of their... plans, their aims, and their activities. They... made superfluous efforts to show that "Nazi" and "German" were not identical terms;... that there were no issues outstanding between... Germany and the rest of the world that could... not be settled in a civilized manner once the... Nazis had been eliminated. Time and again, the... leaders of the conspiracy pleaded with Lon-... don and Washington for an encouraging state-... ment—not for their own sake but for what they... firmly believed would be its electrifying effect... on the German people. The word never came.

Allies Sure of Winning

It can be argued that Washington and Lon-... don were justified in their attitude. Neither in Britain... nor in the United States was popular opinion... in favor of negotiating with the "better" Ger-... mans because it was difficult to believe that... "better" Germans existed after what had hap-... pened in Germany (and in Austria, Czechoslo-... vaki, Poland, and so on) between 1933 and... 1943. Besides, ever since the middle of 1943 the...



Hitler Shows Mussolini Wreckage Resulting From Bomb Attempt

Allies knew they were to win the war. They knew they would soon be in a position to dictate the peace terms; so, why should they tie their hands and risk creating a grave crisis in Anglo-American relations with the Soviet Union?

Added to these reservations must be the Allied mistrust, hard to overcome, of the word of any German. The Allied war leaders were from their personal experiences familiar with German behavior after 1918 and how some of the clauses of the Versailles Treaty were circumvented no sooner than they had been signed.

A dispassionate study of the documents suggests that there was only one case in which outside reaction—or rather the lack of it—prevented an anti-Hitler putsch from succeeding. That was in September, 1938, when Britain's participation in the Munich Conference virtually crushed a conspiracy in which the Army, police, and the Foreign Office had joined. This was the only conspiracy that had a reasonable chance of success and the only one that would have met with overwhelming support from the German population.

Subsequent Attempts Doomed

All the attempts and conspiracies that came later—and there were many of them between Munich and July, 1944—were doomed from the outset. Under the fire of the war, the German nation was inextricably welded to Hitler's chariot. There was nothing the Becks, Goerdelers, Stauffenbergs, and thousands of other nobly thinking Germans could do but to sacrifice themselves in an inspiring testimonial to human honor.

This may seem disproportionately high to some.

One may even say that the testimonial to human honor was overpaid a hundredfold. For the nearly 5,000 men and women whom Hitler had executed between July 20, 1944, and as late as April 23, 1945—one week before the collapse of the Third Reich—and the tens of thousands who perished in concentration camps or were sentenced to capital punishment for individual acts of defiance, were in a sense the elite of the German nation.

They were not the only anti-Nazis in Germany. Actually, several of the conspirators had originally been sincere supporters of Hitler—among them Beck, Stauffenberg, and Goerdeler. But as soon as they discovered the true nature of Nazism they turned against it and began to act on their conviction. Others may have been no less clear-thinking, but they remained silent and passive. Thus, Germany, through Hitler's last revenge campaign, was deprived of many of the very people who should have become the architects of its post-Hitler reconstruction.

City to Honor Count

By Reuters

Berlin

Bender Street in Berlin, site of the German Army supreme headquarters during the war, is to be renamed Stauffenberg Street after the man who tried to kill Hitler on July 20, 1944, the West Berlin City Parliament has decided unanimously.

Col. Claus Count Schenk von Stauffenberg placed the brief case bomb which exploded but failed to kill Hitler.