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Why the Hitler Bomb Plot Failed

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Why they failed to kill Hitler in the bomb plot of July 20, 1944, has come in for some new light.

The war might have been ended nine months earlier, perhaps more than a million lives saved — if that bomb had only gone off as expected.

Now comes a late issue of the U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings, and a translation by Capt. Roland E. Krause, USN, ret., of an article by Capt. Heinz Assmann, German naval liaison officer, who was present at the conference with Hitler. His account differs in one basic respect with that given by William L. Shirer in his monumental "The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich."

According to Assmann, "Shortly after the beginning of the conference,

Count Stauffenberg left the room, stating to Col. Brandt, who stood directly in front of the brief case, that he had to make a quick telephone call and that he would return immediately.

"While Gen. Heusinger was making his presentation, Hitler was bent over the chart and asked for data concerning the supply of replacement formations to the army in the East.

"In connection with this question, it was noted that Col. Stauffenberg was absent, and he was sent for. The presentation went on, when all at once there was a violent explosion.

"The room was completely destroyed . . . I was able to drag myself to a window with difficulty and to jump out. I saw shapes wandering around

aimlessly. I observed Adolf Hitler walking erect, supported by Keitel. His hair was mussed up; his black trousers were hanging in fetters on his legs.

"He suffered severe bleeding at the right elbow, superficial flesh wounds from wood splinters, skin abrasions and the rupture of both eardrums with bleeding . . . However, subsequent effects of his injuries, particularly the considerable shock to his nervous system, were greater than at first appeared the case.

"That Hitler survived was due to the fact that the assassin had used too small an explosive charge . . . and that the bomb had been placed — not on the inside, but on the outside — of the heavy oaken table support."