

RANDOM HOUSE  BOOKS



Secret Germany

Michael Baigent & Richard Leigh

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About the Book

At thirty-seven, Colonel Count Claus von Stauffenberg, Chief of Staff of the Reich Reserve Army, was a charismatic figure destined for supreme command.

The group of conspirators with whom he conceived the plot to kill Hitler in July 1944 was called 'Secret Germany'. That was also the name of the esoteric circle in which Stauffenberg as a young man had been a disciple of the mystic anti-Nazi magus and poet Stefan George.

What was it that motivated this extraordinary aristocratic soldier, with the looks of a Hollywood idol, who was said to be the only man to stare the Fuhrer down until he averted his eyes? For Stauffenberg, the bomb plot was not a political move but a moral and spiritual necessity. After forty-two serious attempts on Hitler's life in the previous twenty years, why did he fail? Had he succeeded, some say he would have become de Gaulle of Germany, saviour of the nation's soul. Even in failure, there can be no doubt of Stauffenberg's heroism. He stands as atonement for the Third Reich and a resolution of the conflicting myths of German culture.

In this remarkable investigation, his whole life explains a troubled past to the present generations of Europeans as few have done in recent history.

About the Author

MICHAEL BAIGENT was born in New Zealand in 1948, and obtained a degree in psychology from Canterbury University, Christchurch, Since 1976 he has lived in England.

RICHARD LEIGH studied at Tufts University, Boston, the University of Chicago and the State University of New York at Stony Brook.

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The Temple and the Lodge
The Dead Sea Scrolls Deception
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By Michael Legacy

From the Omens of Babylon
Ancient Traces
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SECRET GERMANY

MICHAEL BAIGENT &
RICHARD LEIGH



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Acknowledgements

Although this book revolves around the charismatic figure of Colonel Count Claus von Stauffenberg, Chief of Staff of the Reich Reserve Army, it is not intended to be a conventional biography. Neither is it merely an account of the plot he conceived with a group of conspirators to kill Adolf Hitler in July 1944. Some say that had he succeeded he would have become the de Gaulle of Germany and saviour of the national soul, but even in failure he stands as an atonement for the Third Reich and a resolution of the conflicting myths of German culture. If Stauffenberg occupies centre stage in our story, it is because he throws such a clear light on the troubled past of the German-speaking people and explains the dilemma of their search for national identity.

A conventional biography of all three Stauffenberg brothers was published recently in German by Peter Hoffmann, whose book we acknowledge as a useful source of information. But our enquiry has taken us far beyond its parameters. We have viewed Stauffenberg as a reflecting medium, a lens through which we could focus the forces and circumstances that fostered the phenomenon of National Socialism and, not least, the meaning of heroism in the twentieth century.

Any approach to a corpus of historical data demands an element of selectivity. In addressing ourselves to the wider trends, we were obliged to omit some of the more detailed material we encountered in our research. We have not attempted to do full justice to the *Widerstand* (the German resistance to Hitler) and have deliberately avoided certain

aspects of it, such as the diplomatic activities of Adam von Trott zu Solz and the civilians of Helmuth James von Moltke's 'Kreisau Circle'. In some cases we derive a measure of consolation from the knowledge that we have deferred to the wishes of those who agreed to talk to us. Some of the people we interviewed were reluctant to see the events of the 'Bomb Plot', or the *Widerstand*, exposed and raked over again. They were prepared to recall painful memories for us, and to re-open old wounds, precisely because they endorsed the broader issues we wanted to explore. For these people, the details of what happened were less important than the interest we showed in the tradition, the heritage, the mentality and the code of honour that made resistance to the Third Reich a moral and spiritual imperative.

Among the officers directly involved in Stauffenberg's conspiracy we must cite the late Axel von dem Bussche who, in 1944, was prepared to sacrifice his own life in an attempt to eliminate Hitler. In the months preceding his death in 1992, Freiherr von dem Bussche displayed immense generosity in making available to us both his time and his memories. We are equally indebted to Ewald von Kleist, who was also prepared to sacrifice himself and who was actually present in the War Office on 20 July 1944. Ludwig von Hammerstein was another officer present at the scene, and we owe our thanks to him for sharing his recollections. The exploits of these men and their seemingly miraculous escape from Nazi retribution would constitute a gripping and self-contained narrative of its own.

We must thank Otto John, another eyewitness of the events at the War Office and subsequently, during the 1950s, head of West Germany's security services. We must also thank Angela zu Solms and Nona von Haeften, whose network of friends and relations made themselves available to us - in particular Jan von Haeften, Barbara von Haeften,

Gottliebe von Lehndorff and Vera von Lehndorff. Some of their accounts proved as poignant and harrowing as those of active participants in the conspiracy.

We are especially grateful to General-Major Berthold von Stauffenberg, who took time from his official duties to talk to us about his father and his family's tradition of service. For their comments on Stefan George, we would also like to thank Harold-Victor Koch and Hans-Dietrich Fühlendorf.

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23, 25, 27, 35). Other photographs were taken for this book by Michael Baigent.

We also wish to acknowledge Lori Keenan, who contributed appreciably to the work's original inspiration. And we would like to acknowledge the memory of Hauptmann Jaspers, who helped bring something of significant worth into the world.

M.B. and R.L.
February 1994

Introduction

By the spring of 1943, the Second World War was careening towards its fourth year of conflict. It would still have another two years to run, and some of the bloodiest and most bitter fighting had yet to occur. Nevertheless, the tide, in Churchill's phrase, had at last begun to turn. In three of the most important theatres of operations, the Allies - the British Empire, the Soviet Union and the United States - had forced the Axis on to the defensive, and were just beginning to take the offensive themselves.

During the previous year, three decisive engagements had transformed the course of the war, dramatically reversing the flow of its momentum. The first of these was the Battle of Midway, in June 1942, when Japan's seemingly inexorable sweep across the Pacific had been abruptly halted, and the loss of four aircraft carriers left Japanese air and sea power irreparably impaired.

On the Russian front, where Hitler's advancing forces were locked in a titanic struggle with those of the Soviet Union, the German 6th Army's assault on Stalingrad had ground to a halt. By the last week of November, the army was entirely encircled by the Russian counter-offensive. On 31 January 1943, the 6th Army surrendered with its surviving 91,000 men, having already suffered nearly 200,000 casualties. Germany had previously undergone reverses, of course - in the Battle of Britain, for example, and at sea - but Stalingrad was the German war machine's first major setback on land. It was a decisive defeat and led to the series of Russian counter-thrusts that carried the

Red Army across the whole of Eastern Europe, into the pulverised ruins of Berlin.

In North Africa, the progress of the war had seesawed almost since the outbreak of hostilities in 1939. After being repeatedly thrashed by British forces, Italy's battered and demoralised troops were reinforced by the Afrika Korps under General (later Field Marshal) Erwin Rommel, known respectfully even by his adversaries as the 'Desert Fox'. For more than a year, Rommel and a succession of British commanders fenced with each other across the sands of Egypt and Libya. The situation was at its worst for the British in March 1942, when Tobruk, the last bastion before Alexandria and the Suez Canal, finally fell. Rommel seemed unstoppable: he had only to smash his way through the exhausted British 8th Army, and Alexandria and the canal would be his for the taking. Loss of the canal would have been a fatal blow for Britain, permanently depriving her of a crucial sea route to such distant parts of the empire as India, Australia and New Zealand. It would have allowed the Afrika Korps to fulfil Hitler's grand design - to advance eastwards, up through Palestine, into the vital oil fields of modern-day Iraq and Iran. From here, they could have linked up with the German armies already striking down through the Ukraine and the southern regions of the Soviet Union.

Such was the daunting prospect confronting the Allies in mid-1942. But in July, Rommel's thrust towards the Suez Canal was parried by the 8th Army under General (later Field Marshal) Sir Claude Auchinleck at the first Battle of El Alamein. Shortly thereafter, Auchinleck was replaced by a new commander, the then little-known General Bernard Law Montgomery, and during the summer and early autumn, 8th Army was massively reinforced. At last, on the night of 23-4 October, Montgomery launched his counter-offensive with the famous artillery barrage of more than eight hundred heavy guns, the most ferocious and

concentrated such barrage of the war. After eleven days of sustained fighting, 8th Army broke through the German and Italian defences, and Rommel began a retreat which was to carry him westwards across Egypt and Libya into Tunisia - fifteen hundred miles back across the desert with Montgomery in hot pursuit.

Five days after Montgomery's breakthrough at Alamein on 3 November, British, American and Free French forces had landed at the opposite end of the North African coast - at Algiers, Casablanca and Oran. According to the language employed at the time, they were to constitute the anvil on which the hammer of Montgomery's 8th Army smashed the retreating Germans. But things did not go entirely to plan. German reinforcements were rushed into Tunisia. The soldiers of the American II Corps, moreover, were green, their discipline was lax and they offered an enticingly vulnerable soft spot on the Allied front.

On 4 February 1943, the Staff Officer in charge of operations for the German 10th Panzer Division had been seriously injured by a mine. Ten days later he was replaced by a 36-year-old aristocrat from an 800-year-old Swabian family, Oberstleutnant (Lieutenant-Colonel) Claus Philipp Maria Schenk, Graf (Count) von Stauffenberg. On that same day, 10th Panzer Division attacked the American II Corps at Sidi Bou Zid. For the Americans, it was their baptism of fire, and their nominal commander, General Fredendall, was nowhere near the front - he had queasily ensconced himself in an underground bunker more than sixty miles away. Daunted by the German onslaught, most of the Americans abandoned their weapons and fled.

A much larger and even more ignominious humiliation followed five days later, at the Battle of Kasserine Pass. Held in reserve for the first day of the engagement, 10th Panzer Division joined the German assault on 20 February. Again, the Americans panicked and fled, losing nearly 2,700 killed and wounded and another 2,500 prisoners.

Eisenhower, the supreme Allied commander, had been reluctant to call on British support, hoping his troops would acquit themselves honourably on their own. The urgency of the situation, however, took precedence over national pride. General Fredendall was relieved of command (and packed off to the United States with a face-saving promotion). While his successor, George Patton, undertook to rebuild the tattered American morale, help was invoked and a counter-attack launched by the British 6th Armoured Division. By 22 February, the Germans had been driven back to their former positions at Mareth.

Two weeks later, 10th Panzer Division was in action again, this time striking east from Mareth in an audacious but futile attempt to halt Montgomery's advancing 8th Army at Medenine. When Montgomery counter-attacked on 20 March, 10th Panzer offered particularly fierce resistance, and it was not until six days later that the Germans were forced to abandon their positions at Mareth. In both of these engagements, 10th Panzer's new Staff Officer (Operations) made a dramatic impression on subordinates, colleagues and superiors alike.

In spite of all his office work, the Staff Officer (Operations) invariably found time to keep in touch with the troops. He would frequently visit regiments and battalions to discuss personal or official problems with commanding officers. By informal discussion on the spot, he would deal with a whole mass of business which would otherwise have had to be cleared up through official channels. His conversation was not, however, limited solely to official matters; he would range over history, geography, literature, and, of course, politics. Though he was clearly opposed to the existing system, he never tried to persuade or influence anybody. He did not seem to me to be in any sense fanatical, impetuous or a go-getter trying to change everything at once ... He

had the natural charm of the Swabian, which everybody found irresistible.

One of the new Staff Officer's subordinates offers a particularly eloquent testimony:

Although I was only a twenty-two-year-old subaltern ... I was extraordinarily impressed by Stauffenberg's personality.¹ He seemed to me the ideal of an officer. His manner was so frank and friendly that one did not get the impression of being a subordinate. His thoughtfulness inspired one with confidence. On the other hand, the incision with which he spoke drew respect; he was a man possessed of natural authority. It was typical of Stauffenberg's way of going about things that he was determined to get to know personally all officers in the division, down to company commander, as soon as he could - which was why I was ordered to report to him. This was not normal procedure. He was determined that there should be close contact between the staff and the troops.²

On 7 April, two weeks after the German retreat from Mareth, the Allied pincers closed - the Anglo-American forces that had landed in November linked up with Montgomery's 8th Army advancing from the east. This determined the fate of the Afrika Korps and its Italian allies, now boxed in amid Tunisia's rocky hills and flat barren passes. On 12 May, 250,000 German and Italian troops surrendered, thereby paving the way for the invasion of Sicily and then the Italian mainland - the first Allied foothold on the continent of Europe since the evacuation at Dunkirk three years before.

With the Allies enjoying air supremacy, as well as control of the Mediterranean, no German equivalent of Dunkirk could even have been contemplated. But while the army

itself could not be saved, it was still possible for individual commanders, senior officers and other important personnel to be rescued. An ill and depressed Rommel was invalided home shortly after his withdrawal from Mareth. Claus von Stauffenberg was booked for a flight back to Italy, whence he would be re-assigned to a new posting. He himself had recognised that the North African campaign was irretrievably lost. Not caring to spend the duration of the war as a prisoner, he had requested a transfer, maintaining he could be of greater use elsewhere. No one disagreed with him, for Stauffenberg was universally recognised as the single most brilliant and promising young officer in the entire Wehrmacht. There seemed little question that he was destined for high command, eventually for a field marshal's baton. It was said that he had the capacity 'to inspire the Army and the General Staff with a new spirit and to compete with the narrow military point of view'.³ One of his colleagues observed: 'What surprised me was the manner in which those who surpassed him in rank recognised his natural superiority and yielded to it.'⁴ In the view of one of his commanders, he was 'the only German Staff officer of genius'.⁵ Heinz Guderian, the mastermind of German armoured warfare and architect of Panzer formations and the 'Blitzkrieg', was soon to put Stauffenberg's name forward as most likely candidate for Chief of the General Staff.⁶

On the day that the Anglo-American forces advancing from the west joined up with the 8th Army, Stauffenberg was helping to organise the German retreat towards the Tunisian coastal town of Sfax. His staff car was manoeuvring through a lengthy file of other vehicles and demoralised soldiers on foot when the entire column came under strafing attack from a squadron of American P-40 fighter-bombers.⁷ The road was at once transformed into an inferno of blazing vehicles, each of which, as it burst into flames, provided another easily discernible marker for the

low-flying aircraft. As his driver threaded a path between the gutted hulks, Stauffenberg stood upright in his staff car, issuing orders and directing such lorries as still remained mobile. Then, he himself became a target for one of the P-40s' .50 calibre machine-guns. Hands covering his head, he hurled himself out of the car as the bullets struck home.

He was found, half-conscious, beside his overturned, burnt out and shell-pocked vehicle. His injuries were appalling. His left eye had been hit by a bullet, his right seriously damaged as well. His right forearm and hand had been virtually shot away, as had two fingers on his left. One knee was badly wounded and his back and legs were pitted with shrapnel. In this condition, he was rushed to the nearest field hospital, at Sfax. Here, he received emergency treatment. The remnants of his right hand were amputated above the wrist. The little finger and ring finger of his left hand, and what remained of his left eye, were removed.

Three days later, as Montgomery's troops advanced on Sfax, Stauffenberg was transferred to another hospital at Carthage - a difficult and extremely painful journey, with the ambulance under constant attack by Allied aircraft. From Carthage, he was flown to Munich. He was running an alarmingly high temperature, and most of the doctors concluded he was unlikely to live. If, by some miracle, he did, he was unlikely to walk again. He would probably be permanently crippled, an invalid for the rest of his life. He might also be blind.

His head, arms and legs swathed like a mummy's in bandages, he was visited in hospital by an array of distinguished officers, who, during the previous years of both peace and war, had come to esteem him. They included the Chief of the General Staff, Kurt Zeitzler, who brought him a decoration, the Golden Badge for the Wounded, and a personal gift of wine. 'The large number of high-ranking visitors calling on the lieutenant-colonel caused astonishment at the military hospital.'⁸

Stauffenberg was also visited by his mother, by his wife, Nina, and by his uncle, Nikolaus, Graf (Count) von Üxküll-Gyllenband, as well as by other relatives. To Üxküll he confided that he felt his survival had not been coincidental; his life, mutilated though it might now be, had been spared for some specific purpose, some ordained design.

'You know,' he said to Nina on one occasion, 'I have a feeling I've now got to do something to save the Reich. As General Staff officers, we all share the responsibility.'⁹

To a friend, the son of his surgeon, he stated: 'I could never look the wives and children of the fallen in the eye if I did not do something to stop this senseless slaughter.'¹⁰

To Üxküll and a number of others, he was even more incisively determined: 'Since the generals have so far done nothing, the colonels must now go into action.'¹¹

From childhood, Stauffenberg had cultivated self-discipline and a tenacious application of will - a fierce concentration of inner resources, psychological or spiritual, whereby, as he saw it, flesh could be mastered and transcended. These resources were now to be augmented by a consuming sense of mission. The first step for Stauffenberg was to rehabilitate himself. He set about establishing a personal supremacy over physical pain, affirming what he regarded as his spiritual identity in defiance of the body's ordeals. While the surgeons laboured over him, he adamantly refused all pain-killing drugs, all soporifics, anaesthetics and sedatives. Even the official Gestapo report speaks admiringly of the 'great will-power' with which he embarked on his recovery.

Grievous though his injuries had been, Stauffenberg remained hospitalised in Munich for no more than two and a half months, from 21 April until 3 July. As early as the end of April, his recovery was being pronounced 'remarkable', and he wrote to a friend, General Friedrich Olbricht, that he hoped to be ready for duty again by August. Despite the dire prognostications to the contrary, he recovered the use

of his right eye. With the two fingers and thumb of his left hand, he taught himself laboriously to write. In the sleeping compartment of a train, shortly after he had discharged himself from hospital, a fellow officer, pitying his condition, offered to help him change clothes. Stauffenberg chuckled and, in a matter of moments, had undressed and dressed himself again, employing three fingers and his teeth. When the hospital asked him to return to have an artificial limb fitted, he replied that he had no time for such matters. When an artificial limb was suggested by a friend, he laughed and again dismissed the idea. He could scarcely remember, he said, what he'd done with all ten fingers when he still possessed them. He insisted on regarding his injuries as no more than a minor inconvenience, training himself to function as normally as possible, even to ride horseback - and, when later circumstances so required, to activate a bomb.

Stauffenberg would not let himself be demobilised either. He declared his intention not only to remain in the army, but to resume active duty and even to get posted to the front. Almost at once, he was besieged by senior commanders seeking to woo him to their staff. He chose a position as Chief of Staff in the Allgemeine Heeresamt, the General Army Office, one of the departments of the Reserve Army based in Berlin. The Reserve Army consisted of all troops stationed on German soil, within the precincts of the Reich itself. The task of the General Army Office was to supply materiel, as well as trained replacements, to the Reserve Army, which could then transfer them to the appropriate theatre of operations. Such replacements consisted of new recruits, wounded who had recovered, workers withdrawn from industry, over-age and under-age volunteers.

Stauffenberg's immediate superior at the General Army Office was Colonel-General Friedrich Olbricht, with whom he had corresponded in April; and it has been suggested

that he and Olbricht had already come to a secret understanding. In any case, there were reasons for Stauffenberg wanting to be attached to Olbricht's department. Through his own network of connections, he knew it to be a clandestine hotbed of officers militantly opposed to Hitler and the National Socialist régime. These officers had begun to act in close concert with another cadre, led by one of the most dynamic young commanders on the Eastern Front, Major-General Henning von Tresckow, whom Stauffenberg had known since at least the summer of 1941. Under Tresckow's auspices, an embryonic plan had been formulated for using the Reserve Army as the nucleus of a coup. The General Army Office was the vital connecting link between the Reserve Army and Tresckow's circle on the Eastern Front.

By mid-August 1943, some five weeks after discharging himself from hospital, Stauffenberg was in Berlin. Here, he began actively conspiring with Tresckow, then on leave; and when Tresckow returned to the Eastern Front, leadership of the conspiracy in Germany devolved almost entirely upon Stauffenberg. The pace of events quickened when, on 1 October, he officially assumed his post as Chief of Staff at the General Army Office. He was now based at the building on the Bendlerstrasse which served as headquarters for the Reserve Army.

Energy, resourcefulness, determination, eloquence, charisma, an irresistible magnetic charm and an infectious sense of humour - all the qualities Stauffenberg had previously employed in his wartime tasks were now directed towards conspiracy. From his house in a Berlin suburb, shared with his brother Berthold, he proceeded to consolidate the requisite network of contacts, as well as to familiarise himself with the civil and military measures which seizure of power would entail: proclamation of a state of emergency, arrest of Party officials along with SS and Gestapo personnel, occupation of ministries, railway

depots, communications centres, strategic installations and access roads. It was a dauntingly arduous and complex undertaking, yet Stauffenberg's unflagging stamina – especially in a man so recently and terribly wounded – seemed to his colleagues almost superhuman. Tirelessly, he moved through the upper military and administrative echelons of the Reich, screening prospective supporters, probing, evaluating, interrogating, arguing, recruiting – always with a ready laugh, an apparently slapdash cavalier insouciance, a mesmerising force of character and will that seldom failed to win people over.

'Let me be blunt,' he declared to one young officer whose services he wished to recruit. 'With all the resources at my disposal, I'm committing high treason.'¹²

In meeting with co-conspirators, he would often recite fragments from the work of Stefan George, his former mentor, who had died in 1933 and is, after Rilke, probably the greatest German-language poet of the century. In particular, he would quote from a poem entitled 'Der Widercris' ('The Antichrist'), which George had published – with what now seemed uncanny foresight – in 1907:

The high Prince of Vermin extends his domains;
No pleasure eludes him, no treasure or gain.
And down with the dregs of rebellion!

You cheer, mesmerised by demoniac sheen,
Exhaust what remains of the honey of dawn,
And only then sense the débâcle.

You then stretch your tongues to the now arid trough,
Mill witless as kine through a pasture aflame,
While fearfully brazens the trumpet.¹³

On 6 June 1944, history's most ambitious seaborne invasion swept half a million British, American and

Canadian soldiers ashore in Normandy. The repercussions were soon to give Stauffenberg his long-sought opportunity. Colonel-General Fritz Fromm, Commander-in-Chief of the Reserve Army, had been out of favour with Hitler for some two years. Now, on 7 June, owing to a particularly impressive report Stauffenberg had composed for him, Fromm was summoned to the Führer's headquarters above Berchtesgaden, at the Berghof in the Bavarian Alps, and Stauffenberg accompanied him.

It is often assumed or asserted by historians that the meeting at the Berghof was Stauffenberg's first personal contact with Hitler. A photograph published for the first time in this book proves they had met previously - at least as early as the summer of 1942, at Vinnitsa, German headquarters in the Ukraine. There Hitler, as always on encountering a new face, endeavoured to stare Stauffenberg down. In the past, his stare had always dominated others, forcing their eyes down or aside, but Stauffenberg remained uncowed, his eyes locking and holding the Führer's. For the first time in the experience of those present, Hitler's own gaze is said to have given way, growing veiled, jellied, then flicking furtively away - as if intimidated by a charisma, a magnetism, a force of will comparable to his own. Stauffenberg is said to have commented afterwards on this silent contest with typical self-confidence: 'The man is a magician. He almost hypnotised *me!*'

Two years later, all vestiges of Hitler's hypnotic power had evaporated for Stauffenberg. His own accounts of the meeting at Berchtesgaden reflect, above everything else, an overwhelming revulsion. To his wife, when asked whether Hitler's eyes had been impressive or exerted any spell, he replied contemptuously: 'Not at all. Nothing.' They had only been 'veiled'. Goering had been wearing makeup, and the whole atmosphere of the Führer's headquarters had been 'stale', 'paralysing', 'rotten and degenerate'. Only

Albert Speer, the Minister for Armaments, had seemed normal. All the other members of the National Socialist hierarchy had been 'patent psychopaths'. According to eyewitness reports:

Hitler, his right hand trembling, looking worried, suddenly cast a searching glance at Stauffenberg across the long table; then, after quickly reassuring himself that there was no danger, he again turned his attention to the reporting officer.¹⁴

From that day on, the Führer ordered a tightening of his personal security, and emphasised that all briefcases carried to conferences should be closely watched.

Whatever Hitler's suspicions, the record of the dashing, one-handed and one-eyed officer was impeccable, his brilliance could not be disputed and endorsements from such senior commanders as Guderian could hardly be dismissed. On 20 June, he was seconded by Olbricht from the General Army Office to a position as Fromm's deputy: he became Chief of Staff of the Reserve Army. Promoted to full colonel, he officially assumed his new post on 1 July. He would now have access to the Führer's headquarters and to Hitler personally.

Part One
THE BOMB PLOT

The German Resistance

HISTORY HAS BEEN kind to the anti-German resistance in most of Nazi-occupied Europe. In part, of course, this is a consequence of Allied propaganda during the war itself. In the struggle for 'hearts and minds', much was to be gained by stressing the rôles of Free French, Free Polish, Free Czech and other forces fighting alongside those of Britain, the Empire as it then existed, and the United States. There were also vested interests, both during the war and afterwards, in stressing the activities of partisan organisations in occupied France, Holland, Belgium, Denmark, Norway, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, Poland, Greece and, after September 1943, northern Italy - activities ranging from smuggling Allied airmen to safety and transmitting messages to co-ordinating air raids, engaging in sabotage and conducting large-scale guerrilla operations. In the English-speaking world, even the most cursory account of the war will accord some notice to the work of the underground resistance; and there can scarcely be a cinema-goer or television viewer who has not seen at least one film revolving around resistance activities, from Scandinavia to the Balkans and Greece. Nor must one forget the actions of partisans within the former Soviet sphere of influence, and within the former Soviet Union itself.

The German Resistance, or '*Widerstand*', has received altogether less attention from serious historians, and virtually no popular attention whatever. For most people, the Third Reich looms as a single sinister monolithic entity

- the entire German population standing mesmerised, in docile thrall to Hitler's spell. In some quarters, it may even come as a surprise that a German resistance existed at all. Although there will generally be a vague awareness of the abortive plot to assassinate Hitler on 20 July 1944, for most non-historians, this will figure only as it was depicted at the time by the Nazis themselves and by Allied propaganda - a single doomed flash-in-the-pan attempt at a coup d'état improvised, in slapdash and amateurish fashion, by a few disgruntled high-ranking officers. Even among the better-informed, the plot of 20 July is seen as nothing more than an ad hoc and bungled endeavour to remove Hitler personally, rather than a manifestation of a coherent, longstanding, widespread and well-organised resistance movement.

In fact, a subterranean and organised German resistance had existed since before 1938 - before Hitler's invasion of Czechoslovakia and the notorious conference in Munich which, according to Neville Chamberlain, promised 'peace in our time'. This resistance consisted of senior military officers and civil servants, and international diplomats, jurists, intellectuals and men of letters. Some of these were among the most august and influential names in Germany. Hjalmar Schacht, President of the Reichsbank and former Minister of Economics, was involved, as well as Julius Leber, refugee of concentration camps and chief spokesman for German socialism. There were Carl Görden, former Mayor of Leipzig, Ulrich von Hassell, former German ambassador to Italy, and Adam von Trott zu Solz, one-time Rhodes Scholar at Oxford and probably the most brilliant mind in the German Foreign Office. Eminent jurists like Counts Peter Yorck von Wartenburg and Helmuth James von Moltke - cousins of the Stauffenberg family and founders of the intellectual 'Kreisau Circle' - took part, as did Pastor Dietrich Bonhöffer, the