SECRET

Events Leading Up To The Putsch of 20 July (1944)
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Foreword

The following account does not claim to be a history of the resistance movement against Hitler, for the writing of history requires a long interval of time. During the past fifty years there has developed a type of history which I should like to call the chronicle of current events. This account also rejects such a title. For even the chronicle of current events has a concrete prerequisite: a knowledge of all significant circumstances and personalities. I do not have this knowledge at my disposal. Nor do I have the ambition to belong to that group, of whom Aristotle says, that they pick up the unearthed worms in the furrow directly behind the farmer's plow. My knowledge is only one important excerpt from the life of the German resistance movement and only this excerpt did I intend to portray. This report, therefore, is the recounting of an experience. Since I took part in the German resistance movement both as an observer and as an actual participant, my story is necessarily one-sided. It is written, not sine, but cum ira et studie. Still I have never done violence to the high and compelling commandment of truth. In other words; my account is unadorned but not colorless. Since it is taken from memory and is not based on notes, an error in memory may have crept in occasionally.

Perhaps one or another of my readers may be of the opinion that this report has no meaning because the German resistance movement was shipwrecked. To such people I feel obliged to say that successes or failures serve as proof for the foolish. A great German once said: "Not external
success but the genuineness of the attempt decides the worth of a man."

The German resistance movement will gladly have itself judged on the basis of such a yardstick, painful as it is to my friends and me that our will was not translated into accomplishment. We take solace in the saying of the old Romans: "In magnis veluisse est ost!"
Chapter I

Deo - Patriae - Humanitati
(Far God - Country - Humanity)

How did Hitler succeed in seizing power in Germany and to fuse the
German people with National Socialism? The only answer to this question is,
necessity was the principal prerequisite for the domination of National
Socialism, the lost war of 1914 - 1918, the inflation, and the reaction of
the international economic crisis on Germany had opened the doors of
Central Europe to chaos. Without this "stork" which must be apparent
even to the most undiscerning eye, it would have been out of the question
for Hitler to set himself up as the oppressor of the German people.
Regardless of which period of the long history of the German people one
contemplates, no Hitler is to be found there; in fact, no Hitler is
conceivable. Of course, this does not mean that individuals of a Hitlerian
type have not existed, even in calm and well-ordered eras. People of
Hitler's sort have lived in all times and places. But such characters
spent their lives either as unnoticed freaks or in a sanatorium under the
care of physicians. To make history, world history, has been possible for
such people only in chaotic times. Yet there is a further explanation.
Hitler was a person who had the diabolical gift of promising each man
exactly what the man was longing for, of promising every occupational
group exactly what this group dreamed of in its wildest hopes of the
future. In the chapter about propaganda (Mein Kampf, Vol. II), Hitler comes
to revealing his true nature. He reveals his method of winning over people
of diverse ages, of diverse strata, and diverse regions and then reducing
their wishes and hopes to a common denominator. As a result, Hitler created the impression, both among his followers and opponents, that it would not be possible to exclude him permanently from the government. The "smarties" among his opponents finally came to the conclusion that Hitler must have a part in the business of government, he must have the appearance of power, so that he could slowly but surely be suppressed through the determined efforts, on their small scale, of the Privy Counselors and the personnel of the ministries not occupied by the Nazis. This consideration prompted influential circles of the Center Party to negotiate with Hitler before 1933 concerning the question of a coalition government. This was the thought of Hugenberg, Papen, and Seldte. It also represented von Hindenburg's views. They thought to found a societas leonina, but it soon became apparent that the "smarties" were the deceived deceivers, for Hitler succeeded, almost without effort, in neutralizing Hindenburg and Hugenberg, Papen and Seldte, and in establishing his total supremacy. In this maneuver, the calamitous seamy side of a genuinely German characteristic, obedience, came to Hitler's assistance. To a person who knows the German people and German history, there can be no doubt but that one of the basic characteristics of the German is his deficient sense of form. He resembles a wide water course without a channel. In German history it has happened on numerous occasions that overly strict forms have coordinated all the forces, which, for lack of a definite structure, would have threatened to fall apart. This accounts, in general, for the martial proficiency of the Germans. Thus there arose in Germany a sense of obedience at all costs, a feeling for the army camp, a love for the commanding officer. Because the average German lacked a sense of security which grew out of the development of individualistic forms, he subordinated himself readily to the overly strict form of militarism.
No German exploited this over-developed and overdrawn German characteristic more than Hitler. But an even more important explanation remains. For, in the last analysis, the German people gave the world an Eckehart, a Luther, a Goethe and a Schiller, a Beethoven and a Mozart, a Kant and a Hegel, not to mention the long list of intellectuals whose life contributed to the founding of the reputation and fame of European and Occidental civilisation. These names could not be deleted from the history of the world without causing the end of this history of civilisation. No, the main reason that Hitler came into power and choked all resistance in Germany before the instrument of the Gestapo with all its techniques, the concentration camp, torture and killing without due process of law had been established, is to be sought elsewhere. The explanation for Hitler's immediate success in throttling the opposition is to be found in the spiritual nihilism which had arisen during the past century as a result of industrialisation, and, spreading like a parasitic plant, had suffocated all else. By nihilism here, naturally, we do not mean that anarchistic movement which is well known from the recent history of Czarist Russia. This nihilism is rather a much broader and deeper movement consisting of nothing more or less than the disintegration and dissolution off all points of view, all philosophies, all views, all religions - a process which left nothing but insignificant fragments. This is the real spirit of nihilism in Europe. It is of no importance whether Hitler recognized this condition by virtue of reason or whether he merely exploited it instinctively. Yet there can be no doubt that, with the National Socialist idea, he raised a flag which seemingly created an Archimedean spot in the chaotic maelstrom in which the intellectual - spiritual Occident had been drawn. When, immediately before and after 1933,
Hitler again and again delivered almost the identical speech and repeated time - worn phrases ad nauseam and drew the taunts of his opponents at home and abroad, he nevertheless followed the only possible course from his own point of view. He created a new focal point. He impressed upon his contemporaries a basic principle, from which everything else developed as a matter of course. Thus he moulded his following in one cast. Therefore it was not surprising that his manifold opponents succumbed because they lacked this uniform cast (constitution), because almost all of them were tainted with nihilism. As a result, the greater part of the German people, including its spiritual and intellectual leaders, yielded to National Socialism. A discerning view of the world at that time reveals that non-German Europe was, to a certain degree, also captivated by National Socialism. Only this fact explains the weak resistance or lack of resistance where, according to the state of affairs, strong resistance would and should have been possible to Hitler's legion when war broke out in 1939. Hitler's opponents in Germany were faced with the same situation. These people knew that even the decisive forces of German industry, which had so often proclaimed that Hitler would fail because of economic difficulties, would, within a short time, be the most loyal cohorts of this man. No, at the time of this spiritual nihilism no resistance movement against Hitler could succeed if based on economic considerations. This fact was recognized by a few even before 1933. The publication of Ernst Nickisch: Hitler, ein deutsches Joch (Hitler, German Fate) and the publication of Ewald von Kleist against Hitler furnish a classical example of this. Both authors formed their opposition to Hitler from the depths of their mind and soul. They have had to suffer the consequences of their early insight and of the utterance of this insight. Ernst Nickisch was condemned to life-imprisonment, while Ewald von Kleist ended his life on the scaffold.
To quote Goethe:

"The few who knew something about it,  
Who foolishly enough did not contain  
their own hearts,  
But revealed their feelings and their  
views to the mob,  
Have always been crucified and burned."

What Hitler's opponents lacked, was a common spiritual foundation, a unified future policy. To create such a policy was a prerequisite for any earnest political activity. In the thousands of meetings which the opponents of Hitler have held since 1933 behind locked doors, under constant pressure, and in fear of the intervention of the Gestapo, the creation of a basic future policy was always the most pressing task, even when no specific mention was made of it. The appearance of Martin Niemöller and the sermons of Count Galen, the Bishop of Münster, were only the generally visible expressions which rose to the surface during the struggle for a basic future policy. The Occident was, after all, born out of Christianity. Not even the struggle between the individual Christian Churches has been able to dispute the fact that the European world rests upon a Christian foundation. But the decisive doctrine of Christianity is the subservience of man to God and the love of one's fellow man. A century old dispute about the details has darkened this fact but, in practice, has not been able to diminish or displace it. But Hitler, at the same time "a part of that force which wants evil creates good works" (Goethe's Faust), brought this Christian ideal to new flower and effectiveness. For, wherever the individual opponents of Hitler may have steed in the past, they now found themselves as one in the recognition of the basic Christian doctrine of life. Much that had once seemed important to them lost significance. When, within the Confessional Church, reformed and Lutheran representatives came together for the first time and renewed the discussion between Luther and Zwingli about the
question of communion, it became apparent that the former conflict no
longer existed. This conflict had practically disappeared. The long
years between the Luther - Zwingli conflict and this meeting within the
Confessional Church had removed the great theological controversy in the
Protestant Church. A common basis was found without further effort. In
other words, the course of centuries had resulted in a genuine overcoming
of, and a real solution to, this problem. Thesis and antithesis had yielded
a synthesis. This process is only one example of many. It is a pars pro toto.
Any number of other examples of this agreement could be adduced. Thus it
was also possible for representatives of the Evangelical Church to meet with
representatives of the Catholic Church in the Monastery of Ettal, in order to
discuss again the question of the differences between Catholicism and
Protestantism. At this meeting it was also discovered that a number of
differences, over which mankind had once waged wars, had meanwhile appeared
as non-existent. Other differences had remained, but it was possible to
discuss them in a way which lent credence to the hope that the conflict
between Protestantism and Catholicism would one day be overcome. In any
case, a common basis for practical cooperation had now been created. Employers
and labor leaders engaged in conferences and, what had formerly seemed out
of the question, now happened: agreement was reached. Old Social Democrats,
Centrists, Liberals and Conservatives, civilians and service personnel came
together on the old foundation of the Western World. Each person learned
something. For the first time in many years people had the feeling of a
genuine attempt to understand and esteem the other man. Certainly, only a
beginning was made. But in the midst of (Nazi) intellectual slavery and
daily persecution these beginnings gave rise to a new hope. It seemed as though
the first rays of the sun were breaking through the dark clouds. The basic
future policy of the resistance movement was set up.
Theory and practice of National Socialism developed over a period of time. The dragon's teeth that were sown did not sprout until late. Had the German people in 1933 known National Socialism of 1943, recent German history would have taken a different direction. But the very fact that National Socialism developed only slowly, revealed its demonic doctrines and practices to the masses only little by little. The people were being gradually accustomed to increasing doses of National Socialism. The total encompassing of the people and the penetration of Hitler's ideology came gradually and not at one stroke. Many opponents of National Socialism believed that they had to swallow the preferred doses out of tactical considerations. They were of the opinion that they could swallow this little dose and thereby prevent the impending total evil. The lesser evil was accepted to avoid the greater evil. The result was that the sum total of the lesser evil produced the effect of the very calamity on a large scale which they had feared. Thus many original opponents of National Socialism were pushed off balance. They disregarded the doctrine of the old Romans, principiis obsta, only to be seized by the avalanche of National Socialism and to be thrown down the mountain at break-neck speed.

If the question of the ultimate purpose of National Socialism is asked, then the answer can be only: National Socialism wanted to dethrone God and set itself up in His place. The war of destruction against the Jews, the racial delusion, the policy of extermination toward conquered countries, the establishment of the concentration camps with their horrors, the suppression of justice, the removal of the foundations of law from all persons who did not submit unconditionally to National Socialism, all these things showed clearly that National Socialism was determined to do violence to all commandments of humanity. The exaggeration of the concept of the Nat. (Volk), the contempt
of history, the disregard of all other nations proved that National Socialism
had no conception of the idea of the Fatherland. The struggle against the
churches, especially against the Christian religion, the replacement of the
concept of God through the threadbare word "Providence", showed clearly enough
that it was a battle against God Himself. If the period before National
Socialism was a stage of slow disintegration, if a spiritual nihilism prevailed
in it, then, without exaggeration, this period can be characterized as a time
without God.

When National Socialism replaced nihilism and the new Aryan elevated to
the position of God demanded total power over all aspects of life, life
without God became a life against God. Goethe once said that in the last
analysis the history of mankind is the history of the struggle between God
and the devil. Many Europeans did not understand this statement because
long years of peace, interrupted only by localized wars, had lulled the world
into a false sense of security before the outbreak of World War I. The history
of Hitler proves how correct Goethe’s statement was. There can be no doubt
but that the resistance movement in Germany had a mission in which the struggle
against Hitler became a crusade. When Heaven itself rebelled, the earth could
not remain calm. It was a matter of re-establishing the commandments of
mankind. It was also a question of redeeming from the slog of racial delusion
the true concept of the "Fatherland" which is founded upon the regard of the
life of other nations. Reverence of God again had to be reconstituted as the
foundation of life. The total demand of National Socialism, carried to its
ultimate conclusion, meant nothing less than the attempt of Hitler to set
himself up as master of God, the "Fatherland" and humanity. Therefore the
banner of the German resistance movement carried the motto: "Deo – Patrize –
Humanitati". This resistance movement was determined to stay the arm of the
criminal and demon. But even in the struggle against Hitler the truth of
Geeth's saying about the demonic man was to become apparent:

"They are not always the best man,
Neither in spirit nor in talents,
Rarely recommending themselves through goodness of heart;
But a tremendous force emanates from them,
And they have an unbelievable power over all
Yes, even over the elements,
And who can say how far such an effect will reach?
All united moral forces can achieve
nothing against it;
In vain the more lucid part of mankind
tries to make them suspect as deceived or deceivers,
The masses are attracted to them,
Rarely if even are there contemporaries
who equal them,
And they cannot be overcome except by the
Universe with which they began the struggle,
And from such remarks may well have originated
that strange but tremendous word:

'Nemo certe Deum nisi Deus ipse'."
Chapter II

The Resistance Movement before the War

Since my part in the early stages of the opposition to Hitler could be only very modest, my knowledge of the growth of the German resistance movement before the war is slight. As a student at the University of Halle I became acquainted with National Socialism in theory and practice in 1926. My theoretical knowledge was based mainly on three books, on Hitler's *Mein Kampf*, on Rosenberg's *Mythes des Zwanzigsten Jahrhunderts* (Myth of the Twentieth Century), and on Fedor's book, *Die Brechung der Zinsknackschaft* (The Breaking of Interest Slavery). Knowledge of these books made me a determined opponent of National Socialism from the very beginning. It always surprised me, even in later years, how few people had read these books thoroughly and therefore usually adopted a neutral and tentative attitude. Activities among the students provided an opportunity for me to become acquainted with National Socialism in practice. The rigamorele and behavior of the National Socialists confirmed the impression I had received of them through theory. Their lack of manners, their rejection of good form, their joy in vitality keyed up to brutality, their confused concepts of political and economic questions, their pride in a conscious subjectivity, these were points which aroused my disdain and opposition. A personal disagreement with Baldur von Schirach, a man of very feminine characteristics, did its part to arouse my antipathy. When I realized to what extent National Socialism threatened to engulf first the student body and later the faculty, my friends and I founded a counter-movement at the University of Halle. Particularly meritorious services in this respect were performed
by my friends Horst Schneble, who later distinguished himself as a jurist, and Heinrich Schiele, who made a name for himself as a surgeon in the following years. Resistance was surprisingly slight among members of the faculty. Only the internationally known Professor of International Law, Max Fleischmann, whom I esteemed highly, and whom the National Socialists attacked because of his Jewish descent, realized at once, what day had dawned with the rise of Hitler. At that time my friends and I were still young, uncautious, and adventurous enough, to cross swords willingly and gladly with the National Socialists. At a time when the older generation had already become somewhat timid, we did not hesitate to make life difficult for the then Gauleiter of Halle, Jordan, in his large and turbulent mass meetings, even though we ran the risk of being beaten up. At that time I became acquainted with Hans Bernd Gisevius, who in the years to come was to play such a significant role in the German resistance movement.

At the turn of the year 1932-1933, my work took me to Berlin, where I was active as political assistant to the Under Secretary of State in the Prussian Ministry of the Interior, Herbert von Bismarck. While in this position on the thirtieth of January, 1933, I witnessed the day on which the power of state was turned over to Hitler. On the basis of the preceding year of open struggle, my friends and I were not in doubt for one moment about the ultimate meaning of Hitler's domination, among our group, Ewald von Kleist, a conservative from Pomerania, had the most prophetic view. When I recall the picture of the future that he pointed at that time, and when I compare that picture with the situation today, then the description of "prophet" applied to this man is no exaggeration. In his judgment of Hitler and National Socialism he possessed a somnambulant certainly, a characteristic
lacking in the overwhelming majority of people belonging to the political right in Germany. At his instigation I wrote a comprehensive article for the conservative periodical which he headed. In this article I emphasized our fundamental rejection of Hitler and National Socialism without mincing words. Naturally this article was the end of the conservative periodical which was banned permanently. The National Socialists had taken particular exception to the fact that my article had taken Hitler and Hugenburg to task for having forcibly evicted the Communist deputies from the Reichstag in contravention of the Constitution.

All our efforts to influence Hindenburg, Hugenburg, Papen, and Seldte and thereby to prevent the formation of that ominous coalition which Hitler used as a stirrup to place himself in the saddle, failed because of the truly complete blindness which enveloped these basically unpoltical statesmen. Thus Hindenburg, Hugenburg, Papen, and Seldte actually held the stirrup for Hitler against their will. In truth a travesty on world history! Later the Chamberlain of Oldenburg-Januschau, who was well known among the Germans - told me that Hindenburg had said to him shortly before 30 January 1933: "If Hitler wants to come into power, he can be Minister of Posts without question. I shall never appoint him Reich Chancellor." Immediately thereafter Hindenburg did the opposite. Whoever knew the circumstances, was aware that Hindenburg was already too old to survey the intricate threads of politics. His son, a vain fool; Under Secretary Meissner, an adroit but short-sighted intriguer; and Papen, an ambitious but incompetent statesman - these were the people who succeeded in persuading Hindenburg to hand the office of Reich Chancellor over to Hitler. Oldenburg, who had already renounced political life in view of his 80 years, occasionally attempted to make use of his influence with Hindenburg, but usually without success. A day after the blood bath of 30 June 1934, when he had been informed of the true picture by one
of our intermediaries, Oldenburg took the opportunity to inform Hindenburg who was staying at his estate in East Prussia at the time. Since Hindenburg was at that time completely cut off by the SS, Oldenburg, a good-hearted man, immediately mounted his white horse, rode cross-country to Neudeck, the estate of the Reich President, thereby avoiding all the road barricades set up by the SS, and arrived at the castle. In his inimitable way he gained access to the building, explained everything to Hindenburg and thereby saved the life of more than one person who had been arrested at the time. The only people who had influence, insight and determination at the same time [during that critical period] were Generaleoberst (General) von Hammerstein, then Chief of the German Army Command, and General von Schleicher, the last Reich Chancellor before Hitler. They had thought themselves certain of Hindenburg's personal confidence and of the ability to break up a coup on the part of Hitler, if necessary, with the use of the Reichswehr. They never counted on Hindenburg's indecision. This error was to be their undoing as well as that of the German people. Hindenburg suddenly dropped both generals and placed Hitler in the position of power. A nocturnal visit on the part of both generals to Hindenburg, whose decision they attempted to have him alter, failed. Their hope to nip in the bud Hitler's attempt to take over the government did not materialise because this plan also included action against Hindenburg. In view of the standing which Hindenburg enjoyed among the German people and in the world at that time, both generals doubted that their plan could be executed. Later, in confidential conversations, Generaleoberst von Hammerstein frequently blamed himself for having failed to make the right decision in spite of and against Hindenburg.
The attempt of the non-National Socialists in the Ministries to outplay Hitler failed from the very beginning. For Hitler by no means worked only with the support of the ministerial posts held by National Socialists but, illegally with the help of his SA, used force and attained power even in positions which had not been given to him constitutionally.

The best example of this is the burning of the Reichstag. I still remember the moment when I heard about this fire. I was in Under Secretary Bismarck’s office with him. Although we knew nothing about the circumstances, we sensed them and immediately drove to the Reichstag, entered it and found our suspicions confirmed, when we saw the burning chamber. Suspicions gave way to certainty when a number of officers of the Berlin Fire Department told us with a not misunderstandable smile how the fire had been started and that the subterranean passage from the Reichstag to the office building of Reichstag President Göring had been found unlocked. In the evening of the same day, a conference took place in the Reich Chancellery while the Reichstag was still burning. Hitler, Göring, Goebbels, Papen, and Bismarck took part in this conference. While Papen sat there with a rather foolish expression on his face, Göring and Goebbels smiled at him understandingly and showed through their glances at Hitler that they wanted to express but one thought: "Didn’t we do a good job?" Bismarck was the only one who saw through the crime. By virtue of the bulletins coming in about the fire, he attempted to refute Goebbels’ contention that Communists had set fire to the Reichstag, and to unmask the National Socialists as the real culprits. But apparently the reports of the police and fire departments were already "tailored". In any case, the plan did not work. Under these circumstances, it was impossible to furnish incontrovertible proof which the National Socialist present would have been forced to admit.
Nevertheless, it was significant that neither Bismarck nor I were later called as witnesses in the trial of the alleged perpetrators. When I became acquainted with the Lord Mayor of Leipzig, Geerdeler, during the war, the latter told me that Senator President Bünker of the Supreme Court had often complained of his qualms because, as chairman of the senate commissioned to clear up the question of the Reichstag fire, he had not been able to declare the actual criminals (Nazis) responsible. For, according to Bünker's statement to Geerdeler, the entire circumstances and the state of the documents left no doubt in his — Bünker's — mind as to the identity of the real perpetrators. Geerdeler added that anyone who knew Bünker realized that this man finally went to pieces mentally and physically as a result of the pangs of conscience which this trial had cost him.

Over night we were thus involved in a struggle for power which became more acute from day to day. We looked for people who shared our views. This was a nerve-racking task, poor in results but full of disappointments. In order perhaps to save the German Universities from National Socialism, I sought and found contact with a number of influential representatives of German science. I established the most rewarding contact with a great jurist, University Professor Rudolf Smed, a man with a keen mind which surveyed the polarity of human and state life, a noble character, imbued with the spirit of Christian ideals. Cooperation with him was interrupted because of the difficulties of distance, but our contact was never really broken off. He became one of our truest companions. I must also mention Professor Edward Spranger, likewise of the University of Berlin. His name and reputation are world-famous. It is superfluous to say anything about him here. In addition, I thought that Reinhold Seeberg, Jr., the theologian in B—-in, was a man in sympathy with our views, but that was an
error on my part. His acceptance of National Socialism can be attributed to a weakness of character and gave me my first disappointment. These three university professors as representatives of the faculty, and supported by a few representatives of the student body, sought an interview with Papen through me. Through the good offices of the excellent Hans von Wedemeyer, who tried in vain for many years to use Papen (whose comrade he had been since their war service together in World War I) as a weapon against Hitler, it was possible to arrange the conference. After this reception, Edward Spranger wrote to me: "Our conference was worse than failure, for we remained misunderstood. We received the impression that Papen valued a stable more highly than the German universities." Rudolf Smed confirmed orally the views expressed by Spranger. Thus the universities seen also became the property of National Socialism.

In the course of time we came to the conclusion that the German people could be divided into three groups: Nazis, non-Nazis, and anti-Nazis. The struggle against the Nazis further taught us that the non-Nazis were almost worse than the Nazis. Their insight, which was often correct, but their deficiency of character gave us more woe than the capriciousness and brutality of the Nazis. In an effort to establish a working arrangement with other groups and other tendencies (but yet people who shared our distress), I chanced upon Ernst Niekisch, the publisher of Widerstand (Resistance), a much-read periodical. Niekisch had originally been a Social Democrat. After the World War he joined August Winnig in founding the "Old Socialists" and then founded Resistance, a movement, which was based on socialistic ideas and sought contact with Russian groups. Niekisch was a man of the greatest steadfastness; he said what he meant and meant what he said. With these characteristics he combined great knowledge with ability and an unusual
talent for written and oral expression. (When Generaloberst von Seeckt was searching for training possibilities for the German armored forces and air force, he sent Niekisch to Russia. The discussions between Niekisch and Radek were most effective in days to come.) Niekisch was able to acquaint me with a wealth of incidents in which the S.A. by using force and violating the law, terrorized and did away with its opponents, both Jews and Gentiles. Niekisch's material was always excellent. With the help of Under Secretary von Bismarck we introduced case after case into the agenda of the Prussian Ministry of the Interior, created official clarity, and attempted to save the life and health of Jews and non-Jews. This was not always possible, but where it was, the feeling of having helped a human being was no less elevating than the gratitude received from the person concerned, whether Jew or Gentile. In the course of time, these sporadic cases became more and more frequent. The originally untypical case became typical. This circumstance led to a move on the part of Under Secretary von Bismarck. As we have seen, he was in the Prussian Ministry of the Interior which, at that time was called the jointed or welded ministry in informed political circles because it was the only ministry in which the Minister and Under Secretary had different political affiliations, whereas in all other ministries the posts of Minister and Under Secretary were held by men of the same political beliefs. Bismarck attempted to unite a number of non-National Socialist officials under the motto of the state against the motto of the party (as was customary among the National Socialists). He suffered untold agony because, during the time that he carried political responsibility, there were people who were subjected to National Socialist terror because of their descent or opinions. For this reason he demanded of Göring, who was Prussian Minister of the Interior at the time that the police be
instructed to take action against everyone, regardless of Party
insignia, who raised his hands against one of his fellow citizens without
official authorization. He suggested that a threat of prosecution be
held over every police office who did not obey this order. In order to
introduce this plan in final form in the cabinet, he needed support
which he sought from Papen, Hugenberg, and Blomberg. All three turned
him down. Papen turned down the suggestion because he did not even
understand the principle involved. At that time he even boasted that he
had never read the Prussian Constitution, although he was Prussian Prime
Minister. Hugenberg refused to help us because he was primarily interested
in raising the price of butter and in dealing with the problem of
agricultural and industrial fats. The conversation with Blomberg was as
dramatic as it was characteristic. In 1933 General von Blomberg was
commander of the First Division in East Prussia. He had been designated
as Reich Minister of War for professional rather than for political reasons.
When Bismarck took the matter up with him, on the assumption that the
representative of the army would have an understanding of it, Blomberg
explained that he was an officer who had to obey orders and not a man who
could support views diverging from those of the government (i.e. Hitler).
Bismarck replied: "I have come to Minister von Blomberg, not to General
von Blomberg. According to the Constitution, as a Minister you carry a
political responsibility which has nothing to do with your rank of general."
Thereupon Blomberg pounded on the table so that it shook, and said: "I
forbid such talk in my office." Bismarck replied: "If War Minister von
Reen had thought in 1862 as you do now, you would not be Minister today."
Then Bismarck arose and went out. Compelled by his conscience, Bismarck
placed his demand before Göring nevertheless. The answer could not be
in doubt. It was: "No", a circumstance which caused Bismarck to resign.
He refused the posts of State Councilor (Staatsrat) and District President (Regierungspräsident) which Göring offered him. Bismarck's departure was widely criticized. Among his critics was the Reich Minister of Finance, Count Schwerin-Kresigk. When Bismarck explained the reasons for his actions to him, Schwerin-Kresigk replied: "If any planning is done, shavings will fall." To this Bismarck replied that a man could not beat around the bush of responsibility by using a catchword. He said that he could not understand how Schwerin-Kresigk could tolerate conditions which he would be forced to condemn as a private individual. Schwerin-Kresigk then remarked: "You cannot jump out of a moving express train." At about the same time I had a conversation with the future Field Marshall von Rundstedt who was at the moment commander of the 1st Army Group Command in Berlin. Rundstedt was considered a non-Nazi. During the conversation it became evident that he had recognized the Nazis for what they were and had the courage to make uncomplimentary remarks about them. But it was likewise immediately obvious that he was at least as determined to refrain from drawing the conclusions from these facts. On the other hand, I found quite the opposite reaction in Martin Niemöller. At that time this man aroused considerable attention because of his forceful sermons as a preacher in Dahlem. Later he injected new life into the Protestant Church as leader of the Confessional Church in Germany and bitterly disappointed Hitler in his assumption that the Evangelical Church in Germany could be liquidated quickly. Concurrently, he gave the German resistance movement the spiritual (weltanschauliche) foundation, without which it could not have existed. A large part of this work was done by Pastor Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a son of the great and world-famous Berlin psychiatrist. He was one of the most outstanding contemporary Protestant Theologians. His activity in the ecumenical movement enabled him to establish contact with non-German circles. He never tired of keeping old contacts and making new ones. I, too, later became a
victim of the Gestapo and had to end his life on the gallows. His noble character and his pleasing personality proved that a man could contact the non-German world with clean hands, without betraying his native land.

However, since we were also trying to ally ourselves with the Catholics in Germany, I tried to contact Brüning, the leader of political Catholicism in Germany. At that time he lived in two rooms of St. Hedwig's Hospital in Berlin in order the better to escape observation by the Nazis. Brüning made it completely clear on which side he stood. He was not surprised by Hindenburg's attitude, that is, his sudden dropping of Schleicher and the just as sudden appointment of Hitler as Reich Chancellor. On the basis of his long knowledge of conditions in the palace of the Reich President he had had enough experience with Hindenburg and said: "Hindenburg has always been like this. At first he seems to want to go through thick and thin with a man, only to drop him at the crucial moment. And this man the public calls 'the loyal Ekkehart' of the German people!" When I called Brüning's attention to the great activity going on within the Protestant Church and its battle position toward Hitler and at the same time expressed my surprise that a man like the Catholic Bishop of Osnabrack, Berning, had become a member of Göring's (Prussian) State Council, he replied: "It has been a long time since I have spoken with all German bishops. For I know; a man must choose whether he wants to stand under the swastika or under the cross of Christ. A man has to make up his mind for one or the other." Brüning also spoke with great bitterness about Hugenberg who had rejected all possibilities of a common front for preventing Hitler's domination. Through Brüning I also contacted a leading Bavarian Catholic, Freiherr Carl Ludwig von Guttenberg. He was the publisher of the Weisse Blutter (White Pages), a monthly which tried to avoid printing a single National Socialist word and undauntedly expressed
its anti-National Socialist opinions within the limits of censorship.

Guttenberg arranged for me to become a contributor to this publication. Each issue of this periodical, which appeared until well along in World War II, gives evidence of the fact that a person could write under National Socialism without selling his convictions. Another collaborator from the Catholic camp was the director of St. Gertraud’s Hospital in Berlin, Professor Dr. Sigismund Lauter. His great willingness to assist, the richness of his spirit, and his boundless optimism were a valuable support for my friends and me. Many discussions took place in his spacious home. The fact that he, a very busy physician, was not under close Gestapo surveillance as were so many others, furnished us a relatively secure and unobtrusive meeting place during the twelve years of the Hitler regime. The preliminary conservations concerning the attempt of 20 July 1944 on Hitler were held in his home. I must mention one more of my close friends of this period, Niklaus von Halem, who was extremely active in the struggle against the Nazis, 1933-1942. He came from the circle around Carl van Jordan, who was very active in the background. Halem succeeded in converting many high National Socialist officials. For example, he estranged Gauleiter and Reich Price Commissioner Josef Wagner from National Socialism to the point of disavowing it. Even when it was necessary to contact non-German circles, Halem was the most active among us. His trips to Italy, Sweden, France, and Russia provided us with indispensable contacts with important European personalities. He also had close connections with members of the American Embassy in Berlin. I shall say more later about my collaboration with him.

In order to collect material, he undertook to remove from the hands of the Papen clique documents concerning the suppression of the alleged Röhm revolt of 30 June 1934. These records were actually found and taken to Switzerland. But the Gestapo fou-"'d the trail and undertook an investigation in Liechtenstein.
After a discussion with Hale I decided to take a trip to Switzerland where, without ceremony, I called for the documents and took them back to Germany and delivered them to Hale. On his numerous trips and in the scope of his work he was exposed to many dangers. With surprising adroitness he again and again succeeded in escaping the clutches of the Gestapo, until one day fate overtook him too. One of his closest collaborators was Carl von Winckler, who, as an Austrian, was doing considerable work in Austria and Upper Silesia. Herbert Mumm von Schwarzenstein was active in a way similar of that of Hale. He had been Counselor of Legation, had been thrown out of the Foreign Office because of his political attitude and had devoted his life thereafter exclusively to the struggle against Hitler. His good connections with foreign diplomats, especially with Belgians and Americans, were of great importance to us. Kirck (sic), the last charge d'affaires of the American Embassy in Berlin, was his chief contact to the very end. He was made for this work because of his discretion, his exactness in details, and because of the skill with which he conducted discussions.

It was obvious that I could not personally remain an official under Hitler's dictatorship. Therefore I studied to be an attorney. My political activity did not cease during these years of training which I spent in the provinces. But as a result of lack of connection with Berlin, my political work lost its importance and turned into a quiet, small effort. Nevertheless it was possible to organize a reliable cell structure in Rhenish Hesse and in Pomerania. During long, and arduous individual operations, many valuable people were won over and added to the ranks of the resistance movement. I cannot mention all their names here. I would like to name only my professional colleague, Karl Schulte. He was particularly valuable as liaison man between our group and Marxist circles. His father had been a physician and
Independent Social Democratic Party deputy for many years. The son carried his father's testament into the present like a flag. He was one of the most educated men I have ever met among the Marxists. Necessity united us in a permanent exchange of ideas and good cooperation.

I found a changed picture when I returned to Berlin in 1938. If the German resistance movement was a loose mosaic of all political forces before 1933, there was now, to be sure, no firm organization, but an interplay of elements, in which the earlier political forces in Germany were reflected, but developed in unison rather than exhausting themselves in internecine warfare. There existed manifold groups which impinged upon one another, as a result of which now this, now that group stood in the political center. To be sure, I knew many people from these groups, but did not myself belong to any. My course was to be different. Through Biskarock I reached Hans Oster, the head of the Central Office of the Counter-Intelligence Department in the Wehrmacht High Command. With this contact I had reached the center of the resistance movement. Through Oster's efforts, the first practical basic principle of the necessity for cooperation with the military was promulgated. Our work could prosper only if we succeeded in winning representatives of the military ever to our point of view. We were living in a dictatorship. Nothing was to be achieved by democratic means and plebiscites. Without military support, the hands of civilian forces would have been tied. Bridging the way to the military offered the first prospect of success. This was the main work of Oster who, to a certain extent, was the business manager and the clearing house of the resistance movement. He was a man of God, of impeccable character and great clarity, which did not leave him even in dangerous situations. That he was able to take over the role of business manager was largely the work of his superior, Admiral Canaris. Canaris was the head of the Counter Intelligence Department of the High
Command of the Wehrmacht. He hated Hitler and National Socialism but felt too old to take an active part himself. At any rate, he held the protecting shield over Oster and permitted the counter-intelligence organization, insofar as it was under Oster, to be used to maintain, strengthen, and increase the membership of the German resistance movement. Our hope was Generaloberst Freiherr von Fritsche, the chief of the army command. He was anti-Nazi. Like him, Generaloberst Beck, at that time Chief of the General Staff, was a reliable opponent of Hitler. Both had close contact with the Lord Mayor of Leipzig, or Geerdeler. Naturally the attitude of Generaloberst Freiherr von Fritsche could not be concealed permanently from the Gestapo. With the help of a "bought" witness, Himmler hit upon the devilish plan of casting the suspicion of homosexuality on Fritsche and thereby sifting him, although in reality the culprit was a retired cavalry captain von Frisch. In other words, a "t" had to be smuggled into the name, in order to give a foundation to the accusation. When Hitler revealed this plan to his then chief adjutant, Colonel Hessbach, the latter's honor could not be silenced. He declared that he would inform Fritsche of this base plot. When Hitler forbade him to do this, Hessbach replied that he was not only chief adjutant to Hitler, but as an officer of the General Staff equally under the orders of Generaloberst von Fritsche, and reported the incident to him. Thereupon Fritsche made the most impolitic move conceivable. With reference to the lack of confidence in him, he requested release from his office. Later, when the case was continued against Fritsche for alleged homosexual acts, the notorious witness, who had been "bought" by Hitler, appeared on the scene. The honesty of this "bought" witness had to be tested by the court. In this connection, in keeping with the instructions impressed upon him by the Gestapo, he said that he had also been abused by other people.
to them (from the Papen group), they drilled the name of Herr von Tschirschky und Beogenderff into him. But the witness apparently not listened closely, for, as he expressed himself in the presence of the court, he accused a Herr von Tschirschky and a Herr von Beogenderff instead of the bearer of the double name. This statement sealed the unreliability of the witness.

Fritsch was exonerated because of his innocence which had been demonstrated, but he did not return to office. He was replaced by General Keitel as chief of the High Command of the Armed Forces (Wehrmacht) and by General von Brauchitsch as Commander-in-Chief of the Army. Now our entire hopes depended on Generalbeoberst Beck. At this time Hitler was pressing for a military conflict. By means of credit, Hitler had been able to do away with unemployment; but with that, the necessity had arisen of continuing down this road and to let the expansion of credit continue indefinitely. This practice, regardless of intent, could only lead to war. For this reason Schacht resigned as President of the Reichsbank. As an anti-Nazi, Generaloberst Beck fully realized that Hitler's procedure would necessarily lead to war. He was not willing to assume this responsibility before history and the German people. Therefore he resigned when the Germans entered into Czechoslovakia. Generaloberst Halder succeeded him. Again the tireless Lord Mayor (of Leipzig) Goerdeler tried to win him over. As I knew through Oster, Halder almost decided to join us. Even Brauchitsch played the strong man and revolutionary. But the contact with Halder and Brauchitsch was not strong enough to allow insight and consideration to mature to a decision. Both failed miserably.

However, this did not prevent Oster from continuing his work, for, if events were leading to war, the military, so it seemed, would have to gain in power. The wealth of questions which had been of a purely civil nature up to this time would necessarily have to take on a military character during a war. If, as during World War I, the executive functions were to be delegated to the
deputy commanding generals at home, then action would be possible. Therefore it appeared correct to wait until Hitler had declared war, because then conditions would be stronger than men. Then it would perhaps be possible to prevail on even weak characters like Brauchitsch and Halder to desert the Nazis. For the time being Oster was mainly concerned with establishing ever closer ties with other countries and above all with improving contact with English forces. At that time the Englishman, Ean Celvin, was living in Berlin. He was a member of the Casine-Gesellschaft (Casine Society) on Bendler Street, one of the foremost Berlin clubs. He displayed all the attributes of an Englishman, he was smart and cautious, he was bold and discreet, he was an Englishman and a European. Our ties became firmer. Friendship grew out of acquaintance. Ean Celvin made it possible for a really effective thread to be spun between us and his country through a visit on the part of Ewald von Kleist. Not long before the outbreak of war I was given the task enlarging upon this thread. I went to England, looked up Lord Lloyd and told him that the outbreak of war was imminent — reports of the English Ambassador, Sir Neville Henderson, to the contrary notwithstanding — and that hostilities would begin with a war against Poland, regardless of any suggestions for mediation. I was further able to tell him that English efforts to reach an agreement with Russia would be neutralized because the signing of an agreement between Hitler and Stalin was imminent. Lord Lloyd asked me for permission to pass both statements on to Lord Halifax. I had no qualms.

During the same visit I had a conversation with Winston Churchill. This talk took place at Churchill’s country estate. As I introduced my remarks with the statement: "I am no Nazi but a good patriot," a smile crept over Churchill’s broad face and he said: "So am I." Revelation of the content of this conversation will have to await a future date.
At that time we had the impression that the English Ambassador in Berlin, Sir Neville Henderson, was, to a certain degree, captivated by Hitler and National Socialism. Henderson once described to me in words of admiration his impression of the last Parteitag (Nazi Party Congress in Nuremberg). Above all, the spades of the German Labor Service had made a deep impression on him. We feared that his state of mind at the time would not be without influence on his official reports. In contrast to him, we had reason to believe that the First Counselor of Embassy, Sir George Ogilvy Forbes, was maintaining the clarity of his political insight.

Shortly before the outbreak of war, while attending a wedding, I met Henning von Tresckow, one of the best-qualified General Staff officers of the German Army. We had a long, detailed conversation. It ended with the conviction, which we had arrived at together, that duty and honor required us to do everything in our power to overthrow Hitler and National Socialism at the first opportunity during the war and thereby to save Germany and Europe from the danger of barbarism.
Chapter III

The Resistance Movement During the War

When Hitler began the war against Poland on 1 September 1939, the three prerequisites were fulfilled which the resistance movement had recognized as necessary in order to bring about the overthrow of Hitler.

1. Contact had been established with numerous non-German forces, which gave promise of cooperation.

2. The resistance movement, based on a Christian foundation, had established contact with the military. The movement had thereby reached out for the one and only instrument capable of administering the coup de grace to National Socialism.

3. As a result of the outbreak of war, the army, the chosen instrument, was freed from peace-time fetters and was able to develop independently.

Everyone with insight realized that a world war would be the direct consequence of the war against Poland. Hitler alone did not believe it. He confined himself to false information given him by his Foreign Minister, von Ribbentrop. The leading circles of the resistance movement were at that time particularly well informed. My personal assignment in the early days of September (1939) was to remain in touch with the English circles still in Berlin and thereby to maintain an uninterrupted exchange of views on diplomatic and military events.

A fortunate circumstance had occurred: Generalleutnant von Hammerstein re-emerged from obscurity and received command of an army on the Rhine. Hitler was to be prompted to visit this army in order to convince himself of the military strength of the Third Reich on the Rhine in anticipation of the expected attack by France while the campaign against Poland was still in
progress. Generaloberst von Hammerstein was determined to arrest and
overthrew Hitler on this occasion. When, despite the efforts of Sir
Neville Henderson, hostilities between England and the Third Reich began
on 3 September 1939 at 11:15, I was assigned to inform the English group
(in Berlin) of Hammerstein's imminent plan. The British Embassy in Berlin
had already been vacated. But I succeeded in reaching Sir George Ogilvy
Forbes in the Adlon Hotel Unter den Linden between 1:00 and 2:00 in the
afternoon and to communicate the information to him. Hitler certainly did
not know about our plans. But he had an almost uncanny sense for personal
dangers and cancelled his proposed visit. Shortly thereafter he decreed that
Hammerstein should relinquish command of his army and retire again. The
disappointment over the failure of our plan was probably equally great
among us as well as in the informed British circles.

Meanwhile the campaign in Poland took its course. The world knew what
a terroristic regime followed the footsteps of the German army into Poland.
Four years later, when I questioned Generalfeldmarschall von Beek about the
atrocities in Poland, he told me that Hitler had called together the army
leaders shortly before the beginning of the Polish campaign and told them
that the Poles would be treated with merciless severity after the end of the
campaign. He went on to say that things would happen which would not meet
with the approval of the German generals. For that reason, he said, he did
not want to burden the army with "liquidations" necessary for political
reasons, but rather to have the SS undertake the destruction of the Polish
upper stratum, that is, above all the destruction of the Polish clergy. He
continued by saying that he asked only non-interference in these matters on
the part of the generals, who were to confine themselves to their military
duties. As Beek explained it to me, the generals raised no objection to
this statement. Only after the Polish campaign, did serious differences arise between the SS and General Blaskowitz over the atrocities committed by the SS; in this disagreement Blaskowitz naturally lost out. During the Polish campaign, as I learned through Oster, the German General Staff feared a French offensive along the Rhine. In the beginning the so-called German Westwall was very weakly manned. We did not comprehend why the then French Generalissime Gamelin did not make use of this opportunity. According to the views of the German General Staff, with some effort he could have succeeded in breaking through along the Rhine. Gamelins operational abilities were no doubt very highly regarded by the German General Staff.

I was drafted into the army in October 1939 and, as a corporal, was assigned to an infantry regiment in Hunsrück and then in the approaches to the Westwall in Northern Lorraine. My battalion commander at that time was the later Lieutenant Colonel Gerd von Tresckow. He was a determined anti-Nazi, a genuine person, and endowed with more than average bravery. He thought that the hour of salvation from the yoke of Hitler would strike at the moment that an offensive was undertaken against France. He counted firmly on a failure of the offensive, inasmuch as he was constantly reminded of the striking power of the French during World War I. For this reason he tried again and again to bring about conferences between his brother Henning von Tresckow, then second General Staff officer of the Rundstedt Army Group, and me. During these conferences, Henning von Tresckow repeatedly emphasized that, in the opinion of the great majority of the German General Staff and almost all army groups and army commanders, the contemplated offensive against France would be stepped after a short initial success. This view changed somewhat in the course of the following months. A former Austrian officer of the Engineers' Corps had specialized in the field of analysis of
aerial photographs and had attained an ingenious high level of accomplishment in it. He was able to recognize each fortified point and each gun in aerial photographs, some of which were taken at an elevation of 10,000 meters (30,000 feet). On the basis of this analysis he was able to declare that the Maginot Line was exaggerated by far. According to him, in reality, in view of the German offensive weapons, it was only half as valuable as French propaganda had portrayed it. He went on to say that the French fortifications on the northern frontier were nothing but field fortifications and, furthermore, of such recent date, that they could not offer any serious resistance. From repeated photographs it was determined, to the amazement of the German General Staff, that construction of these fortifications was proceeding with a slowness which defied explanation from the military point of view. Now could the Dutch-Belgian fortifications be expected to put up stubborn resistance. Nevertheless, Henning von Tresckow repeated his opinion to me, that the German offensive against France would not be able to carry through. He maintained that, even taking into account the fortifications known to be weak, the Frenchman was a military adversary who was a master in the art of defense. If the Frenchman were to fight as he did in 1917-1918, as was to be expected, continued Tresckow, then the German offensive would finally fail despite its superiority in tanks and planes. When the offensive which had been planned for January, finally began in May 1940, the German Army everywhere encountered a soft enemy. The mass of the French army fought only with half of its energy. Thus the offensive turned into a great operational success, to the surprise of the German General Staff. After Holland, the greater part of Belgium, and a not inconsiderable part of Northern France were in German hands, the German General Staff was faced with the question whether the army should disregard the English army in
Western Belgium and swing south with collected forces in order to defeat France completely, or whether the army should, first destroy the English army by means of superior German force, and then turn against France. Hitler held the former view, whereas the majority of the General Staff maintained the latter opinion. After some hesitation and discussion pro and con, Hitler's view prevailed because Göring guaranteed that, with the help of the air force, he would prevent an escape of the English army across the Channel. The result was a failure of the original plan. In contrast to the Frenchman, the resistance of the British soldier was hard and determined. The German air force did not succeed in preventing the English army from escaping across the Channel. As Henning von Tresckow said to me, an even worse turn of events had been feared. According to the view of the German General Staff, it would have been correct from the operational point of view, if the British Commander-in-Chief, Lord Gort, had thrust southward with his combined forces to regain contact with the French armies, instead of escaping across the Channel. In France, Gamelin had meanwhile been replaced by General Weizgand. Only a stiffening of resistance was to be expected from him. If Lord Gort had acted as suggested above, the allied forces, in the opinion of the German General Staff, would have succeeded in holding up the German offensive at the decisive moment. France would have been preserved as a military and political force for the Allied powers. But Lord Gort preferred a retreat across the Channel. There can be no doubt that this retreat was a tactical success for England. But it was paid for with the renunciation of the great operational solution, that is, holding the Weygand Line in the West with the French. For us, all these military considerations were of great political significance. For Tresckow explained to me that a domestic political act on the part of the army against Hitler could take
place only if the German offensive failed. Henning continued that it was psychologically impossible to lead the victorious German army against Hitler. According to Tresckow, the psychological situation would be quite different if the offensive undertaken by Hitler against the advice of his generals had failed; now only a German defeat could break the spell which Hitler held over the German people and army. In this event, thought Henning van Tresckow, it would not be out of the question that he could win Rundstedt over to a military coup against Hitler. In any case, after the successful offensive against France, an army coup against Hitler was impossible.

It could not be doubted that France had collapsed above all because of spiritual weakness and much less because of material weakness. After the conclusion of the armistice, when France was forced to yield its sizeable air force, it contained, as Tresckow told me, a preponderant number of fighter planes. Not only the surprisingly large number of planes caused astonishment on the part of the Germans, but also the fact that these planes were also brand new and has never been used in the war against Germany. According to the views of the German General Staff, the German offensive would have ended differently if France had not needlessly spared its air force. Naturally that did not prevent Hitler from doing what he wanted with France instead of treating it mildly. He himself gave the order, on the basis of which General Huntzinger, the French representative at the armistice negotiations in Wiesbaden, was under constant secret observation. Thus even his notes which were lying on his desk were photographed by means of a camera built into the ceiling whenever he left the room for a moment.

After England had rejected Hitler's peace feelers of July and August 1940, Hitler set about preparing the invasion of England. The plan of this undertaking went under the code name of Seelöwe (sealion). Again Henning
ven Tresckew had an important connection with the preparation of this invasion. We were convinced that success in this invasion would have meant the domination of all Europe by Hitler. We strove to prevent this success under all circumstances and with all means at our disposal, even at the cost of a severe defeat for the Third Reich. The invasion of England in direct connection with the defeat of France, at a time when England had not yet recovered from the rout at Dunkirk, promised the most success. The prerequisite for this operation was the availability of sufficient bottoms. According to the statements of the German sea warfare command, this shipping space was not in existence at the time. Thus the invasion was prepared in another way. While the ships were being built, the Göring air offensive against England got under way. Since Henning von Tresckew was then charged with maintaining liaison between the army and the air force, we were exceedingly well informed about the momentary state of affairs. Through Henning von Tresckew I knew that Hitler had given the air force the order to bomb not only military centers but also to attack residential areas and, above all, to destroy historical monuments in England, especially old churches. Hitler based this repeated order on the consideration that it was necessary, in this way, to strike at English pride and to humble the English people. The air force did not raise objections to Hitler's order. Preparations for the invasion itself went on concurrently. Again it was the Austrian officer from the Engineers Corps (mentioned above) who analyzed the aerial photographs of the English coastal defenses. In contrast to France, however, the work of fortifying the English coast proceeded so rapidly that it daily became more dangerous to risk the invasion. Thus Tresckew's representations, which were based on political considerations, to give up the thought of an invasion, were more and more widely heeded and
accepted. The English fighter planes forces delivered one battle after another during these critical weeks. One day, when over 130 German bombers failed to return from the skies over England, the order had to be given to halt the air offensive and to confine activities to occasional bombardments.

At the beginning of 1941 Tresckew effected my transfer to the staff of the Army Group of the Center. He himself had meanwhile become First General Staff Officer of the Army Group of the Center in the east. Through my new position as his ordnance officer, daily collaboration was possible and which, up to the time of Tresckew's death, was motivated by the thought of trying every means to overthrow Hitler and his system. In Henning von Tresckew appeared three characteristics which are found frequently individually but very rarely in combination. He was good, intelligent, and industrious, and all these to an astonishing degree. His noble attitude (Gesinnung), the keenness of his mind, and his intensive working manner were a source of marvel to all who knew him, superiors, comrades, and men under him. He threw his whole personality into the political struggle and thereby assured himself in the history of the resistance movement of a place in the front ranks of the men who can take pride in having raised their hands against Hitler and his system. What had decided Tresckew to bring me into his immediate entourage was certainly not my military but my political qualification. In this matter Tresckew needed someone to complement him, and this he sought in me. Jokingly he called me his Kernak (elephant guide) who had to lead him along to right path. I tried honestly to fulfill this assignment. For me, naturally, who had previously been uninformed on military matters, it was of the greatest value to gain an insight into the higher troop command. It seemed as though I were entering a new world, which had been opened to me by outstanding teachers.
Tresckew told me at that time that Hitler had decided to call off the invasion of England. Instead, according to Tresckew, he had commissioned the command (in Posen) of the Army Group of the Center under Field Marshal von Beck to prepare a campaign for the subjugation of Russia. He, Tresckew, said that he had debated for some time as to Hitler's definition of this term. At first he (Tresckew) had been of the opinion that the military plan against Russia could be attributed to a general lust for conquest on the part of Hitler. But in the course of time he (Tresckew) had become more and more convinced that Hitler was motivated by other considerations. Hitler, according to Tresckew, had seen that England, with its alliance with the United States, had built up a hinterland with whose manpower reservoir, raw material sources, and industrial capacity it would probably be able to continue the war for such a period of time that the German machine would be much more likely to overheat than would the Allied machine. In order not to be at this disadvantage, Hitler (said Tresckew) wanted to conquer Russia, in order to control a land whose population, agricultural and industrial raw materials would make him independent. He, Tresckew, did not believe that the subjugation of Russia would be possible, according to the lessons of military history, especially since the available German forces would not suffice to get a firm grip on European Russia. But if (continued Tresckew) contrary to expectations, the Russian soldier were to fight as poorly as the French soldier had in 1940, then the realization of our intention to overthrow Hitler would be vastly more difficult. Therefore (said Tresckew) the decision would have to be reached to capitalize on the German defeat to be expected from this campaign, in order to cause the army to rise against Hitler (on the basis of the psychological situation created by this anticipated defeat).

There was no doubt in Tresckew's mind that this task would be difficult and
accompanied by disappointments. In his opinion, the basic prerequisite for such an action was the necessity of having the right people in the right places. Tresckew was therefore intent upon conducting a military personnel policy within his sphere of influence, which would place officers with a decent attitude, proper political views and with power of decision in key positions, the occupation of which would provide the basis for such an action. From the long list of these people I can mention only a few who were to become decisive for the history of this group. Colonel Bernd von Kleist occupied the prime position. He came from the same regiment as Henning von Tresckew, had been seriously wounded in World War I, had lost a leg, and was now in active service once more. In our group he was the incarnation of the idea of nobility and genuineness. His character was without the slightest blemish. He was incapable of an ignoble act. This his decisive character trait was also the reason for his political attitude. An outstanding military sense enabled him to foresee events, of which others scarcely had an inkling. His tireless industry contributed to making him indispensable at his post. In our group he exerted the greatest influence, because he was [as it is said in Middle High German epics] a knight without fear and reproach. Occasionally, when I asked him for his opinion about the prospects of the Russian campaign, he answered that the German army would fight like an elephant attacking a swarm of ants. The elephant (he said) would kill thousands and thousands, even millions of ants, but he would finally be overcome and eaten to the bone by the overwhelming number of ants. Along with him, Colonel Freiherr Rudolf Friedrich von Gersdorff should be mentioned, a slender knight who was armed with a clear, alert intellect. He was characterized above all by an unusually rapid power of comprehension. His elegant appearance and his determined actions won him friends immediately. His trait, that of telling stories with wit and to the point, could be
compared with that of Colonel Schultze-Böttger. His firm and clean attitude assured him of a lasting influence on his comrades. He surpassed most of the men of his own age in operational skill. For a number of years he had been the adjutant of General (Generalleberst) Beck, when the latter occupied the post of chief of the General Staff. There was nothing, no matter how exciting, that Schultze-Böttger did not dispatch with the quiet and calm of his unusual character. He always struck at the heart of things. His successor was Lieutenant Colonel Alexander von Voss, the son-in-law of General Stülpnaged. Voss was talented far above average; most characteristic of him was his sensitivity. He was at fever pitch during all great military and political events. His noble heart could arouse him just as violently in the face of an injustice as in the face of a great joy. The 20th of July [1944] caused him to end his life with a pistol shot.

In the course of years, the group changed and others entered it, for example, Major Ulrich von Oertzen, who in his inimitable way knew how to work systematically and to establish law and order in the greatest confusion. Similar to him, Captain Eggert was characterized by calmness and consistency. He was distinguished above all by the steadfastness of his religious and political views (Weltanschauung). First Lieutenant Hans Albrecht von Boddien performed a great number of unpleasant details conscientiously and faithfully. His knowledge of people and his never failing instinct for the things of human life which can be accomplished only with finger-tip feelings, were unsurpassed.

At the beginning of the Russian campaign Field Marshal von Beck was commander of the Army Group of the Center. He was no military leader in the sense of Count Schlieffen, but a man with operational talent. Politically he was a non-Nazi. Inwardly the whole te-de of National Socialism went
against him, but deep in his heart, like Rundstedt, he was determined never to raise a hand against Hitler. The liabilities of vanity and egaismus were attached to his character. What remained after these deductions from his character was little enough. In order at least to make the attempt to draw him over to our side, two adjutants, who came from our group, were assigned to him: Count Hans von Hardenberg and Count Heinrich von Lehnderff. If Count Hardenberg was mere the diplomat who could give practical advice in all situations, then Count Lehnderff was characterized by East Prussian seriousness and reliability. Both these men were not to blame that their assignment, to win Beck over to our side failed.

The plan to subjugate Russia was already prepared in the spring of 1941. The maps and orders were stored in the safes of the Army Group when Molotov went to Berlin to confer with Hitler. After the beginning of the Russian campaign, when Hitler gave the impression that only his conference with Molotov had convinced him that an armed conflict with Russia was unavoidable, we could not help but smile because we knew that not only the designs on Russia were long prepared but that the first steps had already been taken. As was the case before the Polish campaign, Hitler again called the field marshals together. Shortly after this meeting Beck told me that Hitler had set a period of six weeks for the conquest of Russia and had expressed the opinion that there would be stubborn battles during the first three weeks, but that then the German armored columns would race across the Russian expanses without meeting any appreciable resistance. In these calculations Hitler had found an ally in the figure of Field Marshal von Brauchitsch who also believed that six to eight weeks would suffice. Beck did not share this opinion; in fact he did not hesitate,
even then, to express the view in a small group that he did not know how
this war was to be won. Again Hitler had pointed out to his field marshals
that the SS would follow the advancing army in order to set up a bleed-terror
regime as it had in Poland. Nor was there a protest this time either \[on the
part of the generals\]. Only when Hitler reached the point of ordering all
Russian commissars and officers to be shot if they were taken prisoners, did
Brauchitsch raise objections. Thereupon the order was extenuated so that it
applied only the captured commissars. With the support of Beck's army
commanders we succeeded in persuading Beck to raise objections \[to this
proposed shooting of commissars\]. Naturally without success, although our
group attempted to call Beck's attention to the inhumaneness and illegality
under international law of this order. Shortly after the beginning of
hostilities, when the first Russian commissar was taken prisoner, and Gersdorff
informed Tresckow of the fact, the latter decided immediately not to permit
the commissar's execution. Thus it was possible, here and there, simply not
to carry out orders given by Hitler. Among the preparations for the Russian
campaign was an order from Hitler, on the basis of which a series of lectures
were given to the staff of the Army Group by alleged or actual Russian
specialists. These lectures were, for the most part, of an economic nature.
They all had the theme that Russian agricultural and industrial raw material
areas lay west of the Urals and that the capacity of Russian industry was so
slight that one could hope the Russian would not be in the position to put
really good weapons, especially tanks, into the field, let alone replace them.
Today this assertion sounds like a conscious misrepresentation. But this
assertion was made again and again during the years of the Russian campaign,
only with this modification: Russia would soon be at the end of its ropes.
Naturally the number of believers decreased from year to year. Of all the
military preparations, the one which made me shudder most was the
deployment of the Division "Brandenburg", which fought in Russian
uniforms and, through this violation of international law, deceived the
Russians and made possible the capture, undamaged, of the bridge to Brest-
Litovsk on the morning of the attack on Russia.

To the surprise of the German General Staff, the mass of the Russian
European army was stationed directly at the western boundary of Russia,
although in 1812 General von Clausewitz had successfully taught the Russians
to exploit the strategic position of the Russian expanses by a prompt retreat
to the east. On this occasion the Russians did the opposite. Thus the mass
of the active Russian European army west of Moscow was defeated and destroyed
in a relatively short-time. Only by considering the full import of this fact,
is it possible to appreciate Stalin's tremendous political and military
achievement in nevertheless stopping the German army in front of Moscow, in
defeating the German army, with new forces raised from the civilian population,
in conjunction with the gruesome Russian winter, and finally, in the years
following, in slowly but surely forcing it back, demoralizing and grinding it
to pieces. When the staff of the Army Group of the Center was located in
Borisow near the Beresina in the autumn of 1941, Beck had recognized the
need of not continuing the advance but rather to pass the Russian winter in
positions protected by field fortifications. Beck's suggestion was rejected
with disdain by Hitler. When the then Chief of the General Staff, General
Halder, who shared Beck's views, requested Beck to send an army commander to
Hitler and to explain to him once more why it was correct to halt the
offensive now, Beck chose the commander of the 2nd Armored Army, Generaleoberst
(General) Guderian, for this mission. In a discussion, both Beck and Guderian
were in complete accord. Guderian flew to Hitler's headquarters. But even
before he returned, a call from Halder arrived, in which he expressed his
surprise that Guderian had agreed with Hitler rather than to contradict him. When Guderian reported back to Beck, and the latter confronted him with Halder's communication, Guderian said, with a shrug of his shoulders, that he had indeed wanted to advise Hitler against it, but that after having entered the room he could do nothing but agree with Hitler. This incident is characteristic of the endless conferences with Hitler. But it is also indicative for an evaluation of Guderian. The result was that the German Army succeeded in reaching the outskirts of Moscow but not in taking Moscow. On the contrary, the German Army was to exhaust itself in sight of Moscow and ran the risk of checking in the fatal pincers of newly formed Russian armies. Hitler planned to give this offensive a special impetus by visiting Beck's headquarters. Again and again he announced his coming, only to call off his trips. Finally he came in an airplane. The airfield was connected with headquarters by a road about four kilometers (2 1/2 miles) long. Hitler had already refused in advance to cover this distance in a vehicle of the Army Group. Rather, he sent a long automobile column from his headquarters in East Prussia several days before his visit, in order that his own vehicles could drive him the four kilometers from the airfield in Berriscow to Beck's headquarters and back again. Unbelievable security measures were taken to prevent any incident. During the conference itself, Hitler went into a rage against his own General Staff which he accused of everlasting timidity. He said approximately the following: "Before I was Reich Chancellor, I thought that the General Staff resembled a wild dog who had to be leashed to prevent him from attacking all other people. After I became Reich Chancellor, I learned that the German General Staff was anything but a wild dog. This General Staff contradicted me in the matter of rearmament, occupation in the Rhineland, the entry into Austria, the occupation of Czechooslovakia, and finally even the war against Poland. The General Staff advised me against
the French offensive, the General Staff advised me against waging war with Russia. It is I who must always spur this wild dog on!" Truly, the concept of a statesman.

On this occasion Hitler also mentioned his plan for the capture of Moscow: No German soldier was to enter the city, which was to be surrounded in a wide arc. No soldier, no civilian, whether man, woman, or child, was to be allowed to leave the city. Every attempt to do so was to be repulsed with the force of arms. He (Hitler, said) had taken steps to fleece and drown Moscow and its environs with huge equipment. Where Moscow stood, he would create a mighty lake which would remove the focal point of the Russian people from the sight of the civilized world forever.

The first signs of the coming military defeat dated from this point of time. We had to make political capital on this. Tresckow now considered the time ripe to tell Beck what was what. In a long lecture Tresckow set forth his views on the situation as a whole and designated Hitler as the man who bore sole responsibility. But even before Tresckow was able to draw the obvious conclusions from these facts for Beck's benefit, Beck jumped up, interrupted the talk and, rushing out of the room while shaking with rage, shouted: "I will not permit the Führer to be reviled. I will shield the Führer and defend him against everyone who dares to attack him." Since I was sitting in Beck's ante-room, I understood every word. Our efforts to win Beck over had to be considered a failure.

While the Army Group of the Center (Smolensk) was pinned down at Moscow, our eyes turned to our hinterland. Although the army group legally had only slight possibility of exerting influence, we nevertheless succeeded in holding the SS terror down to a minimum. But that was less our merit than that of SS-Gruppenführer Nebe. Nebe had become known in the service of the
criminal police long before 1933, had developed an international reputation in his field, and was taken over into the SS after 1933. He was one of the few people within the SS who represented our point of view spiritually and politically and who had written the fight against Hitler on their banners. Outwardly, to be sure, Nebe gave no indication of his feelings. But Oster, who had worked with him for many years, let me know early enough of what mind Nebe was and that there, under the mask of the SS leader, a determined anti-Nazi was concealed. Nevertheless, his uniform alone was enough reason for us to approach him with caution.

Tresckow assigned me to the task of sounding Nebe out and determining whether Oster's view was correct. The result of my efforts justified Oster's opinion in every respect. Thus we soon established complete cooperation with Nebe who, on the one hand, was a master at the art of concealing his true attitude, and on the other hand invented a thousand excuses to sabotage Hitler's murder edicts to an unbelievable extent. We succeeded in rescuing many Russians from an almost certain death. Above all, the Russian population around Berrissow could not do enough to express its thanks to us. They knew how many Russian lives we had spared. Naturally it was unavoidable that in the long run Nebe's SS personnel had him under the suspicion of soft-heartedness. For that reason, SS commandos were sent into the territory under his jurisdiction and carried out their bloody works even though they were not accountable to his command. Thus, one day, a report reached the headquarters of the Army Group of the Center, to the effect that an SS commando had killed 7000 Jews in Berrissow within three days. The investigation which took place immediately showed that a special commando of the SS had arrived in Berrissow. This commando had immediately instituted a "Celebration of the German Police" which resulted in some wild doings. On the following morning at 4:00, the SS
commando had surrounded the Jewish section of the city of Bariosow. The Jews were dragged out of all the houses. Then they had to march to a neighboring woods. There the families were torn apart. Groups were formed, separated according to sex and age. Then one group had to dig a tremendous pit. After this had taken place, the same group had to undress completely. No consideration was given to age or sex. The Jews were further ordered to lie down in the pit in this state. Then the SS commande stepped up to the edge of the pit and fired on these poor tortured people with machine pistols as though sugar were being sprinkled on a cake. Immediately the next group had to step up and, without regard for the fact that the first group was not all dead, had to shovel earth over them and then, in turn, this next group was killed and formed the second layer in the pit. Thus 7000 persons were killed in numerous layers above one another. This report aroused such indignation among the staff officers of the Army Group of the Center that a number of officers, with tears of anger in their eyes, besieged Beck, demanding that he intervene and order this state of affairs to cease. This was the first time that we had at least partial success. To be sure, Beck did not venture to interfere by force of arms and to arrest these responsible. But he commissioned me to draw up a draft of a memorandum on the incident to Hitler. In this way a repetition of these atrocities in other places under our jurisdiction was prevented. Shortly thereafter a further ominous order came from Hitler. This order specified that all P/W camps were to be examined to determine which Russian prisoners had been members of the Communist Party. The order stipulated that the statements of two other prisoners was to be taken as sufficient evidence of the party membership of a prisoner. In such a case, the party member concerned was to be separated from the communist party and handed over to the SS for liquidation. At this order our group virtually revolted in the presence of Beck. I personally
called Beck's attention to the illegality and anti-internation-law-spirit of this order. Again Beck delegated me to draw up a draft of a memorandum to Hitler, in which I raised counter-principles. Unfortunately Beck crossed out the really decisive sentences and tempered the language to the point of impotence. The result naturally was that the order remained in force.

During this time I devoting myself mainly to two tasks of a purely political nature. By means of repeated flights from Russia to Berlin and back, I established liaison between the resistance groups at the front and the resistance groups in the army at home. I informed Oster of the military situation, of the psychological situation and of the conclusions that we drew from it. I also received reports from Oster about the home front and about the political situation in Europe and in the world. In this way we "felt each other's pulse." Beyond that, at irregular intervals I exchanged views with our Swedish intermediary who lived in Berlin, so that we might maintain our thread of contact with England. This thread became especially effective at a much later date when I was able to inform our intermediary about the rocket bombs which were in preparation; I was also able to tell him about their effect and the place of their manufacture. We had the satisfaction of seeing Peenemünde levelled to the ground by air attack shortly thereafter. In order to keep myself as well informed as possible, I also took the opportunity to call on the then Under Secretary in the Foreign Office, Freiherr von Weizsäcker, and, by giving him an unadorned account of the military situation, asked him for a report on foreign political affairs. In the course of this report it became evident that Ribbentrop was catering and beautifying the German military situation in a completely irresponsible manner, while we learned from Weizsäcker at the same time that the situation as a whole in the world was quite different from Ribbentrop's
official reports to the Wehrmacht. At that time, also, my personal connections with Ambassador von Hassel began.

While the fighting raged in Russia, quiet prevailed in the west. Field Marshal von Witzleben was supreme commander there. Through Oster I learned that Witzleben was trying with the idea of carrying out a military stroke against Hitler from there. Unfortunately I was not in a position to report similarly on Beck’s attitude in order to encourage Witzleben to proceed with his plan. Witzleben wanted to undergo an operation before carrying out his plan. While he was still in the hospital he was shelved by Hitler. In November 1941 the expected great German defeat occurred in the East. Hitler held Brauchitsch responsible for it and let him disappear in oblivion. Contrary to expectations, Halder remained chief of the General Staff. Calling attention to his poor state of health, Beck retired in the nick of time. He was succeeded by Field Marshal von Kluge as commander of the Army Group of the Center. Nor was Kluge able to prevent the loss of the battle of Moscow. This defeat meant more than a lost battle. With it, the myth of the invincibility of the German soldier was exploded. It was the beginning of the end. The German army was never again to recover from this defeat. Instead, an entirely new element appeared among the troops. In the thunder of battle the common soldier experienced his God. When he lost everything that he had, he sought and found solace in religious things. The Holy Communion figures soared to astronomical heights. The change in the supreme command of the Army Group of the Center became a mighty turning point in Oster’s political activity. Klug tended to share our views. To be sure, up to this time, as in the case of Beck, he had merely been a non-Nazi. He, too, was not without a certain conceit. In addition, he lacked the operational talent to the degree that Beck possessed it. But he had a grain more of consistency.
He was a glowing wick. If Tresckow had failed in his task to turn Beck into an anti-Nazi, he did not let this failure bother him. He considered it his main task to win Kluge over to our side. For years Tresckow waged a battle for this man. Only a person who knows from immediate contact with what skill and intensity Tresckow struggled to win Kluge over, can understand and re-live the difficulties of these 2½ years. Whenever Tresckow believed he had brought Kluge to the point where he wanted him, he had to experience Kluge's wavering on the following day. But Tresckow was tireless. In the end Kluge yielded to his influence. To be sure, only to his influence. Not without mockery did I frequently call Tresckow the clock maker who wound the Kluge-clock in the morning so that it ran during the day and struck. But only Tresckow was able to wind this clock again when it ran down. Unfortunately this clock ran down often. It is not possible to imagine what a turn of events would have taken place if Tresckow had been with Kluge at the decisive hour on 20 July 1944. He probably would have succeeded in forcing Kluge along the right road and keeping him there.

Chance had given us another particularly delicate instrument through which we were able to and did exert pressure. The salaries of German officers had always been very modest, nor had Hitler changed this situation. But in order to bind the officers corps firmly to him, Hitler paid the officers, from army commanders upwards, sums from his treasury which were not provided for in the budget and which were not subject to tax. This measure was a slap in the face of the German officer's concept of honor. For in this way Hitler led his higher generals by a golden but no less effective leash. One day Kluge received a letter which contained a check in the amount of RM 250,000. On the check, in Hitler's handwriting, stood the words: "For your birthday, my dear Field Marshal. RM 125,000 you
can spend for building on your estate. Reich Minister Speer has
instructions." Kluge accepted this check and also made use of the
building permit for his personal advantage. We knew of this incident
and did not hesitate to tell Kluge that he could justify acceptance of
the check before the verdict of history only if he could prove that
he took the money to prevent his retirement, so that he could devote
himself more energetically to the planned coup d'etat.

During the years in which Kluge commanded the Army Group of the
Center, I continued both of my previously described tasks. Through Oster
and his colleagues, Freiherr Zu Guttenberg and Justus Drellbäck, I became
acquainted with the Berlin attorney, John, at that time (1942). He in turn
brought me into contact with the attorney, Claus Benheoffer, and attorney
Wirmer. All three of them belonged to the civilian circles of the resistance
movement. Through John, who was a particularly intelligent and active
fighter, I became acquainted with the Lord Mayor of Leipzig, Dr. Geerdeler,
and through him in turn with General (Generalleberst) Beck. In both of these
men I learned to know the real leaders of the German resistance movement. If
Beck and Geerdeler are to be characterized, then Beck was the head, and
Geerdeler the heart, of the German resistance movement. Since June (1942)
I had been in constant contact with them. Both men made an indelible
impression on me. Beck was not immediately recognizable as an officer and
member of the General Staff. First of all he created the impression of a
wise man. Every word that he uttered, every motion of his hand showed how
well balanced he was and how he expressed the finest shades of difference in
the thoughts which he felt compelled to express. Three things, above all,
impressed me about his character. His whole personality radiated such noble
purity that anything irreverent would have been impossible in his presence.
As varied as the backgrounds and individual groups of the German resistance movement were, there was never any expression of doubt in the recognition of his person as head of the opposition. If a dispute arose — and there were many of them — it was immaterial of what nature they were, whether a factual or personal difference, he decided the question in such a way that even the loser accepted his decision without challenge. He was a real gentleman who was a combination of goodness and definite authority. To be sure, the General Staff officer was also alive within him. In this respect he was a tragic figure. He resembled a Michael Angels without arms. Everything within him yearned for operational activity. Fate prevented him from applying this talent. What the German army accomplished in the last war, what the German army commanders achieved, that is his work and his school. In the summer of 1942, when I told him that, according to the views of Tresckow, the war was lost because of the situation which had arisen in Russia, he replied: "To whom are you saying that? This war was lost before the first shot was fired." And then he continued to describe the military diversions which, thanks to Hitler, had been undertaken; the occupation of Norway, the Balkan campaign, the war in North Africa — all of these were things which, according to Beck, could lead only to defeat. It was indeed an esthetic pleasure to listen to this man, as he painted the future of the war before the mental eye, slowly and deliberately, proceeding word for word. Now that it is all over, we can only say that each of his prophecies was fulfilled. He not only predicted the German catastrophe in Russia. He also predicted exactly how the western campaign of 1944-1945 would be lost, that the Allies would first land in Sicily and then in Italy, that, one day, the British would also appear in Greece, and that, in conclusion, without the consideration of Spain, a mighty invasion would take place on the northwest coast of France, the success of which would be made
possible as a result of the use of the fleet, the airforce, and the paratroops. I had the impression that I was face to face with a military leader of world history. The more the conversation turned to details, the more a difference of opinion became apparent in one question or another. It was quite possible for us to express an opinion contrary to his. With undivided attention he followed the opposing arguments often he plucked them apart so that we were convinced now and then, however — and this was his greatness of character — he declared himself converted. Beck's weakness, perhaps, lay in the fact that his political activity in the first instance stemmed more from a sense of duty rooted in a moral conviction rather than from an original passion. Geerdeler was quite similar but also quite different. If I said that he was the heart of the German resistance movement, I meant it in the following way: As a result of the many disappointments which the opposition experienced during the war, it was understandable that many people finally gave up all efforts in disappointment or hit upon other plans. That was not true of Geerdeler. He was like a meter; he carried the resistance movement through all valleys and depths; he never despaired; he possessed a convincing logic of the heart; and history will one day credit him with having done without hesitation what his great heart inspired him to do. In addition, he was a man of great spirit. He combined within himself a tremendous knowledge of foreign political conceptions with a clear view of the domestic political situation and, finally, a detailed knowledge of the manifold structure of German economic life. All these things he raised to a high common denominator. In a word, he had a political head of the first order. Finally, he also had the virtue which I have already mentioned in connection with Beck. He tolerated contradiction, expressed his opinion about it, was really able to discuss matters and equally in a position to change his opinion if he found it necessary to declare himself convinced. One characteristic of Geerdeler's,
his great phantasy, should not be left unmentioned. This phantasy sometimes let him view things as real which were only in the process of arising.
The difficulties and dangers, under which a meeting with these men was possible, were legion. But never did Beck and Geerdeler shy away from these difficulties and dangers when they considered a meeting necessary.
When I suggested to Geerdeler, who had just returned from a conference with Field Marshal von Küchler, that he (Geerdeler) go to Smolensk with me and talk with Kluge and Tresckew, there was no hesitation on his part. He agreed and did so. His friends in the High Command of the Armed Forces provided him with the necessary false papers. Thus he went to the headquarters of the Army Group of the Center in Smolensk and met with Tresckew and Kluge. This first meeting was a great success. For the first time, Tresckew had the feeling that he was face to face with a congenial person. At once, the bond between both men was formed. Only death separated them again. One of Geerdeler's great qualities was the gift of speaking convincingly with people of the most varied classes and winning them over to our cause. On the basis of Tresckew's groundwork, Geerdeler broke the ice with Kluge and, to a certain extent, obliged him. Even though Kluge later often wavered and frequently raised objections, in order to veil his retreat, inwardly he felt himself a comrade-in-arms, a co-conspirator. Geerdeler had understood the technique of grasping Kluge by the sword belt. Whenever Kluge wanted to withdraw from us, one pull on the part of Geerdeler sufficed to keep him in line. Naturally we had to strive to maintain constant contact with Geerdeler. In Berlin, in the person of the excellent and reliable Studienrat (high school professor) Kaiser and of Professor Jessen, he had loyal friends who frequently brought us together with him in the darkness of night without arousing the Gestapo's suspicions.
Among the people, who kept up the contact between Geerdeler and us despite all
difficulties and in disregard of all personal dangers, Bernd von Kleist stood out. He worked in harmony with Geerdeler. I then recognised the necessity of bringing Beck and Tresckew together. Both had met before the war when Beck was Chief of the General Staff and Tresckew General Staff officer in the Operations Division. But their former assignments had brought them together only on military grounds. Now the old bond was renewed. A political circle was formed, carried by high seriousness, employing all means because everything had to be won, if it were not to be lost.

Later when Schultze-Bütting became First General Staff officer in Field Marshal von Manstein's army group, I was again able to make a contribution toward increasing our collaboration, in that I succeeded in bringing about a meeting between Beck and his former adjutant. At about the same time, through Kaiser, I became acquainted with General Olbricht, the Chief of the General Army Office (Allgemeines Heeresamt), the most important department under the commander of the Replacement Army (Ersatzheer). Olbricht, a deeply religious man, was determined to employ his military authority and power in the overthrowing of Hitler. Thus, in 1942, the plans of the German resistance movement crystallised more and more. Events led to a meeting between Olbricht and Tresckew, the result of which was that Olbricht and Oster pledged themselves to build up an instrument in Berlin, Vienna, Cologne, and Munich, with the aid of which Hitler's power was to be seized in the cities in question when the first stroke against Hitler was begun elsewhere. The point of dispute was whether it would be possible to carry out this stroke with the Replacement army on the front army. In this connection the question of assassination of Hitler was seriously discussed.
Among the civilian forces within the resistance movement, Nikolaus von Halem was the first to contemplate the thought of an attempt on Hitler's life. There had often been talk of an impending military defeat which would have as a direct consequence the threatening loss of the entire war. There had often been mention of an economic collapse. None of these things had come to pass. In disgust Halem had therefore turned away from all conferences and, instead, concentrated on finding a man who would be prepared to undertake an attempt on Hitler's life. He thought that he had found the man in the person of a former Free Corps fighter. But this man also failed him. It did not even reach the stage of an attempt. Rather the Gestapo succeeded in unmasking the conspiracy. Not only Halem but also Mumm von Schwarzenstein fell victim to the subsequent investigation. Their silence, despite torture, saved the rest of us from being discovered. Meanwhile the turn of the year 1942–1943 approached. The landing of the Americans and British in Northwest Africa cast the first shadow of the coming invasion. In the early days of November 1942, when the German naval command reported that a large convoy protected by warships had passed through the Strait of Gibraltar in an easterly direction, Tresckow asked General Heusinger, the chief of the Operations Division in the Army High Command, how this fact was to be interpreted. Heusinger replied that they of the Army High Command were of the conviction that it was an attempt to relieve the hard-pressed base at Malta. He went on to say that there was no thought in German military circles about the possibility of an invasion of North Africa because the Americans and the British were in no position to do so. Immediately thereafter the landing became a fact. Only a short time later the 6th German army was surrounded and destroyed at Stalingrad. This event was
like handwriting on the wall. Then and there Tresckow and I decided, come
what may, to let the deed follow the thought of Hitler's overthrow.

Translated by

T/5 Walter J. Mueller

Biographical Records Sectio
Chapter IV

THE ATTEMPT ON HITLER'S LIFE

ON MARCH 13, 1944

The German resistance movement against Hitler and National Socialism had it all clearly defined from the beginning that the overthrow of Hitler was a prerequisite to the successful outcome of the planned coup d'état. There was no agreement, however, as to the manner of overthrowing Hitler.

The civilian group within the resistance movement was of the opinion that Hitler must be seized but not killed. An attempt on Hitler's life would arouse repugnance in view of the soft and sentimental temperament of the average German. Also, there was the danger that the assassination of Hitler might have created a myth later, something to the effect that, with Hitler alive, everything would perhaps have turned out all right in the end. The idea was to seize Hitler alive, try him before the entire world and thus make this man and his system go down in history as something absurd. Burgomaster Goerdeler was the main supporter of this idea. The military group was of a different opinion. It was the military who were to put the plan into execution and they considered that the seizure of Hitler was next to impossible if not impossible.

They knew the attitude and the spirit of the German soldier. They knew, above all, what the oath meant. They were aware of the fact that 70 million Germans and a great part of the non-German population of Europe were engaged in the war against the powers which fought Germany
and were, so to speak, under the ban of Adolf Hitler. Europe was like a school class with Hitler standing before them, the cane in his hand. The school boys showed their fear in a more or less concealed manner. On whom will the teacher "pick" next? The military group within the resistance movement feared that this fascination emanating from Adolf Hitler would last as long as he was alive. To remove it with one stroke was considered by the military as the most urgent task. This idea, whose main exponent was Generaloberst Beck, was accepted. The resistance movement decided not to seize Hitler but to kill him.

It was obvious that the assassination of Adolf Hitler was only the initial spark of the planned coup d'état. The next step was the occupation of the most important parts of Berlin by military forces not only in order to remove the old system from the Government center of the German Reich but also to constitute a new one. The initial spark was considered advisable only if the next step could follow immediately. Under the conditions prevailing around the beginning of 1945, the execution of the initial spark was to be the task of the active military forces while the occupation of Berlin was to be the task of the reserve army. As already stated, all plans were concentrated in the hands of Hans Oster. He submitted all important facts to the head of the movement, Generaloberst Beck, and received instructions from him. It was his task to contact General of the Infantry Olbricht, Chief of the Allgemeines Heeresamt, main division of the command of the reserve army, in order to take the necessary steps for
the occupation of Berlin. Olbright and Oster are the two men who considered and drew up the first plans for the seizure of power within the Reich. They were in search of a man in active military service who would be in a position to kindle the initial spark thus giving them the signal for the execution of their own plans. This man was found in the person of Henning von Tresckow. He gave the work done so far the sharpness and intensity which appear at the point where a more or less amiable tea conversation turns into a deadly serious matter. Oster and Tresckow have never met before. It was my duty to bring them together and see to it that they continued to keep in touch. Whoever lived in Germany during the war knows all the precautionary measures one had to take in order to avoid the discovery of the planned coup d'état by the Gestapo. For this reason every conversation which was not absolutely necessary was avoided. Even among the most trusted persons only a name was pronounced only if the situation required it.

At the last meeting Olbright-Tresckow at the end of 1942, Olbright asked for eight more weeks in order to work out, in collaboration with Oster, the plan for the occupation of Berlin, Cologne, Munich and Vienna. At the expiration of this term and acting in accordance with orders from Tresckow, I saw Olbright once more at which time he uttered these memorable words: "We are ready. The initial spark can be kindled now." Meanwhile, Tresckow had not remained inactive. He doubled his efforts to persuade his Generalfeldmarschall von Kluge, to remove Hitler and take over the reins of government. Our idea was to have Kluge, in
his capacity of supreme commander of an army group, participate from
the beginning in the coup d'état. Thus, he would have exercised a
strong influence on the hesitant commanders at the front and on the
reserve army. He was to begin at the same time the withdrawal on the
eastern front, repeatedly demanded by the General Staff and refused by
Hitler; he was to shorten the front lines so as to make the defense
easier and thus compel all other army units to join him in this enterprise.
In addition, Tresiekow tried to provide the material prerequisites for
the initial spark. These consisted in the following: Hitler was to be
persuaded to leave his headquarters in East Prussia and to visit the
staff of the Heeresgruppe Mitte (Middle Army Group), which was stationed
at that time in a forest west of Smolensk, in the immediate vicinity
of the town. Tresiekow wanted to have Hitler in a place familiar to
us but unknown to him thus creating an atmosphere favorable to the
planned initial spark. In this task, Tresiekow was helped by his years
of acquaintance with Hitler's chief adjutant, General Schmundt.
Schmundt was an ardent follower of Hitler. But he was not intelligent
enough to see that Tresiekow's request to have Hitler visit Kluge at
his headquarters was merely a military pretext for the execution of a
political act of utmost importance. Consequently, in the first days
of March 1943 Hitler made known his intention to visit
Generalfeldmarschall von Kluge in Smolensk. In the beginning this was
just another promised visit for Hitler did what he always did in such
cases: he announced his visit only to call it off shortly before
the set time. This happened several times, until Hitler arrived by
plane in Smolensk on March 13, 1943. Had Kluge been prepared at that
time to follow his better judgment the tyrant would have been removed
on March 13, 1943. We had brought to the army group a cavalry
regiment under the command of Baron von Boeselager who was on our side.
The officers' corps had also been selected by us so that
Boeselager, who possessed both military competence and dare devilry,
could have acted. Kluge, however, had the right idea but not the will.
In one word, he hesitated. He kept on arguing that neither the world,
nor the German people, nor the German soldier, would understand such
an act at that time. One must wait, he said, and let the events take
their course and bring Hitler's removal nearer. That is why, in the
beginning, it was not possible to set in motion the apparatus of the
army group in order to carry out our plan. We decided therefore,
Tresckow and I, not to hesitate any longer, to go ahead and do the job
ourselves. We were hoping that after the assassination of Hitler,
Kluge would no longer hesitate and that he would follow his better
judgment. In order to make it easier for him and the entire military
staff, Tresckow conceived the following plan: he decided not to shoot
Hitler but to kill him by placing a bomb in his plane so as to make
believe it was an airplane accident thus avoiding the opprobrium
attached to an assassination. For this purpose, Tresckow had
obtained several months before the necessary materials with the help of
Geradoff. Because of his official position, Geradoff could procure the explosives without attracting attention. Although at that time Geradoff had not yet been told about our plans with regard to the coup d'etat, we were so sure of him that we did not hesitate to have him procure the explosive for us. In selecting the explosives, we soon became aware of the fact that the German explosives were not suitable for our purpose since they had to be discharged by means of an ignition cord which caused a low whistling, this might have been noticed by an attentive observer which would have led to the premature discovery of the act. We chose instead English explosives and ignitors; at that time both were frequently dropped on German territory by English planes. They were intended for acts of sabotage to be committed by English agents. However, a great part of these explosives did not reach the agents as they were collected by the proper military authorities. This English explosive had two great advantages. It was of small volume and very effective. It was not larger than a thick book and could destroy everything within a moderately large room. The ignitors, too, were very skillfully constructed. There were three different types. Some went off after 10 minutes, some after half an hour, others after two hours; thus, one could choose the ignitor which seemed the most suitable for an estimated length of time. Besides, there was no noise before ignition. A simple pressure on the head of the ignitor broke a very small bottle releasing a corrosive substance. This
liquid ate away the wire which held a spring and the firing-pin. After the destruction of the wire, the firing-pin snapped forward and ignited the percussion-cap which, in turn, ignited the explosives. Treskov and I considered it as our first duty to familiarize ourselves with the manipulation of the explosives, to make sure that everything worked and could be done by us almost automatically. We made many experiments which, except for a few, succeeded. The effect was amazing. We tried it in the open as well as in closed rooms, both with and without animals. Our main difficulty was - in those cases when the experiments were unsuccessful - to get to the root of the matter as both of us had no engineering or technical background. But in the end this too succeeded. The unsuccessful experiments were those conducted in the open; it was not that the explosion did not take place at all; there merely was an inexplicable delay in the time of the explosion. From several unsatisfactory talks with military engineers we learned that this was due to the cold weather in Russia. Intense cold was responsible for the delay in the destruction of the ignitor wire by the corrosive substance. After having concluded our experiments successfully, we proceeded to the immediate preparations themselves. Treskov had the following plans: in order to be sure of the effect, we took not one but two packages of explosives and wrapped them into one package which looked like a package containing two bottles of cognac. The package had to be fixed in such a manner
as to enable us to touch the igniter with our hand without undoing the wrapping. The package was fixed in this manner and on March 13, 1945, I took it and locked it in a case to which only I had access. Meanwhile, Kluge and Tresckow rode to the Smolensk airport to meet Hitler. Hitler arrived as usual with a very large suite, including his physician and his cook. The conversation took place in the room of Generalfeldmarschall von Kluge. Besides Tresckow the commanders of the Heeresgruppe Mitte were present. It would have been easy to place the bomb in this room. But placing the bomb in this room would have killed not only Hitler but also Feldmarschall von Kluge and the other army commanders. In this way we would have lost the entire military apparatus we had at our disposal. It would have meant depriving ourselves of the fruits of success.

Luncheon was served after the meeting at the casino of the High Command of the Heeresgruppe Mitte. This meeting presented the same problems and considerations as the one held in Kluge's cabinet. Here too the bomb would have killed not only Hitler but also the entire military apparatus which we needed badly for the execution of a successful coup d'état. As always, Hitler ate a special dish which had to be prepared by the cook he had brought along and had to be tasted first before Hitler's eyes by his personal physician, Professor Morell. The procedure gave us the impression of having before us an oriental despot of old times. To see Hitler eating was a
most repulsive sight. With his left hand resting on the upper part of his thigh, he kept shovelling into his mouth with his right hand all sorts of vegetables but not as one might think, by lifting his right arm to his mouth but by thrusting his mouth toward the food and keeping his right arm on the table. In between, he took various kinds of soft drinks, which were placed before his plate. We had been told before that, in accordance with Hitler's orders, we were not to smoke after lunch. Thus, he forced upon his entourage of the moment his personal dislike for smoking. During lunch, Tresekow spoke to a member of Hitler's suite and asked him whether, on his return to headquarters, he would be willing to take along a small package addressed to General Stieff in the Highcommand of the army and consisting of two bottles of cognac. Hitler's companion replied in the affirmative. Early in the morning, as previously arranged, I called up my Berlin collaborator, which had been chosen by Oster, to give him the case which contained the announcement that the initial spark was imminent. It was so arranged as to give Oster time to inform Olbricht about it and proceed immediately with the necessary preparations for the next step. After the lunch in Smolensk, Hitler rode back to the airport in Feldmarschall von Kluge's automobile, accompanied by Henning von Tresekow. About the same time, I took the bomb and carried it to the airport. There I waited until Hitler had dismissed the
officers of the Heeresgruppe Mitte and was about to board his plane.

At that moment, I set the ignitor which was to go off in half an hour
and, upon a wink from Tresckow, I gave the package to Hitler's
companion. He, too, boarded Hitler's plane. Shortly thereafter, the
planes took off in the direction of East Prussia, accompanied by
several pursuit planes. We returned to our headquarters from where
I called up again our collaborator in Berlin to give him the
additional clue which was to inform Oster that the initial spark
had been created. We knew that Hitler's plane was provided with a
special safety device. It consisted of several locked compartments.

Hitler's seat was armored and provided with a mechanism with the help
of which he could parachute instantly. According to our calculations,
the explosives placed in the plane were sufficient to destroy it
entirely; if, contrary to our expectations, this should not happen,
we felt sure that in any case the explosion would demolish a great
part of the plane causing it to crash. We expected the crash to
occur before the plane reached Minsk and believed that one of the
accompanying pursuit planes would immediately report the crash to
its command post. Nothing of the sort happened. After more than two
hours the announcement came that Hitler had landed on the
Kostenburg airport and had returned to his headquarters. There was
no doubt that the attempt on his life had failed. We did not know the
cause of this failure. First I called Oster's middleman again and
gave him the password meaning the attempt on Hitler's life had failed. Then we discussed what was to be done. I do not think it necessary to conceal that we both were very nervous. The failure of the attempt on Hitler's life had enough by itself. Worse, if possible, was that the discovery of the bombs would bring about our unmasking and would have bad consequences for a large number of our very important collaborators. After long deliberations, Tresekov decided to call Hitler's companion and to beg him not to hand over the parcel to General Stieff, but to keep it until the following day, when I would exchange it for another package since I had confused the two. From the answer we received, we could see that the bomb had not yet been discovered; the parcel still was supposed to contain cognac. We also had to prevent its delivery to General Stieff for the reason that he did not, at that time, participate in the plot. Under some military pretense I took the ordinary courier plane to headquarters the next day; I looked up Hitler's companion and exchanged the bomb-containing parcel against another one, which really contained two bottles of cognac for General Stieff. I can still feel the anxiety I felt when Hitler's companion, ignorant of the object in his hand, smiled and presented me with the bomb shaking the package so violently that I feared the bomb might explode yet since the ignition had been set. With simulated calm I took the bomb and drove right away to Korschen. From here, a special sleeper reserved for the
Army High Command left for Berlin in the evening. After arriving at Korschen, I got into the compartment reserved for me, looked the door a

and cautiously opened the parcel with a razor blade. As I removed the

wrapper, I could see that the condition of both loads had remained

unchanged. I unsecked the bomb carefully and took the fuse out.

As I inspected the fuse, I was greatly amazed to make the following
discovery: through the manipulation of the ignitor, the bottle
containing corrosive liquid had been broken. The liquid, as expected,
had decomposed the wire, the percussion lock had snapped forward,
but the percussion cap had not taken fire. I was both very
disappointed and very happy. Disappointed because, due to the un-
foreseen incident, the attempt had not succeeded; happy that we had
been able to prevent discovery and its consequences. On March 14,
at night, I left by special train for Berlin; and on March 15, I
called on Oster to report to him on the failure of the attempt on
Hitler's life. I took with me the fuse as evidence of the unfortunate
incident which had destroyed our plans. Oster showed his noble
character by not uttering a word of blame; he received the report with
calm and resignation.

Some days later, the yearly commemoration of the dead soldiers took
place in Berlin; it was accompanied by an exhibition in the arsenal
of the various kinds of arms taken in Russia. As by chance,
Oberst Freiherr von Gersdorff was appointed by the High Command of the Heeresgruppe Mitte to be present at this exhibition. Tresckow had seen in this assignment a sign of destiny; he had thrown off his mask before Gersdorff and had thus won him over as a full member of our conspiracy. Forthright Gersdorff had asked for the permission to try the assassination a second time. Tresckow informed me of these facts through a member of the Nachkommando maintained in Berlin. Of course this information was transmitted in a code unknown to anyone.

After I had learned all the essentials late at night, I wanted to see Gersdorff in the Hotel Eden early the next morning. He was still fast asleep. I woke him and handed him the bomb before he had had any breakfast. Unfortunately, we lacked a fuse. All our attempts to get hold of one failed. Even the efficient and reliable collaborator of Oster, Regierungsrat Justus Delbrück, son of the great historian, did not succeed. The attempt on Hitler’s life could not take place.

How the course of the war and with it the destiny of the world would have been changed, had Hitler been slain as early as March 1943. However, keenly concerned as we, the most immediately interested, were, there was something good in it: Olbricht had found out that his previous preparations in Berlin were insufficient. Now there was an opportunity to improve these preparations and to make up for what had not been done before. When, shortly afterwards, I saw Tresckow again, I did not have
a despairing man before me, but a man who had decided to go ahead on the way on which he had started out. He knew that difficulties exist in order to be overcome.
Chapter V

THE PREPARATIONS FOR THE 20TH OF JULY

The 13th of March 1943 had not only been disappointing but instructive as well. We were intent on learning from the events and to double our efforts of slaying Hitler. At our discussions in the East, Tresckow and I had come to the following conclusion: the main mistake was a lack of coordination between our people belonging to the fighting forces on the one hand and our sympathizers in the Reserve Army on the other. To offset these defects Tresckow pretended he needed a very long rest, because he was physically and mentally exhausted by the war on the Russian front; his request was granted and he got leave for a cure of several months. He did not undergo the cure, but remained ten weeks at his sister's in Neubabelsberg, between Berlin and Potsdam.

We faced our practical problems and we had to tackle them carefully and energetically. The first one consisted in a thorough preparation of the coup d’état we intended to carry out in the capital. Our next task was to clarify the immediate political aims of the coup d’état. Then we had to persevere in our efforts to extend our influence upon fieldmarshals and generals whose ideas were akin to ours. Finally, we had to prepare a new attempt on Hitler's life. The preparations for these four tasks were done in Berlin during the ten first weeks of
Summer 1943. The action taken on July 20 was based on these preparations. Of course a great many meetings and interviews were necessary. We had to be more careful than ever. Yet we did succeed in keeping secret the object and the very existence of the work done during these weeks. Just before we started our activity that summer, Supreme Court Justice (Reichsgerichtsrat) von Dohnanyi, one of Oster's closest collaborators, was arrested. Through this investigation, carried out by the Reich's Military Court (Reichskriegsgericht), Oster's military position was shaken. Admiral Canaris could no more keep him. Oster was put in the Leaders Reserve (Führerreserve) and thus became powerless. We had lost the man who up to that day had been our chief executive. The next step was to find a man who could succeed him. This man was found in Oberst Count Claus Schenk von Stauffenberg. His military situation was that of Chief of Staff in the Allgemeines Heeresamt directed by General Olbricht. In practice, he was Olbricht's first subordinate. From a military point of view, Stauffenberg's position was far more important than Oster's. Though Oster enjoyed great authority, thanks to his age, and had many years of political experience, somewhat technical military matters had become somewhat alien to him in the course of the years. Stauffenberg, on the other hand, seemed to be a born staff officer; he mastered all the tactical and strategic questions with an up-to-date knowledge.
Born in 1907, he had joined the "Bamberger Reiter", which was, at that time, one of the most aristocratic regiments. The Stauffenbergs were an old Bavarian Catholic family. Count Claus Schenk von Stauffenberg had made an outstanding military career. He became an early member of the General Staff and was specially qualified in all questions of military organisation. During the war, he served principally in the Organizational Section of the Army Highcommand. Later, he was transferred to a regiment of the Africa Corps. As a soldier too, his services were outstanding. In a fight against the British in Italy, he was seriously wounded. He lost one eye, his right hand, and two fingers of the left hand, so that he had only three fingers left. Therefore, he was transferred back to the General Staff. Due to his experience in the organization of the army and to his ability he was appointed to the Allgemeines Heeresamt; this position, gave him important insight into the military and political situation in the German army, and enabled him to exercise considerable influence on the character of the reserve army. Tresckow, Stauffenberg and I had met for the first time in summer 1941. Stauffenberg belonged then to the Organizational Section in the Army Highcommand and he called on us in Borissow. From this talk Tresckow and I got the impression that he was a very able General Staff officer. We learned too that he was not a Nazi and saw a danger in Hitler and National Socialism.
But we did not realize that Stauffenberg was one of the most resolute anti-Nazis, and that his name would go down in history as a fighter against Hitler. Tresckow and I were only the more impressed in summer 1943, when Olbright suggested him as the person who could take over Oster’s military job and brought him to us. After our first talks we could see what Stauffenberg had in mind. The strength of the German officer was based, to a large extent, on his one-track mind. The normal German officer was so engrossed in his profession that he was superior to the majority of his colleagues abroad. But that strength also included a great disadvantage. Seeing the military questions only, he had no judgment in any other field, first of all in political matters. Of course, this did not apply in the case for Tresckow. At the end of World War I, he had left the army and entered business; for many years he had been a stockbroker in Berlin and then head clerk in a Jewish bank. Before joining the army again, he took a one-year’s trip around the world and acquired a good knowledge of Europe and of many other countries, especially of both Americas. Stauffenberg had no such qualifications. Yet he had another advantage, which differentiated him from most of his fellow officers. From his early youth, he had been a spiritually minded man, whose existence could not be filled by military life only. His spiritual longings brought him into Stefan George’s circle. The latter soon discovered his qualities and inner value and they became increasingly close to each other.
Although many had approached George and left him later, Stauffenberg remained faithful to his master. Spiritually and ideologically, Stefan George retained his influence over Stauffenberg. He knew many of Stefan George’s poems by heart. One of his keenest pleasures was to recite Stefan George’s famous poem about the Anti-Christ. His attitude towards Hitler too was determined spiritually. Thus it was not the threat of a military defeat or any other material consideration that became the decisive factor in his attitude. On the contrary, Stauffenberg’s fight against Hitler was based on the realization of the truth of Christianity. His ethical convictions made him fight Hitler. A few talks sufficed to make it clear to us that we had found Oster’s successor in Stauffenberg, whose inner attitude, circumspection, clear mind, tenacity, courage and technical knowledge and capabilities made him appear the born manager of the resistance movement.

If we wanted Berlin, the military, political and commercial center of Germany, to be in our hands by way of a coup d’état, we had to make elaborate military preparations. That was the job Stauffenberg considered his main task. Trejoekow put at his disposal Major von Oertzen, who, like Stauffenberg, had experience and ability in the field of military organization. Stauffenberg and Oertzen became
the men who, working day and night under Tresekov's supervision, worked out a plan in form of orders, which, on July 20, led to the occupation of Berlin by military forces. The first problem was to find out what army troops were in and around Berlin and what SS troops would oppose us. The fact that the troops of the reserve army were in a continuous state of flux made it particularly difficult to determine the existence of our own forces. This was in the nature of the reserve army, which had to furnish replacements at irregular intervals to fill gaps in the front regiments or had to put up new divisions. This entailed certain shifts so that the Guard Regiment (Nachtrregiment) in Berlin itself, the nearby military schools - the infantry school in Deberitz, the cavalry school in Krapnitz, the tank troop school in Wünsdorf, the artillery school in Jüterbog - and the troop detachments stationed in the drill grounds of the same name had to be taken into consideration.

We investigated further what kind of arms these troops had, whether they were equipped with heavy arms and with arms for street fighting. One of the most important questions, was which stand the officers would take and how to occupy the command posts. For it was impossible to use these troops as they were. It was necessary to watch the stand of the commanding officers and to try to exercise influence over them without sharing all the secrets with them. Finally we had to consider that the German officer could not do with his soldiers just what he wanted
to do. Nazism had penetrated so deep into German life and also into the army, that some special way was to be found to make their actions plausible to the troops. One difficulty which was hard to remove was the acting of the Personnel Office which used to suddenly change the holders of many important positions, which could, as the case may be, upset all our plans. How important this was, we had to learn on July 20, when the commanding officer of the Berlin Guard Regiment was a hundred per cent Nazi. Furthermore, it was not easy to find out which SS troops were in and around Berlin, how they were armed and how much ammunition they had. Yet we succeeded in it. From our inquiry it followed that the SS troops in Berlin were far stronger than the regular troops. The superiority of the SS troops, both in quantity and in arms was of great moment, because of the importance of some key points, such as the quarters of the Government offices, the radio stations, the press buildings, the electricity, gas and water plants, railroad junctions, etc. This disadvantage was made worse by the short distance between the SS barracks and these key points, while the regular army forces had a long march to do. In spite of all our calculations and of the changes we could make in the organization, we could not avoid the fact that within the first 24 hours the situation was to remain risky. After that time, however, the
army was expected to have brought to Berlin such numerous forces, that the SS would be outnumbered. In other words, we had to go through a critical time. The chief thing during that 24 hour period to hold out in comparative passivity, and then to annihilate the SS troops, with the prospect of a decisive success. In all these problems, we had to take into consideration the production of the Berlin armament industry. At last we had to reckon with the fact that in Berlin the so-called "blue police" was available. Since Count Helldorf, President of the Berlin police, at first a Nazi, had grown a staunch Anti-Nazi, that question was rather easy to solve; we could certainly expect a part of the "blue police" to be on our side, all the more since Count Helldorf was backed up by the SS-Obergruppenführer Bebe, who, during the war, had come back to Berlin as head of the Reich's Criminal Police Bureau (Reichskriminalamt). Bebe once gave me a document of historical importance. It contained the following information: in spring 1945, Himmler had called a meeting of his SS-Obergruppenführer and Gruppenführer to give them a picture of the military situation. Bebe had taken down this speech in shorthand. This picture was amazingly outspoken. Himmler had described the military situation almost without concealing anything. He said that even men with only one arm and one eye had to be drafted.
He was very sorry to tell them that big losses had made it necessary to dilute the SS troops considerably. Nevertheless, the war had to be carried on. Its outcome was to decide the history of the world. The possession of countries and provinces was only the apparent object of the war. What was really at stake was nothing less than the extermination of Christianity in this world. That aim was not to be disclosed openly as yet.

All findings made by Stauffenberg and Gortzen were hidden under the false pretence of making preparations for some possible interior disturbances. Important, too, was the stand of the military district (Wehrkreis) III, which includes Berlin and the province of which Brandenburg and the chief was a Nazi. Yet we did succeed in entering into an agreement with General Rost, who was chief at that time. The commandant of Berlin, General von HASE too, was one of our supporters. We planned to take the same steps in the most important places where the Deputy General Commandants (stellvertretende Generalkommandos) were located. The huge amount of work required by all these questions was done then. In spite of the failure of July 20, it can be said here that scarcely any of the German military operations had been prepared by the General Staff as carefully as the coup d'etat of July 20. Naturally, Treckow, Stauffenberg and Gortzen were not satisfied to resolve the problems in their mind, but put down the outcome of their work in drafted orders. They were of two kinds: those to be given during the first twenty-four hours and those to be given to the troops after the period of risk had elapsed.
All these orders were put down in writing. They were written by two ladies, who were in the conspiracy, Margarethe von Oven and Arika von Tresckow, born von Falkenhayn. Margarethe von Oven was the former secretary to General von Fritsch and later Generaloberst Generaloberst von Hammerstein. Arika von Tresckow is the daughter of the former Minister of War von Falkenhayn and the wife of Henning von Tresckow. The orders for the first 24 hours were given under the name of Generaloberst Fromm, commander of the reserve army. Though Fromm was not in the conspiracy, we had to do so to avoid arousing suspicion among the troops. The orders began with the statement that the SS troops had attempted a revolt. This disturbance was to be suppressed. Therefore, the regular troops had, among other things, to disarm the SS located in the Lichtenfelde barracks, and to annihilate them in case of resistance. In this way we hoped to be able to make up for several hours with regard to the advantage in time the SS troops had over the army forces. The second part of the orders, which were to be given once the mask was dropped, was signed by Generaloberst Generaloberst von Sitzleben. The latter had been chosen as commander-in-chief of all the armed forces. It was a great moment when Tresckow submitted and explained these orders to Sitzleben, who signed them without hesitation as early as summer, 1943. All orders were then given to General Ulbricht for safeguarding.

During the summer months of 1943, Tresckow did not limit his activity
to preparing the General Staff orders for the coup d'etat to be carried out in Berlin but worked at the increasingly urgent problem of our political goal, keeping in constant touch with Beck and Goerdeler.

What was to come, after the coup d'etat had succeeded? The resistance movement had been founded and, for many years, financed by civilians. Military persons participated in it only later. Of course, with the war going on, they came more and more to the foreground. That was in the nature of things. But in no way had the military acquired supreme power within the resistance movement. There were two reasons for it: first, the civilians, in consideration of their unquestionable priority, were not ready to give up the direction of things. Besides, the military, just because of their experience, wanted to avoid military supremacy. Men like BECK, WITZLEBEN, TRÖSCHKOW and STAUFFENBERG were thoroughly convinced that the military ought to be nothing more than a means to carry out the coup d'etat. They should not grow to exist for or by themselves. To be sure, all of us saw clearly that we could not escape an armed clash with the SS. And this had to be the job of the military only. When this was done there probably would be a time of considerable uncertainty inside the Reich. It would be the job of the army to master this period of uncertainty. So, to call the thing by its name, a military dictatorship was planned for the time immediately following the coup d'etat. Yet all the leading persons of the German resistance movement agreed that the time of that military dictatorship should be reduced to a minimum, and in no case exceed three months. After that the military should withdraw and the civilians take the full power in the State. After several hours of discussion, the following points were
clear: The future German Reich should have a democratic regime, i.e., all power should come from the people. Every political element should have its share in the exercise of power. With that goal in mind, GORDON had had, for many years, interviews with the representatives of every political group which had to be taken into consideration, from the extreme right to the extreme left. He had succeeded in bringing about the agreement, which had been lacking before 1933. First of all, his meetings with KAHN, BOLZ, and others, made possible the cooperation of the Catholic forces in the Center Party. But, he found understanding among the left wing elements too. He was in continuous touch with people like LEBEN and the trade-unionist LEUSCHNER. Even the Communists said they were ready to cooperate. GORDON had in mind a bicameral system; the Parliament (Reichstag), elected from a political point of view was to include representatives of all parties and the Reich’s Council (Reichsrat) should represent the interests of the professional groups (Berufsstande), of the Länder, the Church and the large towns. Of course, it should be a parliamentary regime, i.e., the government should be directed to rule only with the confidence of both Chambers. Another question was how to set up the government. Here, the second principle of the resistance movement became apparent. According to the character and the history of the German people, state leadership cannot be established exclusively by building from the lower classes to the top. Some agency should exist, which should be beyond any political discussion and would represent the German Reich. That is possible only by
creating a monarchy. The monarch should appoint the Chancellor of the Reich, who would form the government, which would have to secure the confidence of both Chambers. But here we faced an important difficulty: owing to the situation, we could choose neither a dynasty, nor a personality for the throne. We were compelled to consider another solution: the choice of a regent instead of a monarch. For that post, nobody could be considered but Generaloberst BECK. He had all the necessary prerequisites: sincerity, dignity, non-partisanship, seniority (a quality which, in Germany, is necessary to give the greatest authority). The choice of a king was postponed until the ship of state would be afloat. As Chancellor of the Reich we chose CUKADELKA. His year-long struggle, his far-reaching mind, his ability to bring into agreement opposite opinions, made him fit for that position. As Minister of the Interior a trade-unionist should be appointed; the other portfolios should be entrusted partly to men of the right wing, partly to men of the left. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs should be given to a career diplomat; we thought of both Ambassadors von Hassel and Count Schulemburg. The latter, who, for many years, had been active in Moscow, was to establish contact with Stalin immediately following the coup d'état.

For the contact with the British and the Americans we had men enough at our disposal. Of course, there were sometimes discussions about the ministerial posts; often the names were changed; but the basic picture remained unchanged. Once CUKADELKA asked TRUSCKO and me which
posts we were ready to accept. He was somewhat astonished hearing the
answer we shot at him like a pistol bullet: "We don't want anything.
We will keep our liberty and only want the right to say what we think
and to be listened to by you. But if Beck or you need one of us for
a special assignment, we shall be, of course, at your disposal, if we
think we can fill the post." GOEBBELS could not make us change our
point of view. By participating in the meeting where the political
aims were set, Treitschke and I got acquainted with part of the civilians
inside the resistance movement, for instance Regierungsrat Glasevius,
and attorney Josef Muller, both whose work consisted above all in keep-
ing us in continuous touch with foreign countries. I also met some
people more efficient from an inner political viewpoint, such as Fin-
ance Minister Popitz, Count Seelmann von Wollkow, Count Peter York, Count
Schwerin, Ministerialrat (head of a ministerial department) Sack, Peschel,
etc.

Since the question of our political aims was more and more taking shape,
our next job was to win the active participation in the coup d'état
of important persons inside the army. Among the officers, including
the generals as a body, there was no more unity than among the German
bishops or the professors of the German universities.

In view of the importance of the High Command of the army, Treitschke
managed to have General Stieff, Chief of the Organization Section of
the Army High Command, come to Berlin. He was immediately won over
to the plan of a coup d'état. Further members of our conspiracy were
General of the Nachrichtengruppe (signal coups) Fellgiebel, the
Quartermaster General, General of the Artillery Wagner and General
Lindemann, waffengeneral of the artillery at the Army High Command.
The latter was one of our most active collaborators. An essential
task was assigned to General Fellgiebel, who, as chief of the entire
intelligence service, had considerable possibilities at his disposal.
His task was of a dual nature. On the day of the revolt he was to
cause the information center at Hitler's headquarters to be blown up
so that it would be impossible to communicate with any other post
either by telephone, cable or radio. This elimination of Hitler's
headquarters on July 20 has not taken place. Fellgiebel's second job
was to keep the center of the resistance movement, i.e. General Ol-
bracht's office in Berlin, in communication with the other posts. That
succeeded to an amazing extent on July 20. Therefore the Nazis called
the coup d'état: the "switch-board putsch". Tresckow too sent out a
few feelers to the airforce and also to Colonel Baron Ronne, Chief of
the Abteilung Fremde Heere/West, (Section Foreign Army/West); his
assistant, Hauptmann Count Matuschka later kept us well informed of
what was going on in the West. That was not enough for Tresckow; he
died again to win for us at least two field-marshal in command on
the front, to bring about coordination between the army on the front
and the army at home. During Tresckow's absence in Summer, 1943, Bernd
von Kleist and Baron von Gersdorff had been unable to brace Kluge's intentions. He was faltering again. But at last he made up his mind and came to Berlin. Tresckow soon regained influence over him. An important discussion between Kluge, Beck, Ulbricht, Goerdeler and Tresckow took place. It resulted in unity among them so that the coordination between home and front army seemed assured. Tresckow also strove again to win over Generalfeldmarschall von Manstein. He knew him well, thought highly of his active mind and believed that he would be able to render good service to the worthy cause. In order to gain influence over Manstein from another direction as well, his first General Staff officer, Oberst Schultze-Büttger had been active for us. He was supported by Manstein's adjutant, Oberleutnant Alexander Stahlberg. Manstein was different from Kluge. He kept weighing the chances of the opposing forces in the war and remained in a state of deliberation. But Tresckow persisted. Once, Manstein was so impressed with the way in which Tresckow described the situation to him and outlined his historic responsibility that he trembled all over, but again he was unable to say yes. Tresckow had wasted his time. Finally, Manstein got afraid of Tresckow. At the turn of 1943/44, the Personnel Office proposed to appoint a new chief of the General Staff of the army group commanded by Manstein; they suggested Tresckow, but Manstein refused sharply. The Chief of the Personnel Office, General Schmundt, was surprised and asked for the reason. He was told by Manstein: "Tresckow is an excellent General Staff officer, but his
attitude toward National Socialism is a negative one." This judgment, which Schmundt himself told Tresckow later on, not only put an end to Tresckow's military career, but also kept him away from any important position that might enable him to exercise influence over the course of events. Among the generals that had been approached was Generaloberst Guderian. Tresckow and Goerdeler negotiated with him. When it turned out that Guderian would participate only if success was assured and that he might betray us in any case, General von Habenau went to see Guderian and told him: "I warn you of treason. You have gone too far in negotiating with us. Do not forget that the Third Reich not only punished the incendiary but also the one who first reports the fire." When, on the evening of the 20th July, Guderian was appointed Chief of the General Staff of the Army, everyone who was in the know realized that Guderian had gotten the post through treachery. On the other hand, two generals, von Stülpnagel, commander-in-chief in France, and von Falkenhausen, commander-in-chief in Belgium and Northern France, declared that they were ready to participate. So a uniform view had been achieved as far as the political goal was concerned. The coup d'état for Berlin had been prepared by the General Staff. Generalalfeldmarschall von Kluge of the front army had been won too. An important element of security in the west was secured through the participation of Stülpnagel and Falkenhausen. Now the decisive factor was the initial spark, that is to say, the moment which was to unleash the revolt. According to all our experience, it could consist
in nothing else but a repetition of the attempt on Hitler's life.

Two things were necessary: a person to carry out the attempt and explosive material. The latter was procured through Oberst Freiherr von Freytag-Loringhoven, who was then in the defense section under Admiral Canaris and was able, although with some difficulty, to get hold of English explosive material. The first contingent sent by him met with a strange fate. It was to be sent to the High-Command of the army in East Prussia and to be stored there. General Stieff was to take charge of it. Major Kuhn and Oberleutnant (1st Lieutenant) von Hagen were to carry out the task. They buried the explosives in the neighborhood of the headquarters. Through an unknown reason, the explosive ignited by itself and exploded. This disagreeable incident caused the attention of several security organs. An investigation took place. Oberstleutnant (Lt. Colonel) Schrader, who belonged to us, was put in charge of it and managed very skillfully to let the investigation peter out. In order to replace the explosive, Stieff sent Oberleutnant von Hagen to the Heeresgruppe Mitte. Oertzen directed him further to a military engineers' staff, who furnished Hagen with German explosive, which he took to the High-Command of the Army. But this explosive material turned out to be unsatisfactory, since it could be made to explode only by means of a slightly hissing fuse. So we had to approach again Freytag-Loringhoven, who procured us some more English explosives. And this was really used at the attempt on Hitler's life on July 20. Concerning the attempt itself, the following decision was taken: it was necessary to bring the person who was to carry it...
out into Hitler's headquarters. This in itself restricted our choice to a comparatively small circle, since the majority of persons who otherwise would have been eligible had no admittance or could be brought there under some pretext with great difficulty only. In order to clarify the preliminary questions on the possibilities in Hitler's headquarters, I flew there twice and discussed the necessary things with Oberstleutnant Dietrich von Bose. He furnished me with a detailed description of Hitler's days. At 10 o'clock only a servant woke Hitler. At the same time, an elevator brought his breakfast into his bedroom. Besides, extracts from foreign newspapers chosen by Ribbentrop, were read to him. Since Hitler did not speak any foreign language, everything had to be translated into German. All writings that were presented to him were typed on a special machine with unnaturally large letters, for Hitler was nearsighted. Everything had to be written in such size that an observer could not notice his faulty eyesight by the way he would otherwise have had to hold the writing in order to be able to read it. He needed a magnifying glass or glasses in order to study maps. It was strictly prohibited to photograph him with his glasses on. For Hitler thought that a dictator's authority would suffer from his wearing glasses. At 11 o'clock he received his Adjutant-In-Chief. The latter had to inform him mainly on personalities. At 12 o'clock noon the military situation was discussed, the chiefs of the General Staff of the Army and the Armed Forces reporting on the situation. Other officers were called according to necessity. Here, Hitler personally decided military questions. At 2 o'clock the noon meal was served;
due to Hitler's monologues addressed to the others, it lasted until 4 o'clock. From 4 to 6 or 7 o'clock, he took a nap. Upon arising he gave audiences of a representative character. The evening meal started at 8 o'clock and lasted until 10 o'clock. Afterwards, he gathered around himself a special circle of persons, chosen by himself, with whom he talked until 4 o'clock in the morning, mostly speaking himself. During these hours of the night and in this circle of faithful followers he developed the ideas that were to bring happiness to the peoples of the earth. At 4 o'clock he went to bed. His two secretaries participated in these nightly conversations, while his mistresses - he had several of them - were not brought along to his headquarters but were stationed at the Obersalzberg. The activities of the day were changed only in particularly urgent cases. Under no circumstances was he to be awakened up when sleeping.

Only someone who succeeded in securing an invitation to the night circle or who was admitted to the discussions of the military situation had a chance of carrying out an attempt on his life. It was next to impossible to draw a pistol and to shoot due to the large number of SS-men who were constantly in the room. Only someone who has carried arms himself and has used them knows how difficult it is to shoot a person from the hip, even though no protective measures have been taken such as in this case. It is much easier to do the killing in a state of high emotion than to take someone's life coolly and deliberately. Even
the hunter is seized with feverish excitement when the game he has been waiting for comes within the range of his rifle. How much greater is the inner agitation, when, surmounting a thousand difficulties and risking one’s own life, one takes up arms in the face of unpredictable danger of failure in order to carry out a deed on the success or failure of which hinges the fate of millions. At the discussion which was to determine who would feel himself capable of such an attempt on Hitler’s life it turned out that even those who had repeatedly proved their courage in war said openly they did not think they would be able of such an action. The thirty year old Oberstleutnant Freiherr von Boeselager f. i., who had been decorated with the Knight’s Cross, the Oak Leaves and the Swords on account of his courage in action, refused saying that he could not do such a thing, but that he felt he would be able to take Hitler’s headquarters with the aid of the regiment he was commanding. However, Boeselager’s regiment was stationed in Russia, we could not manage to have it transferred to East-Russia, although we tried to. The Christian convictions of another one — Oberleutnant von Haften, Stauffenberg’s orderly officer — led him to believe that he could not justify it to kill other people of Hitler’s surroundings by attempting to kill the latter. One, who would have been free of any such considerations, was wounded severely and could not leave the hospital so that he had to be eliminated from the list of eligible persons.

Finally, General Stieff and his two assistants, Major Kuhn and Oberleutnant von Hagen, offered to carry out the attempt on Hitler’s life. Thinking it over, Stieff found it impossible to take the explosive along to the room where the discussion was to take place.
General of the Artillery Wagner he adopted the following plan: the introduction of a new uniform was considered at that time. The uniform was to be shown to Hitler. This was to be the opportunity for Stieglitz and his helpers to kill Hitler. The showing of the uniform had been announced several times. Hitler cancelled it again and again as if he had had a foreboding of the plan. So it could not be done.

Tresckow was the only one to offer to do it by himself. But his plan depended on a meeting with Hitler somewhere. So it would have been necessary to place Tresckow in a situation which would enable him to be with Hitler without causing attention. It would have been possible as Chief of the Army Group Manstein. This was rendered impossible by Manstein’s refusal to take Tresckow. Later on, Tresckow attempted to get himself into such a position. He tried to convince Gen. Schmundt that a new office should be created under Schmundt himself with the function of gathering political and psychological information among the front army and communicating it directly to the superior authorities for proper exploitation. Schmundt was interested in the plan, but probably grew suspicious of Tresckow later, especially since Manstein had informed him about Tresckow’s real convictions.

Later on, another possibility turned up when General Heusinger, Chief of the Operational Section in the Army High Command was going to take a rather long leave and was in need of someone to take his place; it was discussed then whether his deputy should not be made his successor right away. Various attempts had been made to get Tresckow into this position. Heusinger himself made it finally impossible. Heusinger was not a Nazi and, under the assumption that he had become an anti-Nazi
in the course of the years, the intentions of the resistance movement were outlined to him. He said neither yes nor no but remained undecided. When Tresckow himself finally urged him to appoint him as his substitute, he grew suspicious and prevented it. Staudenauerg was not thought of then. The fact that he had only one eye and three fingers and the consideration that he could not be spared in Berlin on the day of the revolt made him appear to us as a person unsuitable for the task of carrying out the attempt on Hitler's life. So we arrived at still another decision. It should be tried again to make Hitler visit the Heeresgruppe Mitte. Then several of us, Oberst von Kläst, Hauptmann (Captain) Kört, Oberstlieutenant von Foss. Major von Gerlitz, Kettlemeister (Captain) von Breitenbach, Oberlieutenant von Rodden and I, would kill him by community action through pistol shots, without the use of explosive. Although we assumed that not all the shots would hit him, we thought that even half of them would be sufficient, we figured that, being in the majority, it would be psychologically easier for us to carry the burden such an action would represent for anyone.

We prepared everything in Smolensk as well as in Cracow and, again a little later, in Minsk. But nothing could persuade Hitler to repeat his visit to the Heeresgruppe Mitte.

While we were considering all these plans, Kluge had a severe automobile accident on his way from Orscha to Minsk and was thus eliminated for many weeks and months. This meant that an important link in the ensemble of home and front army had disappeared. His successor of Heeresgruppe Mitte

Commander-In-Chief of the Heeresgruppe Mitte

Generalfeldmarschall
Busch, a man, who was neither up to his military task nor possessed the degree of inner independence usually found in persons who think independently. He was a blind follower of Hitler. His attitude did not change the decision of shooting Hitler on a visit, which had been taken in our circle in the High Command of the Heeresgruppe Mitte. Busch is characterized best by the following story: One day he spoke of his having formerly been a member of the People's Court. Since he did not know anything about jurisprudence, he decided to sentence all the accused to death. This, he said, he had carried through, although the learned judges had been of a different opinion. In connection with this we came to talk of a special order by Hitler. The latter had ordered that all parachutists, English and Americans alike, and regardless whether they wore uniform or civilian clothes, were to be shot immediately. Busch went so far as to approve of this order. His high military position did not prevent me from contradicting him energetically. Busch admitted quietly that this order was against international law; as a matter of fact, the order was to be passed on by word of mouth only, while the written copies addressed to the army group were to be destroyed immediately.

Another grave obstacle appeared when Generaloberst Bock fell ill and had to be operated on by Professor Sauerbruch. At that time I was again in Berlin to talk over the situation with Stauffenberg and Ulbricht. Ulbricht told me this: "I have to tell you the worst thing that has happened to us in the course of the entire war. Admiral
Camaris has visited me a short while ago. He told me of one of his discussions with Himmler. The latter told Camarís openly he knew very well that there were important circles in the army which played with plans of revolt. But it would never come to that. He would attack in time. The only reason why he had put up with it for so long was that he wanted to find out who really was the driving force behind it. Now he knew. And he would stop people like Beck and Goerdeler in time." Camarís' words had made a deep impression on Ulbricht. He was afraid that Himmler might attack immediately. There was nothing else left to do but try to keep cool and double our efforts. We knew well that, as with most things in life, luck was the decisive factor here too. During the critical time, Treseckow had been put for two months in charge of a regiment in the East. This eliminated him from our plans. When, later on, he was made Chief of the General Staff of the Second Army, Kluge was sick and without a command. With the best intentions in the world, none of the plans of an attempt on Hitler's life had been realizable. In the meantime the German military situation had reached a new low, so that Beck said: "We will not be able either to refuse the demand of unconditional surrender." Especially the situation in the East deteriorated more every day. This was due mainly to Hitler himself. Since Brauchitsch had been eliminated in November, 1941, Hitler himself had assumed the military leadership. In order not to lose his command again, he had issued two orders, which
had a disastrous effect: Frederick the Great had introduced the so-called Command of Tactics (Auftragstaktik), which means that the superior, in giving orders to his inferiors, mentions only the tactical goal so that the subordinate was at liberty to choose the tactical means which, in his estimation, would lead to the prescribed goal. Hitler eliminated this element of freedom by ordering that the superior also had to indicate the tactical means that had to be adopted in order to reach the prescribed goal. Furthermore, Hitler decreed that no officer on the entire Eastern Front was allowed to give an order to retreat that had not been previously approved by Hitler personally. Both orders limited the liberty of the military leaders to such an extent that all tactics ceased to exist and being surrounded by the enemy seemed to become the apogee of military wisdom. Hitler stubbornly refused to accept the repeated suggestions of the field-marshal to withdraw from the Eastern front which was much too long and to have an East Wall built. This order, to hold out at any rate, created the basis for the great Russian successes. The invasion, which had been openly announced by Hitler, was to be expected at the beginning of 1944. We had no doubts as to the fact that, if our plans were to have an immediate political effect, that they had to be carried out before the invasion took place. But one unlucky incident after the other occurred. In this desperate situation, the above mentioned Rittmeister von Breitenbuch declared he would try to be taken along on Fieldmarshal Busch's planned visit to Hitler and would do it himself with a pistol in his hand. Even those among us who saw but little chance of success urged him to do so. Breitenbuch succeeded in going
along to the room where the discussion at the Obersalzberg took place. But it was too difficult even to reach into one's pocket to draw the pistol. For Hitler had not received anyone for months without having stationed in his room two giant SS-men, whose behaviour left no doubt that they would throw themselves upon the visitor as soon as he started to raise his hand against Hitler. So one disappointment followed the other, when, on June 6, the invasion started. A few days after the beginning of the invasion, Generalkommandant Keitzler, then Chief of the General Staff of the Army, summoned all army commanders at the Eastern front to headquarters. At this occasion, Tresckow took me along to East Prussia. We met at the quarters of our confident Count Lehndorff in Steinort. Steinort was one of the oldest and most beautiful castles in East Prussia. There, Ribbentrop had made his headquarters to be constantly near Hitler. Of course, the castle was not beautiful enough for Ribbentrop. He had the interior changed partially. A movie was built in the basement, where he had a film shown to him every night. He designated Steinort as his military headquarters so that even his kitchenmaids had as their address a Feldpostnummer (APO number). Otherwise, of course, he led a life full of pleasures. The most beautiful flowers and Lucullian treats, which, for years, had been unknown even to these Germans who lived best, had to be brought by plane from Copenhagen and other places, in spite of the fuel shortage. For nothing was good and expensive enough for him. Lehndorff had just arrived with a message from Stauffenberg. He wanted to ask Tresckow and me
whether it would still be worthwhile to hold on to our plan which no longer contained any practical usefulness, now that the invasion had taken place. We deliberated and arrived at an affirmative answer. Tresckow expressed it as follows: "The attempt on Hitler's life must be carried out at any price. If it should fail, action must still be taken in Berlin. For it is no longer a question of practical usefulness, but of showing that the members of the German resistance movement, risking their lives, have dared to strike the decisive blow before history and the world. Compared to this, everything else is of slight importance."

Tresckow asked Lehmdorff to send this answer immediately to Stauffenberg and added that Stauffenberg should go himself to France to see General Speidel, Chief of Staff of General von Rommel, in order to explain to him that he must arrange for a gap in the Western front by means of false orders so that the Allies could make a break-through.

Our visit in East Prussia was from another point of view most important. General Haltung who had remained chief of the Operational Sections, explained the entire situation to the assembled heads of the German army on the Eastern Front. He affirmed that on the Western Front it was counted upon that the English and Americans could be held on the Cotentin Peninsula. A possible break-through into the plain was not to be thought of. This opinion was based on the idea that only a stroke of luck had made the invasion successful. What was meant by this, I was told by Tresckow, who knew it from General Schmundt. When the
invasion started on June 6, the Germans were quite surprised. The invasion was not expected at this time. A special disadvantage was the fact that Rommel, in spite of the stoppage of all military leave that had been decreed by Hitler, secretly flew to Ulm to celebrate his wife's birthday. General Speidel was obliged to try and reach Rommel by telephone to inform him of the event. At the same time, notice was sent through the ordinary channels to the high Command of the Armed Forces. The orderly officer who was in charge there did not awaken General Jodl on account of the early hour so that it was not until nine o'clock that the latter heard of the invasion and Jodl waited another hour before he announced the news to Keitel. Both obeyed the standing order not to awaken Hitler and they did nothing. It was only through the noon report that Hitler learned of the invasion. The fear of disturbing Hitler's sleep had great momentous consequences. For behind the Atlantic Wall, a tank corps was stationed whose duty it was to attack and annihilate the enemy in case of a landing. This tank corps could only go into action on a personal order from Hitler. Neither Rommel nor Kundstedt could give an order to this tank corps, so that valuable and perhaps decisive time had elapsed when Hitler gave orders to attack at 2 p.m. But in the meantime the spearhead of the tank corps had been largely eliminated by an American air attack so that the counter-attack was launched too late; proper leadership being lacking, it could not be carried out vigourously and uniformly. Thus, Hitler's quiet sleep had favored the invasion, had even made it possible perhaps.
The account Heusinger gave of the situation in the East was rather strange. Bad ground and air reconnaissance, the latter being a consequence of continuously decreasing plane production, made it impossible to gain a clear picture of the Russian plans. Heusinger's opinion was that a Russian attack was not out of the question, but that a large scale offensive was rather improbable. No attention was paid to Treseckow who maintained that the Russian assault armies were certainly left sufficiently far behind to be well out of reach of air reconnaissance. He further asserted that the Russians would attack the bulge of the Heeresgruppe Mitte at several places, break through the thin German lines, throw their assault armies into the gap and then roll up the entire front of the Heeresgruppe Mitte. This opinion, too, was disregarded. When, on 23 June 1944, the Russians attacked, it took them three weeks to annihilate twenty-seven German divisions. The situation in the East had become untenable and Treseckow felt obliged to do something about it. At the end of June he sent Oberstleutnant Freiherr von Boeselager to Kluge, who, in the meantime, had been made supreme commander in the West. Boeselager was to explain the situation in the East and to beg Kluge to open up the front in the West and to fight hitler, rather than the Americans and English. In any case he should request the presence of Treseckow or myself. This was to assure us influence over Kluge. Boeselager returned shortly before the middle of July. Kluge had declared that no more gaps were necessary in the Western front. The break-through of the Anglo-American forces was
only a question of time and could not be prevented. Although he -
Wüge - was supreme commander in the West, he was not sure of his
staff and was so restricted in his actions that he could undertake
nothing by himself. Therefore he could not even request the pre-
sence of Tresckow or myself. Shortly afterwards, on 1 July 1944, Count
Lehndorff arrived in the East with Stauffenberg's answer. The latter
was of the same opinion as we in that something had to be done at any
price. The attempt on Hitler's life could be expected from one day to
the next. Stauffenberg would carry it out himself, but he needed
Gortzen right away for the execution of the plan with regard to Ber-
lin since many changes had occurred since summer 1943. Stauffenberg
said, furthermore, that Tresckow was to remain at his post for the
time being; he would be called later through a telegram from General-
feldmarschall von Witzleben after the latter would be installed of-
officially as commander-in-chief. I was to be ready to come to Berlin
immediately following the attempt on Hitler's life. I would then re-
ceive a telephone call from Oberst Merz von Quirnheim, who, meanwhile,
had taken over Stauffenberg's post as Chief of the Allgemeines Heere-
samt. A short time ago, Stauffenberg himself had been appointed
Chief of the General Staff with Generaloberst Fromm, commander of the
reserve army. Stauffenberg's eminent organisatory achievements had
earned him this position. When Generaloberst Fromm informed him of
his appointment to this important post, Stauffenberg had objected say-
ing that he did not believe the war could still be won, the fault lying
with Hitler himself. After listening quietly, Fromm had answered that
this was pretty much his own opinion too. Stauffenberg had been
courageous enough to raise the same objections with Generaloberst
Zeitzler, Chief of the General Staff of the army. The latter had
not contradicted him either and had said he appreciated the frankness
with which he had voiced his opinion. Zeitzler, who had been appointed
as successor to the former Chief of the General Staff of the Army,
Generaloberst Halder, in summer 1942, had come as a Nazi, but had
changed his attitude more and more due to daily altercations with
Hitler. One could almost say: Saulus has changed into Paulus.

Shortly before July 20 Oberstleutnant von Voss called me by telephone
and gave me a message from C Bertzen: it had been tried twice without
success, but a third attempt that had chances of succeeding was to be
made. Previously, Oberst Schultze-Hüttger, our associate, who had
been appointed Chief of the General Staff of the 4th Tank Army, had
been informed of our intentions by Tresckow so that the events of the
decisive day should not find him unprepared. On July 20 I drove over
to the heeresgruppe Mitte and talked to our friends there. Upon my re-
turn, I received a telephone call from Oberst Merz von Quirnheim, who
indicated to me that the attempt had been successful and that I was to
go to Berlin without further delay. Soon afterwards the radio announ-
ced officially that an attempt had been made on Hitler’s life, but
that he had been wounded only slightly. At first, Tresckow and I be-
lieved that the official announcement was not based on the truth. We
grew suspicious only when we were informed through the ordinary channels that orders from Berlin were to be disregarded. The official reason given was that certain elements in Berlin were engaged in dubious activities; in view of the attempt on Hitler's life. One thing remained clear: an attempt had been made to strike the decisive blow. I learned of its failure through Hitler's midnight broadcast over the entire German radio. I rushed over to Tresckow's, who was already in bed, and told him what I had heard. Tresckow replied immediately: "I shall shoot myself presently. The investigation will lead them to me and they will try to get more names from me. I shall take my life now in order to prevent it." I contradicted him and advised him to wait. Our discussion lasted almost the entire night until we arrived at the following conclusion: Tresckow was to take his life on the front the following day, while I was to go on living as long as it was justifiable to do so in order to rehabilitate the German resistance movement before public opinion. The next day, on 21 July 1944, Tresckow and I said good-bye to each other. He was perfectly quiet and self-possessed. He said: "Now the whole world will start to attack and insult us. But now, as before, I am firmly convinced that we did the right thing. In my opinion, Hitler is not only the archenemy of Germany, but of the entire world. When, in a few hours, I shall stand before the judgment seat of the Lord to account for what I did and for what I did not, I shall have a clear conscience, I think, with regard to my fight against Hitler."
Once God promised Abraham not to destroy Sodom if it contained but ten just persons; and so I hope he will spare Germany for our sake. No one among us can complain about his death. Whoever has joined our circle has done the job of hussars. The ethical value of a person starts only where he is ready to give his life for his conviction. Tresckow drove over to the 28th Infantery division, the first General Staff officer of which was Major Kuhn. He informed Major Kuhn of everything that he knew, advanced further and went alone into no-man's land. By means of two pistols he created the illusion of a pistol fight. Then, using a gun grenade (Gewehrgranate), he tore his own head off his body, at first, everybody thought he had died in action. I was put in charge of taking his body back to Germany, where Tresckow was buried in the family tomb.
Chapter VI.

ARREST AND LIBERATION

The human senses are sharpened by danger and the faculty of perception is heightened to a degree almost unconceivable to Civilised Man. It seems as if we were developing a sixth sense, an anticipation of dangers and difficulties ahead. Since July 20, 1944, there was no doubt in my mind that I would be involved in the investigation. If, in the following, I shall describe my arrest and liberation it is not because I think that my personal fate is of any special interest, but because I think that my experience is typical for that of a majority of our friends and partisans among the resistance movement against Hitler. This is the only point of view from which I want this chapter to be understood.

According to the agreement made between Tresckow and me, I awaited the events following the 20th of July. On the 6th of August, when, in reading the publication on the perpetrators of the attempt, I found the name of Henning von Tresckow, my feeling that my arrest was pending became certitude. So I was not particularly surprised when, on the 17th of August, a staff officer woke me from my sleep and declared me for arrested. The idea of snatching the pistol that lay beside me and ending my life flashed through my mind. At the same time an instinct warned me and urged me to hold out as I was destined to escape from all present and future complications. This feeling varied in intensity during the last part of my imprisonment.
At times weaker, at times stronger, it never left me completely. It has carried me through all hardship and danger and was the reason that I did not try to escape, although this was possible twice.

Following my arrest, which had taken place in Moscow in the immediate proximity of the German-Russian front, I was taken under military guard to a village some kilometers away and jailed in a small Polish farmhouse. The guard at the door could not have prevented me from escaping at night through the unguarded backdoor to the nearby woods. On the following day I was taken in an automobile under military guard to Ortelburg in East Russia. From there I was taken to Berlin by train. We arrived late at night at the station Friedrichstrasse. The confusion was great due to the overcrowding, which, even then, had become a standard institution. My guard consisted of one officer and two non-commissioned officers. None of them knew Berlin and I practically had to lead them from the platform through the station to the guard room. The non-commissioned officers carried my luggage while the officer telephoned from the guard-room for an automobile. Thus it would have been easy for me to escape through the crowd. But for the reasons mentioned before I did not make any attempt, especially since I was well aware of the difficulties with regard to shelter and food that were to follow any successful escape. So I was taken to the jail in the building of the Reichssicherheits- Hauptamt (Main Reich's Security Bureau) of the
Ostapoj in Berlin on the Prina Albrechtstrasse. This took place
during the night of August 18, 1944. As soon as I entered the
prison the picture changed noticeably. My former guard had been
correct and polite. As soon as I was in the hands of the Gestapo,
politeness transformed itself into roughness and correctness into
insubordination. As a matter of course I was put into solitary
confinement. But since there was one washroom for several persons I
was able during the following days to make the acquaintance of some of
the other prisoners. Among them I discovered many familiar faces,
such as Admiral Canaris, General Oster, the Ambassadors Count
Schulenburg and von Hassel, Count Lehndorff, President of the 'Reich's
Bank Schacht, Minister of Finance Popitz, General of the Infantry
Thomas, Generaloberst Fromm, Pastor Dietrich von Hohnhoffer, Lord-
Mayor Goerdeler, the lawyers Josef Muller and Langbehn, General of
the Infantry von Falkenhausen and many, many more, who, ordinarily, were
so hard to reach in Berlin. Now we were all together as if it
were the third act of a bad opera. We were not permitted to talk
to each other. But one glance or a rapid sentence at a moment when
we were not watched frequently were enough to make ourselves
understood. The Gestapo had set up a special guard for the prisoners
of the 20th of July. It consisted of officials, wearing civilian
clothes for the greater part and coming from those sections of the
Gestapo which had been bombed out. Many of them were not unfriendly;
but some of them just assumed an air of friendliness in order to pump
us by means of clumsy familiarity. The friendliness of a few of them only was genuine. These were police officials who had been in office prior to 1933 and who, when alone with someone and deeming themselves safe, did not conceal their true attitude towards Hitler and National Socialism. Many of us are indebted to these officials for slight alleviations and even valuable hints. The Communist toadies showed much zeal to render our life bearable. After two days I was led to my first hearing, my hands having first been tied outside the cell. Police inspector (Kriminalkommissar) Babecker conducted the trial. He first informed me that I had been accused of having participated in the preparations for the attempt of July 20, 1944. This accusation, he declared, had been borne out by many witnesses. It would be useless to deny it and it would be better to confess right away. Only if I had assumed that the Gestapo really and proofs, I would have been ready for such a confession. But from the very beginning I was under the definite impression that the Gestapo did not really know anything about me and this impression was strengthened in the course of the trial. They had strong suspicions but no proofs. Therefore I decided to deny everything. Being confronted with criminals wearing the mask of state authority, I felt morally justified in behaving as I did. When I denied, I was accused of having been at Count Lehndorff's in East Prussia, together with Treskov, approximately at the middle of June 1944. There we were supposed to have had a discussion involving high treason and plotting against the nation, dealing
of which were the immediate preparations for the 20th of July.

Since I had had occasion accidentally to talk shortly to Lehndorff in the washroom, I knew that the latter had admitted a talk between us, but had not revealed its nature to the Gestapo. Therefore I flatly denied this accusation too. Thereupon I was shown a protocol, allegedly signed by Lehndorff, which was to be the counter-evidence. Having been acquainted with Gestapo methods for a long time, it was easy to guess that the protocol as well as the signature were forged.

So I continued to deny and asked to be confronted with Lehndorff, which, of course, was not granted. My denial, however, entailed the first coercive measure against me. In future, my hands and feet were tied. Only someone whose hands and feet have been tied by day and night for months and even had to eat this way is in a position to judge the tremendous physical and mental burden caused by this continued fettering. The fact that the food in the Gestapo prison was quantitatively and qualitatively under the minimum required to keep up a man's energy does not have to be stressed especially. I learned from the following trials that the Gestapo was comparatively little interested in a confession revealing my participation in the attempt on Hitler's life. Their real object was something else. They wanted to hear the names of other participants. Their intention was to learn from me of as many anti-Nazis as possible and to destroy them. The confession of my own participation was to be but the preliminary step to the point of view deemed decisive by the Gestapo.
When I persisted in the denial of my participation, I was shown several names. I either denied having been acquainted with these persons or claimed not to have known anything that they had opposed Hitler in their attitude and actions. So the trials soon arrived at a dead point. From the point of view of criminal investigation, they were conducted in a clumsy, not to say bungling, manner. It was not difficult to hold out under the cross-examinations that lasted for hours and were carried out during all times of the day and night. The commanding tone in which I was dealt with could not make me flinch either. As a conscript in the army I had learned not to bat an eyelash when shouted at for hours on end and called the most obscene names. My assumption that the officer's uniform I wore might perhaps protect me from further measures soon turned out to be an illusion. Suddenly, the police inspector who conducted the trial adopted violent measures. Defenseless as I was, with my hands tied, I was hit in the face. The police inspector was supported actively by his secretary. She looked about twenty and derived pleasure from hitting my face and spitting at me. I remained quiet but pointed out the vulgar and criminal aspects of this sort of trial. It is possible that this further incited the wrath of the Gestapo. At any rate they now proceeded to brutal violence in order to obtain a confession and the names they wanted. One night they came again to my cell to take me to a trial. There were four persons in the room.
where the investigation was to take place: police inspector Habecker, his secretary, a sergeant of the security service in uniform and an assistant to the police inspector wearing civilian clothes. They informed me that this was my last opportunity for a confession. When I persisted in my denial they proceeded to torture, which was to comprise four degrees. First, my hands were tied on my back and then a device was pushed over them, which covered each finger separately. The inside of this machinery was equipped with thongs directed against the part of the hand where the fingers start out. By means of a screw the whole thing could be tightened so that the thongs were pressed into the flesh. The second degree consisted of the following procedure: I was tied, face downward, to something resembling a bedstead, and a blanket was put over my head. A thing that represented a sort of stove-pipe was drawn over my bare legs. These pipes had nails on the inside and again a screwing device made it possible to press together the walls of the pipes so that the nails were pressed into the lower and upper parts of the thigh. The "bedstead" was the main equipment for the third degree: I was tied onto it in the manner I have described before, while my head was covered with a blanket. By means of some device the bed was then pulled out, either suddenly with a jerk or slowly, so that the tied body was forced to follow the movements of the Procrustean device. At the fourth degree I was tied in a special way so that my body couldn't move either forwards or backwards. Then the assistant and the sergeant beat me with heavy cudgels from behind. Every blow made me tumble forward so that,
being tied to my back, I fell with full force on my face and head. During this procedure all participants took pleasure in deriding me. The first torture session ended with my fainting. None of the measures described had induced me to utter a word of confession or to mention the name of any of my political friends. After I had regained consciousness I was led back to my cell. I was received with unmistakable expressions of pity and horror on the part of the guards. The next day I was not able to get up so that I was incapable of changing my underwear, which bore heavy traces of blood. Although my health had always been excellent, I had a heartattack in the course of this day so that the Gestapo officials got scared. The prison doctor was called. Suspicious, but unable to resist, I had to put up with the measures he took. I lay in my cell for many days until I could get up again. The result was repetition of the torture, carried out in the same four degrees as the first time. The material success was zero. Many of my political friends, such as lawyer Langbehn and Regierungspräsident (Local Government President) Count Bismarck, have endured these tortures. We all made the experience that man can stand things which previously would have appeared impossible to us. Whoever was not capable of praying before learned it now. He was taught that prayer, and only prayer, can console in a like situation and impart superhuman strength. One learned, too, that also the prayer of relatives and friends outside the prison would give one ample
reserves of strength. After the second torture was over, I had to make it clear to myself what my tactics should be. I started that it was the intention of the Gestapo to continue coercive measures and even to increase them as the police inspector had explicitly told me. Since I had resolved to reveal no names under any circumstances, I prepared to take my life in spite of my being tied. While I was still engaged in these considerations and preparations, I happened to find a way out, the importance of which I had not previously thought out deliberately. Some instinct suddenly told me to reveal under pressure that I had been informed of Treackow's intention to exert coercion on Hitler and to make him resign as commander-in-chief of the army in favor of a field marshal. The unexpected happened. The Gestapo was satisfied with my declaration and cut short my trial. I was left alone for a while. The police inspector told me only one more thing, namely, that four considerations had been decisive in suspecting me of having participated in the events of the 20th of July:

1) My luggage contained material throwing some light on my Christian outlook. I had had a book on Catholic moral theology, one on Protestant ethics, a series of writings on a merger of the Catholic and the Protestant church and, finally, a Bible.

2) I was a lawyer in civilian life, a highly suspicious fact since the Third Reich was not in need of lawyers and their existence constituted a nuisance.

3) I had been an officer. For many years, opposition had arisen from the ranks of this profession and the Gestapo had been unable to do anything about it.

4) I was a member of the nobility, a clique which, by its very nature, was opposed to Hitler and National Socialism.
Soon afterwards I was informed that the Court of Honor of the German Reich under the chairmanship of Generalfeldmarschall Keitel had expelled me from the armed forces on the basis of a report they had received from the Gestapo. This happened, although the Court of Honor of the German Reich had neither seen nor heard me. Again a few days later I was informed that a warrant of arrest had been issued against me by the examining magistrate of the People's Court, Landgerichtsdirektor (presiding judge of a chamber in a regional court) Dr. Ehrlich had signed it. This examining magistrate, too, had never seen nor heard me. But in view of the warrant he deemed me sufficiently suspicious of high treason and plotting against the nation. One day, after a lengthy period had elapsed, I was taken out of my cell and brought by automobile to the concentration camp of Sachsenhausen. There, I was led to a place which bore unmistakable signs of being a rifle-range. Characteristic was merely that the shooting distance was about 50 meters. The official who accompanied me smirked and, pointing out to me the rifle-range, said: "Now you will know, I assume, what will happen to you. But first we shall do something else with you." Then I was led into a room which was obviously part of the crematorium of the concentration camp. Here stood the coffin of General Treskov, which had been removed from its grave and brought to Sachsenhausen. It was opened in my presence. Then, confronted with the body, which had been lying in the earth for several months, I was asked in a threatening tone of voice whether I would not make a full and final
confession. But I persisted in my previous behaviour. Then the coffin, with the body in it, was burned before my eyes and, contrary to my expectations, I was driven back to my prison. Certainly, it was a terrible time. But I also experienced the truth of Hölderlin’s words of fate “that the heart experiences a new sort of beatitude when it holds out and endures the midnight hour of horror and that, like the song of a nightingale in the dark, we hear the world’s divine hymn of life only in our most profound misery.” Since then, that is to say since the Gestapo was sure that I would be condemned by the People’s Court, I was dealt with correctly, was allowed to write letters, to talk to my family and to receive packages. Nothing unusual was seen in the fact that the content of the packages reached me only in part. The guards collected the taxes right away. Twice I had an opportunity in my prison to talk briefly to Goerdeler. The time was sufficient to agree that we were to be strangers to each other. We both kept this agreement although acquaintance with Goerdeler was oftentimes reproached to me. At least, I was threatened of being confronted with him. This, however, was not carried out since he too stubbornly denied having known me. His firmness has saved my life at the time. Later, in January 1946, Goerdeler talked to me about the military situation and said he thought defeat was imminent. On February 2, Goerdeler and Popitz were fetched from their cells. The manner in which this was done left no doubt as to the fact that their last hour had arrived.
One day, during the latter part of December, a lawyer from Berlin by
the name of Bode visited me in my cell. He introduced himself and
declared that he was my defense counsel. I was due to appear before
the People's Court in two days. As things were, I would be certain to
be condemned to death. I had waited for this moment. I asked him to
listen quietly and told him that I had undergone torture and of what
kind. The conclusion of my narration was to deny everything at court
that I had confessed under torture. He took up this suggestion
energetically and said that the case of Regierungspräsident Bismarck
had been a similar one and had ended with an acquittal. Of course,
everything depended on proving the torture and of making a good
impression at court - as he expressed himself. He promised to inform
the President of the People's Court and the Attorney General
(Oberreichsanwalt) in advance of the facts since the objection would
probably be brushed aside otherwise. I had proof later on that
Dr. Bode had fulfilled his promise. In one word, Bode took up his
activity as defense counsel with energy and courage. For in taking
this step he might easily incur the wrath of the Gestapo, which could
have incalculable consequences for him. So, on December 21, I and
five other accused appeared before the People's Court. Naturally,
not all cases could be dealt with in a day. Since I was the last one
on the dock, I witnessed five trials at the People's Court, which
impressed me profoundly. Freisler, the President, discarding the
notion of objectivity prescribed by law and morals, was in the habit
of branding the slightest offense as high treason. Accordingly, most
of the sentences provided for death through hanging. In each case, Freisler delivered propaganda speeches entirely unworthy of a judge. With regard to myself, the investigation had revealed only that I had been informed of a plot involving high-treason without having indicated it to the authorities. §139 of the German Criminal Code provides a prison sentence in this case. But the other five trials had taught me that Freisler would regard even the knowledge of a traitorous undertaking as participation in it and would pronounce a death sentence. It was a question, then, of using their own means against the Gestapo and of eliminating my slim confession by pointing out torture. At the end of January my counsel paid me another visit in my prison and told me that my situation had taken a turn for the worse in as far as my name had also been mentioned in some other proceedings. Apparently, the Gestapo had not been aware of this. But Freisler would remember the name and probably not pay any attention to my representation of the facts. Such were the circumstances that accompanied my second hearing on 3 February 1945. The case of the accused Ewald von Kleist was dealt with before my own. He declared openly that he had fought Hitler and National Socialism with all means, had never concealed it and regarded this fight as ordered by God. Only God would be his judge. He received the death sentence of the People’s Court with stoicism and perfect composure. Whoever saw Ewald von Kleist at this moment, proud and firm before men but humble before God, could not help wishing to be able to die with just such a countenance.
My case was called up when the sirens sounded and the approach of several American bombing squadrons was announced. The attack hit mainly the centre of Berlin. The People's Court and the Reichssicherheits-Hauptamt of the Gestapo burst into flames. When, after the end of the raid, I waited for the hearing to be continued, I was informed that it could not take place President Freisler having been killed by a bomb. He was found dead, with my acts in his hands. But apart from slight damages, the prison of the Gestapo on the Prinz Albrechtstrasse had not been destroyed. The prisoners whose sentences were pending remained there, although there was no light, no water, no heating - circumstances which, at the time of the year, did not make the sojourn there any more agreeable. But the majority of the prisoners was removed. The crew of special guards disappeared with them so that we few remaining ones could sometimes talk together thanks to reduced supervision. Thus, I made the acquaintance of Generaloberst Fromm. On 20 July 1944, following the failure of the attempt on Hitler's life, Generaloberst Beck, General Olbricht, Oberst Count Stauffenberg, Oberst Merz von Quirnheim and Oberleutnant von Haeften had been shot on his orders. Later, he had also been arrested and an investigation was started with the object of proving his subsequent knowledge of the attempt on Hitler's life. Afterwards, when the authorities had been persuaded that this accusation could not be maintained but Fromm had already been replaced by Himmler as commander of the reserve army, it was sought to reconstruct the
accusation. A new basis was found in the assumption that he had suppressed the revolt too late, thereby showing himself as a "coward". So he was sent to the People's Court for cowardice. He let me read his accusation, which covered twenty pages, and talked to me several times about his case. All this revealed the following: In the early afternoon of July 20, 1944, General Olbricht came to Fromm's room and said that he had to inform him of something alone. Thereupon Fromm interrupted the military report that was just made to him and Olbricht told Fromm that a successful attempt on Hitler's life had been made. Fromm asked: "Who told you that?" Olbricht replied that he had gotten the information from General Fellgiebel, who had personally transmitted the message from his office to the intelligence officer attached to the commander of the reserve army. Olbricht continued: "Under these circumstances I propose to send word to all Deputy General Commands (stellvertretende Generalkommandos) indicating internal riots and to take over the executive power." Thereupon Fromm declared that he could take such a far-reaching measure only if he had had personal proof of Hitler's death. He would call up Generalfeldmarschall Keitel and ask him. Olbricht himself picked up the receiver in Fromm's room and asked to be connected with Generalfeldmarschall Keitel. When the connection had been established, Fromm asked Keitel what was going on at headquarters; wild rumours were circulating in Berlin. Keitel replied: "What is supposed to go on? Everything is in order." Fromm said. "It has just been reported
to me that the Führer was assassinated." Keitel answered: "That is nonsense. An attempt on his life has been made but fortunately it has failed. The Führer is alive and only lightly injured. But where is your Chief, Count Stauffenberg?" Fromm replied: Oberst Count Stauffenberg has not yet returned." Olbricht listened to this conversation. By reason of what Keitel had said Fromm declared that word of internal riots was not to be passed on to the Deputy General Commands for the time being. After a while General Olbricht appeared again at Fromm's, accompanied by Stauffenberg. Olbricht pointed out to Fromm that Stauffenberg had corroborated the report of Hitler's death. Fromm replied: "But this is impossible, Keitel has assured me of the contrary." Stauffenberg said: "As usual, the Fieldmarshal is lying. I have seen myself that Hitler has been carried out, dead." At this moment Olbricht said to Fromm: "In view of this situation, we have passed word to the Deputy General Commands indicating internal riots." Hearing this sentence Fromm jumped up, hit the table with his fist and shouted: "This is outright insubordination! What do you mean by 'we'? Who has given the order?" Olbricht replied: "My Chief, Oberst Hers von Quirnheim." Fromm asked that Hers von Quirnheim be fetched immediately. The latter appeared and, questioned by Fromm, admitted to have given the clue of internal riots to the Deputy General Commands without Fromm's permission. Fromm told him, standing: "You are under arrest."
We will see about the rest latter." At this moment Oberst Count Stauffenberg rose and declared coldly: "Herr Generaloberst, I have myself ignited the bomb during the discussion of the situation in Hitler's room; it created an explosion as if a 15 cm. grenade had struck. Nobody in this room can be alive." Fromm replied: "Count Stauffenberg, the attempt on Hitler's life has failed, you have got to shoot yourself immediately." Count Stauffenberg: "No, I shall not do this." Again Olbricht spoke up and said, addressing Fromm: "Herr Generaloberst, the moment has come when we have to act. If we do not strike now, our fatherland will go down under Hitler for ever." Fromm replied: "Then you too, Olbricht, have participated in this coup d'état?" Olbricht answered: "Yes, but I personally stand only at the periphery of the circle that is willing to seize the power in Germany." Fromm replied: "All three of you are under arrest." Olbricht said: "You cannot arrest us. You are mistaken about the real constellation of power. We arrest you." Thereupon a hand to hand fight between Olbricht and Fromm started and Merz and Stauffenberg intervened. Fromm succumbed. An officer with a pistol entered his room. Fromm was forced to remain in his room. At the same time he was informed that his telephone had been disconnected. Generaloberst Fromm submitted to this arrest until evening. But two generals were able to penetrate to his room in the course of the afternoon. They told him that news of the attempt on Hitler's life had spread extremely rapidly. The officer's corps and the officials of the commander of the reserve army did not intend to participate in the coup d'état.

It had been attempted to assemble troops and to arrest the mutineers.
In the evening Fromm asked permission to go to his official dwelling place in the same building. He was permitted to do so. Fromm there, Fromm succeeded in establishing a connection with other military offices and in calling troops. With the aid of these troops Fromm arrested the mutineers. Among them was also Generaloberst Hoeppner, who had been expelled from the armed forces in 1941. He looked up Fromm after the latter had been arrested, shook hands with him and declared to be in sympathy with his personal fate; but he could assure him that no harm would befall him. The powers of the commander of the reserve army would now be taken over by him - Hoeppner -, while Generaloberst Beck was in the building too. They had chosen him as the new leader of the German Reich. For them, Hoeppner further declared, Hitler was dead, even though Keitel may affirm the contrary. When the news of the failure of the attempt on Hitler's life spread, the majority of the officers of the commander of the reserve army grew hesitant and finally deserted to the other side so that Fromm, supported by the troops he had called, was able to recover his power in the Reich's War Ministry in the Bendler Block. Fromm set up a court-martial consisting of three generals, which sentenced the mutineers to death. Fromm went with the sentence to the office of the Allgemeines Heeresamt, where Beck, Olbricht, Stauffenberg, Merz von Quirnhein, Hoeppner and others were assembled. Fromm declared
them all under arrest and read the death sentence to them. Hoeppner asked Fromm to wait with his execution, he might still be able to justify himself. Fromm granted this and had Hoeppner led away. Olbricht only requested to be allowed to write a few lines to his wife. This too was granted by Fromm. When Fromm asked the other officers to surrender their arms, Beck stood up and said: "You will not ask this of me, your old superior. I will draw the consequences of this jumbled situation myself." Fromm agreed. Beck sat down in a chair, pulled out his pistol and tried to kill himself by shooting himself through the head. But the projectile only skinned the skull. Then Beck, sitting in his chair and supported by Stauffenberg, aimed for the second time. The second shot was fatal so that he dropped the pistol, but did not end his life immediately. Olbricht, Stauffenberg, Merz and Haeften were then shot one by one by a troop command according to martial law. Before he was shot upon Count Stauffenberg called out: "Long live holy Germany." Afterwards, Fromm asked an officer whether Beck had died yet and, on receiving a negative answer, ordered that Beck be spared further suffering. According to this order, an officer killed Beck through a pistol shot.

In February 1945, Generaloberst Fromm was sentenced to death by the People's Court on account of cowardice. The sentence hit him hard. He had not expected it. A few days after the sentence was passed, he was executed through the axe.
Among the prisoners in the Prinz Albrechtstrasse was also Kurt von Plettenberg. His situation turned out to be untenable and he refused when he was to be forced to name the persons he knew had been involved in the conspiracy. He was given 24 hours to think it over. I was able to talk to him once more in the morning. He described his situation to me and said, smiling: "I shall take my life myself before I shall mention a name." At noon, when he was led up to the room of the trial on the 4th floor, he hit the examining official on the jaw and jumped out of the window. In another second he was smashed on the pavement of the courtyard.

My fifth term at the People's Court was set for March 18. Vice-President Dr. Krohne was chairman. Contrary to Freisler, he did not know my name from other proceedings. I declared right at the beginning of the trial that Frederick the Great had abolished torture in Prussia 200 years ago; it had been used against me. Then I give a detailed description of the procedure. I was so worked up by the memory of it that I had a fit of tears. But I was not interrupted. I felt how the Court and all the other persons present held their breath, you would have heard a pin drop. In a short while I regained my countenance and could proceed with my narration. When my examination was over, I thought police inspector Habecker would be heard. But the chairman told me the Kriminalkommissar inspector had already testified outside the main trial - a procedure not known in the German Criminal Procedure Code. But apparently he had not been able to deny
the facts. For the Chief Reich's Prosecutor dropped the accusation
and asked himself for an acquittal. In my concluding remarks I
mentioned §343 of the German Reich's Criminal Code, according to which
an official who uses coercive measures against the accused in order
to wring a confession from him is to be punished by a jail sentence
up to five years. The chairman interrupted me and rejected my
remarks as inappropriate legal instructions given to the People's
Court. I replied that three laymen were sitting in the Senate and
that I had given these monitory legal instructions for their sake.
I knew, of course, that the reason for which the chairman rejected
my remarks was the following: according to German law, a public
prosecutor who hears of a crime has to bring it to the attention of
the authorities. I intended to point out this obligation to the
Chief Reich's Prosecutor, who, as is usual in such cases, neglected
his duty of accusing Gestapo officials. The People's Court acquitted
me and revoked the warrant of arrest. So I returned to the prison in
the Prinz Albrechtstrasse. Naturally, immediate release was out of
the question. When, a few days latter, there was another air raid
alarm and we prisoners were taken to the shelter, Habocker appeared
too. I heard him give the order to watch me particularly carefully.
A few hours later he told me that the decision of the People's Court
was apparently wrong. It would be respected in so far as they would
refrain from hanging me like the rest of the persons who had
participated in the attempt on Hitler's life. I would be shot. A
strange feeling came over me when I had to corroborate this revelation through my signature so as to comply with the rules of bureaucracy. Again several days elapsed until they suddenly woke me up one night at 2 o'clock. I was ordered to hold myself ready. Then a closed car took me and some other prisoners to the concentration camp Flossenbürg in Upper Franconia. Flossenbürg was one of the extermination camps. Here, all those were murdered who either had not been tried in the People's Court or had been acquitted. It was also in this camp that Admiral Canaris and General Oster had been hanged. Again I was put in solitary confinement. It could be felt clearly that this was an extermination camp. One could hear this person or the other being awakened in his cell at 6 o'clock in the morning. Then the respective prisoners, regardless whether men or women, had to strip themselves naked and were led by our cells to the immediately adjacent courtyard where they were either hanged or shot. Both things were done in a diabolical manner. In hanging, the prisoners did not have their vertebra broken, but were strangled until they finally suffocated. It occurred now and then that one or the other was out of after he had lost consciousness. They waited for him to come back to life. Then they told him derisively that he probably had had a foretaste of hanging. Thereupon he was really hanged. Those who were to be shot were also led out naked and were tied in a kneeling position, after which the adjutant of the concentration camp killed them by a
pistol shot through the nape. At noon we used to see through the windows of our cells how other prisoners of the camp carried down a slope the bodies of those who had been hanged or shot. The crematorium of the concentration camp was then out of order so that the bodies were burned on a wooden stake. In the afternoon we could not get rid of the disagreeable sweetish smell of burned bodies in our cells. During the time I spent in Flossenbürg, at least fifty people daily died in this manner. The guards often-times told us of these so-called executions. They also told us that the guard crews that participated in them received additional food rations in form of schnaps and blood pudding. Every day I expected my own death. But things developed differently. Already, we could hear distinctly the uproar of the battle carried closer by the approaching American troops. Soon, we distinguished clearly between the noise created by the firing and the striking of the artillery projectiles. At noon the door of my cell opened suddenly. An SS-man ordered me to hold myself ready immediately. All my things had to remain here. This was the usual method in the German concentration camps of depriving the prisoners of their last belongings. I was brought to Dachau together with many other prisoners. We arrived there at night. An SS-officer took me apart and told me that, due to the confusion, my papers had not been brought along with me. I should tell him what kind of a prisoner I was. I replied that I was an honourable prisoner (Ehrenhaftling). In this manner I was, for the first time, put into a barrack together
with many other prisoners after I had been in solitary confinement for a long time. Only a person who has experienced this himself can realize what it means to be able again to speak to someone. Germans and non-Germans were mixed together. Our section comprised about 130 people. More than 20 nations were represented. There was a surprising variety of professions ranging from circus clown to Catholic bishop. But there was only one spirit and the views were the same. Especially the English officers could not be surpassed in comradeship.

A few days later we moved on from Dachau. I was put into a concentration camp near Innsbruck. Here too the execution methods prevailed. As far as I could see, the persons involved were mainly partisans of the Tyrolian Liberation Movement. But the advance of the Americans was irresistible. We were again moved on. This time we were brought into the Puster Valley south of the Brenner. Due to the withdrawal of the German troops, the place where we were to be put up was already taken by a German army post. So we stood in the street in the pouring rain without shelter, guarded by a crew of SS-men, whose features revealed clearly how upset they were by the advance of the Allies. One could see how they grew uncertain in their outlook on life. Some of them started talking among themselves as to whom among us they would still have to kill. This was too much for the patience of our co-prisoner, pastor Niemöller. He approached the SS-officer in charge and said:
"If these people here are not removed, we shall kill them." This sort of language made an impression. A few more days full of crises followed. But we endured them until, on May 4, we were finally liberated by an American detachment. How wonderful are the ways of God!