

Lecture Notes on "The Black Orchestra"

" The Black Orchestra was the code word given by the SS Gestapo to those who conspired to overthrow Hitler between 1938 and 1944. The only disagreement within the group was the method employed. Should Hitler be assassinated as he had many of their colleagues or should he be tried by the Judiciary. The attached presentation notes, copyright to Allen Fudge, convenor of the Moss Vale Probus Club Military History Study Group gives the full story of their exploits."

**Slide 1 THE BLACK ORCHESTRA (SCHWARZE KAPELLE)
Schutzstaffel (SS) code word for those who conspired against
Hitler between 1938 and 1944**

Slide 2 PART 1 THE FIRST HINT

England. Summer of 39. Try to imagine for a moment you are in England in the summer of 1939 where there's a fairly relaxed atmosphere as people have generally accepted the fact that there probably will be peace in their time as Chamberlain assured them when he returned from Munich in 1938. So despite Hitler invading the rest of Czechoslovakia in March people are getting ready to go to the seaside for their annual holidays. Meanwhile you, the 2nd Viscount Astor, are enjoying a break with your family at your country estate "Cliveden".

Against war with Germany. Besides holding a seat in the House of Lords you are also Chairman of the Royal Institute of International Affairs. You were against a war with Germany in 1938 and you are still against it even should Hitler make further demands or incursions in Europe, mainly for the reason that you recognise England's military weakness and consequently do not consider England has the capacity to defeat Germany should the two go to war.

Not an appeaser. For this opinion many in the aristocracy wrongly regard you as an appeaser although many of them do not know that you secretly prefer that England be led by Churchill in the event of war rather than by Neville Chamberlain who is too old or Lord Halifax, the Foreign Minister, for that matter, who is favoured by the King and Queen, and whom you consider to be the real appeaser amongst the aristocracy.

Adam von Trott. While you are thinking on these things, your son David says to you "father do you remember Adam von Trott? We were at Oxford together. Well he is with the German Foreign Office now and he telephoned me briefly yesterday from Berlin asking if I could help arrange an appointment for him to see you. "What about you ask" "All he was prepared to tell me over the telephone was that it was a matter of extreme delicacy but one vital for continuing good relations between England and Germany.

Preferable to negotiate. When they did meet two days later all that von Trott was prepared to reveal to Lord Astor was that England should not rush into declaring war should Germany make a further incursion in Europe. Instead it would be preferable to negotiate with Hitler a second time. Following this initial conversation between Lord Astor and Adam von Trott Lord Astor made an appointment for von Trott to with the Prime Minister, Neville Chamberlain, which had been von Trott's main objective in seeing Lord Astor in the first place.

Chamberlain advised of conspiracy. In the meeting with Neville Chamberlain it transpired that von Trott was not suggesting a surrender to Hitler, as some of his English friends imagined but was attempting to let the British know that a conspiracy led by senior German Army officers was afoot to lure Hitler into a trap which would allow the military high command to overthrow Hitler before an unstoppable war began between Germany and England.

Dinner at the Astors. At a subsequent dinner hosted by the Astors at which the Prime Minister, Lord Halifax and Winston Churchill attended, David Astor asked Adam von Trott to explain in simple terms what he was really up to. Adam jokingly paraphrased his mission thus. "He was, he said, suggesting that Hitler should be treated as a village drunkard who was brandishing a revolver and had to be taken by his best friend (the German Army) and his favourite neighbour (the British), one by each arm, and walked to a rough place, somewhere like Tanganyika, and there be hit on the head with his own revolver"

1 Sep 39 Germany invades Poland. Two months later Germany invaded Poland and England honoured its treaty with Poland and declared War on Germany. Later, David Astor and his father discussed von Trott's mission which they both considered was doomed to failure from the beginning but they also agreed that Adam von Trott was indeed a brave man because his act was treasonable and if the SS ever found out the purpose of his mission his death would surely be slow and painful.

Why was German opposition not better organised? When David asked his father why the German opposition to Hitler was not better organised to prevent Hitler from invading Poland his father suggested that the answer to that surely is another question, and then Lord Astor asked his son "In which totalitarian dictatorship has there ever been a successful opposition? It may not be as easy to do as mere spectators such as us may think".

PART 2 LEBENSRAUM

SLIDE 3

1933 lebensraum.(Living space) Does any one know the meaning of the German word Lebensraum? When Hitler first assumed power legally in 1933, amongst other things he proclaimed his policy of lebensraum, which was the inclusion of all German-speaking people into a greater Germany.

England and France knew this; the world knew this, as it was a major plank in his political platform also clearly expressed in what was later to be his bestseller book Mein Kampf. He started this expansion program on 7 March 1936 by occupying **the Rhineland**. Then on 12 March 1938 he annexed Austria, both of these without either a whimper or any interference from France or England. These two successful incursions convinced most of the German people and indeed a number of senior army officers that here at last was a leader who would restore Germany to its former greatness.

SLIDE 4

1938 Sudetenland. Then in Aug 1938 Hitler started verbally haranguing Czechoslovakia as a prelude to carrying out Phase 3 of his expansion program the occupation of Sudetenland. **Where is Sudetenland?** Sudetenland had been apart of Germany in the early 19th century and there were about 2 million Germans living there but more importantly for Germany,

Apart from the Germans living in the Sudetenland what was the other reason for Germany's interest in Czechoslovakia? it contained the prized Skoda Works probably the largest and best arms manufacturer in Europe at that time. And as Germany was expanding her army from its 100,000 establishment set by the Treaty of Versailles in 1919 to a much larger army Germany needed greatly increased supplies of arms and munitions, which the Skoda Works could help provide.

PART 3 THE INSTIGATOR

SLIDE 5

1938 The right general at the right place at the right time. At that time, Colonel General Ludwig Beck was Chief of the German General Staff and the second most senior soldier in the German Army. Beck was an extremely capable officer of the old school who was respected throughout the entire German officer corps for his professionalism and because they knew he had the stomach to resist any attempts that Hitler or his henchmen may take to Nazify the German Army. Additionally, Beck as an oberstleutenant in command of a battalion in 1923 had fought against Hitler and his SA thugs in the streets of Munich when the Nazi's tried to overthrow the Weimer Republic by insurrection.. He despised Hitler in 1923 for his extremist political views and the way he went about trying to achieve them and he despised him more so in 1938 for his territorial expansion program because of the bad image this would create for Germany and the German Army in the civilised world and because such a policy would, in his view, certainly start a war and one which Germany would surely loose.

Slide 5A Beck convinces his Commander in Chief. Beck convinced his chief Colonel General Walter von Brauchtsch, a relatively weak man who had just taken over command of the Army, to approach Hitler to ask him to drop his plans to take the Sudetenland. Initially anti nazi, Brauchitsch, for reasons known only to him had just married an ardent nazi and this had softened his attitude towards Hitler and his policies. Nevertheless Brauhitsch did summon up the courage to confront Hitler but he probably spoke for no more than one

or two sentences before Hitler went into one of his usual explosive rages and Brauhitsch melted and left wondering whether he would still have a job the next day. This convinced Beck that the time had arrived to remove Hitler by a coup d'etat and in so doing save the World from World War 2.

SLIDE 6

Mid 1938 Recruiting the Conspirators. Thus Beck set about recruiting a group of people around him who he knew were anti nazi These included servicemen, aristocrats, politicians, diplomats, community leaders and police officers. In mid 1938, the conspirators had their first meeting. All pledged their total commitment to getting rid of Hitler by a coup d'etat. The only disagreement between them was on Hitler's fate. Some believed he should be officially charged and tried by a Judge and Jury for his crimes against the German people. Others wanted to assassinate him just as he had many of their friends.

SLIDE 7

The Initial Conspirators. At that early stage the conspirators comprised General Erwin von Witzleben, Commander of Berlin Military District, General Heinrich von Stulpnagel Deputy Chief of the General Staff. Admiral Wilhelm Canaris Head of Abwehr (Directorate of Military Intelligence). General George Thomas who was Chief of the War Economy Department, General Walter von Brockdorf-Ahlefeld who commanded the Potsdam 23 Infantry Division who also pledged to use all the troops under his command, General Hans Oster Deputy Head of Abwehr and aristocrat Lieutenant Colonel Count Gerhard von Schwerin. Although not involved in the detailed planning General Erich Hoepner, commander of the Wuppertal Panzer Division and a fervent anti nazi immediately placed his division on stand-by alert on the request of General Witzleben. Members from the Foreign Ministry were Theo Kordt, Carl Goerdeler, Ernst von Weiszaker, permanent head of the German Foreign Office and later Minister in the Vatican, Ulrich von Hassel and Adam von Trott and Dr Hans Gisevius German Vice Consul in Zurich. Members of the Police were the Berlin Police Chief Wolf von Helldorf and Deputy Police Chief Paul von Hase. Three of the other civilians were Berlin Attorney Fabian von Schlabrebdorff who was related to the British Royal family, Dr Joseph Mueller also an attorney who acted as a special courier for Admiral Canaris and Helmuth von Moltke (His father commanded an army in WW1) was a lawyer and a legal advisor to Admiral Canaris

SLIDE 7A

Sept 38. Beck resigns as CGS. After General Beck's resignation in Sept 38 he continued working with the conspirators and recruited the new Chief of the General Staff General Franz Halder who was informed of the group's progress on a daily basis. Most of their files were held in a secret safe. At OKH which was at Zossen, about 30 miles south of Berlin. A duplicate was held at Admiral Canaris's office at the Directorate of Military Intelligence in Berlin. These files and Canaris's meticulous note keeping would ultimately prove to be a major cause of their undoing

SLIDE 8

PART 4 THE FIRST COUP D'ETAT

Planning the coup. As the Czech crisis intensified, Beck and Oster worked feverishly on their plan to assume political power. First was the target list. This was the list of people that needed to be arrested and the allocation of troops to this task. Second were and the buildings that needed to be seized and the allocation of troops for that task and so on. The plan was completed after a detailed ground reconnaissance of each building had been undertaken to ensure that all likely escape routes were recorded. It was all done very thoroughly just as one would expect from German general staff officers.

Seizure of Chancellery. General Witzleben assumed responsibility for the seizure of Hitler and the Chancellery building. He commissioned Major Wilhelm Heinz to recruit a crack force of 60 commandos for this task who would then spirit Hitler away to a castle in Bavaria.

Slide 8A

Hitler addresses annual party rally 12 Sep 1938 By the second week of September 1938 everyone and everything was in place. On Sept 12 the conspirators and all of Europe waited anxiously as Hitler arrived in Munich to speak to the annual party rally. The conspirators expected Hitler to use the occasion to deliver an ultimatum to Czechoslovakia, cede the Sudetenland or face war. But Hitler was cunning, whilst he delivered a tirade against the country and its president, his speech was only vaguely threatening. Then on Sept 14, out of the blue, Neville Chamberlain unexpectedly announced he was going to Germany to meet Herr Hitler. Neither Beck nor the other conspirators could believe that the British and the French would cave in to Hitler's demands over Sudetenland.

Agreement reached at Munich. 30 Sep 1938 Then, after some tooting and froing at Munich, Britain and France agreed to the occupation of Sudetenland by Germany and advised the Czech President that if she wanted to fight over the Sudetenland then she would have to do it alone. As a result of this political coup on Hitler's part, a coup he had forecast, the conspirators coup fell apart before it even began. Never again would such an auspicious moment return. The undecided Generals who might have rallied to the conspirators had war erupted or been on the verge of erupting thereafter mocked and shunned all future efforts of the conspirators to enlist their support. Beck prophesied that Britain's failure to stand up to Hitler over Czechoslovakia would lose Britain the two most important allies she had against Hitler, the German General Staff and the German People. The conspirators could only lament that "we are deserted" while an embittered Gisevius concluded, "Chamberlain has rescued Hitler".

SLIDE 9

PART 5 RESISTANCE BETWEEN SEP 38 AND SEP 39

Emissaries to London. Despite the fact that the conspirators had lost their best chance to overthrow Hitler their belief in what they hoped to achieve was so profound that they persevered. Between Sep 38 and Sep 39. their focus was on sending a number of emissaries to London to inform them of their

existence with a view to obtaining England's tacit support. Adam von Trott was one of them.

Those who visited England. First was senior diplomat Carl Goerdeler who called on Winston Churchill to pressure Chamberlain to help the German opposition. Then came Berlin attorney Fabian von Schlabrendorff whose connections with the Royal family won him instant respect and a good hearing. It was this man who broke the news to the British Foreign Office that Hitler and Stalin were planning a non-aggression pact. When Lord Halifax later received this information he said he was advised by his own competent experts that such a thing was an utter impossibility. Disregard it.

Count Schwerin's advice accepted. In June the conspirators sent another emissary the urbane aristocratic Lieutenant Colonel Count Gerhard von Schwerin. Amongst other things he advised the British that Hitler took no account of words only deeds therefore he suggested the British and French Air Forces should stage mass bomber and fighter exercises over French air space and the Royal navy should show its mettle in the North sea to impress Hitler. Both suggestions were acted upon but these were the only two that were. Actually Hitler was not impressed by this show of force. All he said was "I saw my enemies at Munich and they are no better than little worms".

German Soviet Non aggression Pact. Any thoughts the conspirators may have had about a second coup attempt were completely neutralised when Hitler brought off another diplomatic coup by persuading Stalin to agree to a non aggression pact which meant that if and when Germany attacked Poland Germany would only be fighting on one front. Hitler forecast that the French and the British would do nothing to interfere and he was right on both counts

SLIDE 10 PART 6 SECOND COUP ATTEMPT ZOSSEN CONSPIRACY

Oct 39 Total war through Belgium and Holland. In Oct 39 Hitler told his general staff that he would wage total war to ensure a complete German victory. When he said he would deal the West a knock out blow by waging a lightning war through Belgium and Holland many senior ranking officers were horrified.

Another WW 1 Quagmire? Many officers knew that Germany faced serious munition shortages inadequate to sustain an offensive against Britain and France. They were also certain that Hitler's Western adventure would flounder in another World War 1 like quagmire. And even if the offensive succeeded how then could Germany ever be readmitted into the ranks of civilised nations.

1938 Coup plans Updated. Beck, Canaris, Oster and Hitler's other sworn enemies began planning a second coup attempt. General Halder the new Chief of the General Staff, ordered the plans of the 1938 coup attempt, hidden for nearly a year in a secret safe in Army headquarters in Zossen, removed, reread and updated. General Hans Oster took over the planning task. Major

Heinz told his 60 commandos to see to their weapons and to pack their gear. A new arrest list was drawn up to include Hitler, von Ribbentrop, Himmler, Heydrich, Goering, Goebbels and Waffen SS Life Guards Commander Sepp Dietrich.

Brauchitsch sits on fence. However when they approached their Commander in Chief General Brauchitsch, now in financial debt to Hitler, he decided to sit on the fence. "I won't do anything but I won't oppose it if someone else acts.

Halder conceals pistol. Hitler now set a date for the Western offensive— Nov 12 1939. Aware of this General Halder smuggled a small automatic pistol into his pocket with the half hearted intention of using it at the next joint conference however when the opportunity presented itself Halder could not bring himself to kill Hitler in cold blood.

Halder and Brauchitsch see Hitler. On Nov 5th Brauchitsch and Halder summoned the courage to drive to the Chancellery to try to persuade Hitler one last time to abort Case Yellow, the coming Western offensive. In the face of another violent outburst the two men withdrew severely chastened, however the next day Hitler did decide to postpone case Yellow until the spring of 1940, which again forced the conspirators to abort the second coup attempt before it could even, begin.

SLIDE 11 PART 7 KORDT RESOLVES TO KILL HITLER

Kordt decides on suicide mission. Fed up with Brauchitsch's shilly shallying and Halder's last minute panic attack, Theo Kordt, a civilian from the Foreign Ministry went to see Hans Oster and assured him of his resolve to kill Hitler even if he died in the process. Kordt was a regular visitor to the Chancellery. His scheme would involve blowing up Hitler in the Chancellery. Oster would procure the explosives from Abwehr's Section !! (Sabotage) commanded by Major Erwin Lahousen, another conspirator. But an unexpected event intervened one month later, which prevented Kordt from realising his plot.

SLIDE 12 PART 8 NOV 39 THE LONE ASSASSIN

8 Nov 1923 Putsch Anniversary. . Every November 8 Hitler visited the Burgerbraukeller beer hall in Munich to honour his failed 1923 putsch when he and his followers attempted to overthrow the Weimar Republic. The Army's swift and brutal crackdown had left many of his followers dead and wounded and Hitler honoured their memory every year with a ninety minute impassioned speech.

8 Nov 38 Reconnaissance. Almost a year earlier, on November 8 1938 a Swiss carpenter and clock manufacturer by the name of George Elser who had been working in Germany as a common labourer attended the ceremony as a reconnaissance for an assassination attempt in November 1939. He was determined to assassinate Hitler for the same reasons as the conspirators but also out of anger against the increasingly stringent paternalism the Nazi State was developing over German workers.

8 Months developing bomb. After going through the building and noting all the timings including the length of Hitler's speech which was 90 minutes and the exact position from which Hitler spoke. Elser then spent the next 8 months developing the most accurate 50 kilogram time bomb possible with the means at his disposal.

Delete?

Aug 39. Preparation of bombsite. On 5 Aug 1939 the bomb was ready and he returned to Munich to prepare the bombsite immediately below Hitler's proposed speaking position. He arrived at 2330 hrs every night hiding in the Burerbraukers gallery waiting for the building to empty before doing his painstaking preparatory work, which took two months.

2 Nov 39 Timer set. On 2 November 39 Elser placed the charges and detonators inside the prepared cavity and on 4 Nov he tested the timers for the last time and set the clock. He returned yet again on Wednesday the 8th Nov and checked it finally at 06.30 hrs. If all went according to schedule Hitler would be blown apart 15 hours and 50 minutes later. He then went back to his rooms to collect his belongings and departed for Switzerland.

8 Nov 39 Hitler arrives but 10 minutes late. Hitler arrived at 2010 hrs, 10 minutes late. Amid hoarse screams of Zeig Heil. Hitler ranted and raved as expected and then suddenly at 21.12 hrs, 57 minutes into his speech he suddenly stopped, gave the Nazi salute and marched out of the beer hall. 8 minutes later on their way to the railway station Hitler's convoy heard the explosion. The bomb certainly did the job that was expected of it. 8 people who remained in the vicinity of the platform were killed instantly.

Elser searched at border. Later that night, the German border police at the Swiss border searched Elser and they found amongst other things a clock spring, a few small cogs, a tiny aluminium detonator and a postcard of the Burgerbraukeller in Munich. They reported this to the Gestapo who immediately and correctly concluded that Elser was the assassin.

SS convinced Elser a lone assassin. The SS were eventually convinced he was a lone assassin and had nothing to do with the Black Orchestra but they did not execute him immediately but held him throughout the war, for 5 and a half years, until two weeks before VE day when they hanged him slowly.

SLIDE 13

PART 9 THE VATICAN CONNECTION

Conspirators reopen communications with British. It is a testament to their steadfastness that the German conspirators did not give up but continued to risk their lives to communicate with and to win the support of the British government throughout the war. Admiral Canaris protected that effort.

Venlo Incident. After the Venlo Incident in August 1939 when two agents from the British Secret Intelligence Service fell into a trap set by the Gestapo set in Holland. The two SIS agents went to a cafe in Venlo, not far from the Dutch German border, to rendezvous with two men who they believed were senior conspirators. The two Germans turned out to be Gestapo agents who led the British into an ambush during which they were captured and spirited away over the border to Berlin where they were interrogated. Under brutal interrogation the Gestapo learned the names and location of many British agents working throughout Europe including at least two in Czechoslovakia. This incident made the British very wary about future meetings with any Germans who claimed to be conspirators.

Need for a third party honest broker. Therefore the conspirators needed a third party, an honest broker, and one who would be respected by both sides and one who could also communicate with the British Government. One of the diplomats in the group suggested Pope Pius XI

Canaris sets up communication channel. This is where Canaris's cleverness came into play. The Resistance-Vatican-London communication channel functioned like this. Beck or Oster would hand the secret correspondence to Dr Joseph Mueller, Canaris's secret courier who would then take the package to Rome. Once there Mueller would meet with Father Lieber in the secluded confines of the Gregorian Seminary who would then pass the package to the Pope who would read it before handing it to the British Ambassador at the Holy See, who was Sir Francis D'Arcy Osborne. Sir Francis would then courier it to London where it would be handed directly to Lord Halifax. Never once did the Pope meet with the German courier.

Efforts failed. All their efforts via the Vatican failed because the British Government refused to pledge that it would stop hostilities pending a coup d'etat by the conspirators.

SLIDE 14 PART 10 OTHER ATTEMPTS TO ASSASSINATE HITLER 1938 to 1944

17 Attempts. In all Hitler's spectacular diplomatic and military triumphs from Munich to Paris had left the conspirators exposed to ridicule and contempt. Yet with no foreign help they stuck together and concocted one assassination attempt after another. As many as 17 between Sep 1938 and July 1944 plus the attempt by the lone assassin made a total of 18. But with every good fortune, Hitler, by fate or by design, miraculously escaped them all.

Hitler paranoid about personal safety. Paranoid about his safety and sensitive to the fact that the aristocratic officers in the army hated him Hitler rarely visited any of the battlefronts during World War 2. Any travel that he did undertake or any fixed appointments he made to appear in public would almost always change at the last moment without warning. Many of the 18 attempts on his life were aborted for that reason alone. It was also usually impossible for an officer no matter how high ranking to enter Hitler's presence without being searched. Even Field marshals were required to leave their caps, belts and side arms in an anteroom before entering the Fuhrer's presence. That was one the reason's Stauffenberg chose the bomb concealed briefcase weapon in July 44. A few of the 18 attempts were

1. **In November 1939** General Kurt von Hammerstein-Equord asked Hitler to come and inspect the Siegfried Line on the pretext that it would impress the enemy. Hitler politely refused. When Hammerstein confided to his colleagues that he intended to "neutralise Hitler once and for all" they knew exactly what this man of iron repute had in mind —arranging a fatal accident
2. **July 40.** Preferring bullets to explosives Count Fritz von Schulenberg planned to have Hitler shot during a reviewing parade in Paris. Hitler cancelled his plan to be there without warning and instead slipped into Paris in the early morning hours of 23 July to tour a few Paris landmarks
3. **May 41.** Barely a year later Field marshal Erwin von Witzleben had assembled a team of sharp shooters from among his staff to kill Hitler during another planned military parade. Again Hitler cancelled without notice
4. **13 Mar 43.** Major General Henning von Tresckow, Chief of Staff Army Group Centre on the Russian front planned the most elaborate assassination attempt yet. To get a sure kill, the ingenious Tresckow put together three separate assassination plots. Should any one of them fail?
 - 4.1 The first involved Hitler's motorcade being attacked by Tresckow's escorting cavalry between the landing strip and his Centre Army headquarters.
 - 4.2 Failing that plan, Tresckow's co-conspirators, his fellow staff officers, would attempt to shoot Hitler collectively in the officer's mess at the luncheon table.
 - 4.3 The ultimate fall back plan involved smuggling a concealed time bomb onto Hitler's Condor aircraft, which would explode in flight on its return journey to Rastenberg. Tresckow. The problem for this option was obtaining a bomb with a silent time fuse. At that time German time -bombs emitted an audible hissing noise but Hans Oster from Military Intelligence was able to come up with a captured British silent plastic C time bomb, which had fallen into

German hands when partisans failed to find it after a drop by the RAF over France. T

- 4.4 The first plot was aborted because of the increased size of Hitler's own armed SS escort which had travelled in unexpectedly a second aircraft.
- 4.5 The second plot was aborted because their Commander in Chief Field Marshal Gunther von Kluge who was close to becoming a conspirator decided to sit next to Hitler in the Mess instead of opposite him as he was supposed to and the risk of killing him also was too high.
- 4.6 The third plot, was carried out. Tresckow's ADC asked one of Hitler's ADC's to carry a package supposedly of two bottles of brandy aboard the aircraft and deliver it to one of Tresckow's friend's at Rastenberg, General Stieff, who coincidentally was also a conspirator and the group's explosive advisor. Needless to say fate saved Hitler again because the plane arrived back safely at Rastenberg. When Stieff examined the package which was delivered by the ADC he found that although the silent time fuse had worked perfectly the detonator was faulty. So another attempt hits the dust.

SLIDE 15 PART 11 COLONEL CLAUD VON STAUFFENBERG

Stauffenberg enters the scene. Tresckow, the main action man at that time, was now totally pre-occupied with the rapidly deteriorating Eastern Front and could no longer effectively work with the the conspirators so in Dec 43 Colonel Count Claus von Stauffenberg took over Tresckow's role. He had just returned from convalescing after being severely wounded 6 months previously by loosing his right hand, two fingers from his left hand and his left eye. He had also been recently promoted to Chief of Staff to General Fromm, Commander in chief of the German Home Army stationed in Berlin. As such he was expected to attend conferences at Rastenberg so he was in a first class position to do the job.

Strauffenberg disillusioned in Nov 38. Though initially supportive of Hitler he rapidly became disillusioned following the violence of Kristallnacht in November 1938, which he saw as having tarnished Germany's good name in the civilised world. The atrocities committed by the SS in Poland and Russia confirmed his position.

Remarkable talent. He had a remarkable talent for recruiting officers into committed conspirators. His political wisdom, professional brilliance, moral courage, upright integrity, Teutonic chivalry, unforgettable kindness and above all his exceptional charm impressed and seduced virtually everyone who came to know him. Even Hitler expressed fondness for him 5 days before the intrepid young count tried to kill him.

Spared for high purpose. Recovering in hospital from his wounds Stauffenbeg was convinced God had spared him for a high purpose and ridding his country and Europe from war and nazi oppression was a high purpose.

SLIDE 16 PART 12 THE THIRD COUP D'ETAT ATTEMPT OPERATION VALKYRIE

20 July 1944. Final attempt. Operation Valkyrie was the scenario for the last coup attempt in 1944. In 1942 General Friedrich Olbricht convinced Hitler of the necessity for a counter-coup strategy to defeat any potential uprising against the Nazi regime hence the Valkyrie Plan. It was principally aimed against foreign slave labour of which there were millions in occupied Europe. What Hitler did not know was that Olbricht planned to use this same intricate plan to overthrow the Nazi regime.

Two civilian conspirators arrested. By mid 1944 preparations for the Valkyrie conspiracy were moving at break-neck speed because the Gestapo had just arrested two of the civilian conspirators and the SS were obviously zeroing in on the Black Orchestra therefore time be of the essence.

First two attempts aborted. The Valkyrie conspiracy was aborted on two occasions in July because Goering and Himmler were not present. Stauffenberg then insisted that, as time was crucial that the assassination should go ahead with or without those two men. Generals Beck and Witzleben reluctantly agreed that the attempt was to be made on the next visit to Rastenberg. This was to be the 20th July.

20 July conference. Late change of venue. On reaching Rastenberg Schauffenberg was advised that the conference would not be held in the usual underground concrete bunker as it was being refurbished. Instead the briefing would be in a temporary wooden framed outhouse a few meters away.

Setting the timer. Stauffenberg was a very cool operator not showing any signs of nerves he politely refused all SS offers to carry his briefcase. Before going into the briefing room hut he first needed to set the timing device. He casually asked the SS guards if there was anywhere he could change his shirt before he met with Hitler and the others. They showed him a temporary rest room. He entered closing the door behind him whereupon he used the special pliers, which had been designed for a three-finger hand to set the fuse. In the process SS guards interrupted him with one putting his head around the door to see if he was all right. It was worse than a Hitchcock thriller, still Stauffenberg remained calm and unflustered and completed the wiring properly.

Placing the bomb. He was then shown into the briefing room where nearly all were assembled. Hitler shook the thumb and two fingers of Staufenberg's

Over 5000 executed by SS. Through the hands of the SS, Hitler was able to exact a terrible price for the attack on his life, not only on the conspirators but on many others as well, most of whom were innocent of complicity. The execution toll immediately following the coup failure was 157 German service officers. Among them 15 Lieutenant Colonels, 17 Colonels, 13 Generals, 1 Admiral, 1 Field Marshal plus 9 military members of the German aristocracy and between 20 and 30 civilian conspirators making a total of about 187. Others committed suicide. Later another 5,000 Germans were to follow these men to the torture chambers and then the gallows before Hitler had satisfied his thirst for vengeance. Final total about 5187.

Firing squad for Stauffenberg. Because of his hero status Colonel Count von Stauffenberg was taken from his office in Berlin later on 20 July and was summarily executed by an SS firing squad. One of his friends and a fellow conspirator managed to throw himself in front of Stauffenberg to protect him as he was about to be shot. They died together.

Show trial. Those senior officers who were not shot immediately or committed suicide were belittled in a one-day show trial and sentenced to death by the hanging judge Roland Freisler. From the court they were led to the execution chamber en masse where they were strung up by piano wire from butchers hooks in the ceiling. The stools on which they stood were then kicked away and they eventually died by slow strangulation. A process which took about 30 minutes.

Trescow walks to his death. General Henning von Trescow still serving on the Eastern front on learning from General Fellgiebel at Rastenberg that Hitler had survived the attack left his headquarters on the pretext of visiting his forward troops of Army Group Centre and then to the amazement of his soldiers he strode purposefully into no-man's land looking neither right nor left where upon he was killed instantly by a Russian sniper.

Fate of Canaris. Admiral Canaris and four of his colleague conspirators including General Hans Oster were not executed immediately for some reason but were held by Himmler in Flossenberg Concentration Camp until 9 April 1945, two weeks before that area was liberated by the Americans when they were when led out by their SS guards and hanged devoid of clothing. The final indignity.

Beck's fate. General Beck tried to commit suicide with a revolver shot to the head but he was not mortally wounded. When the SS found him still alive they gave him a coup de grace.

Three senior generals commit suicide. Other senior generals who offered strong moral support and who chose to commit suicide by cyanide tablet were Field Marshal Erwin Rommel, Field Marshal Gunther von Kluge, Trescow's c in c.) and Field Marshal Walter Model.

Hitler's pliant generals executed. Hitler's pliant military advisers, Field Marshal Wilhelm Keitel and General Alfred Jodl, both from OKW, were tried by the Allies and executed at Nuremberg prison in 1945

Waffen SS Colonel General Josef Sepp Dietrich. Who was on the conspirators second coup attempt target list was sentenced to life imprisonment at the Nuremberg War Trials by the Allies for the actions of one of his subordinates during the Ardennes offensive who massacred a number of American prisoners. He was subsequently released on parole in 1957. Then in 1958 he was charged by Court Assizes in Munich and sentenced to a further 18 month's imprisonment for being an accomplice in the pre war murder of Ernst Rohm and other senior SA officers during the nights of the long knives, the night the SA leadership plus many others who were against Hitler, were liquidated.

Fate of Roland Freisler. Roland Freisler the hated hanging judge who was chief prosecutor, Judge and Jury at the conspirators trial in Berlin in 1944 was still presiding on 15 March 1945 in the same courtroom. On that day the air raid warning sounded and as usual the court moved to the underground shelter. On arrival there Freisler realised that in his haste to get to the shelter he had left some important papers on his bench and rushed back to secure them. At that very moment the court building received a direct hit and he was killed instantly. That end was too good for him.

SLIDE 19

PART 15 FINAL RESULT OF FAILURE

Another 10 million died. It was a tragedy that this last attempt did fail because it meant that another 10 million people would die in the European Theatre before hostilities ended on 8 May 1945. Although it may surprise you the failure of the last coup attempt and these deaths were something for which the Allies can claim some responsibility.

One reason for generals not committing themselves. Obviously one reason for the failure of many of the coup attempts was that about 80 percent of Hitler's most senior generals, even though they had similar feelings about Hitler as the conspirators, and would have liked to have seen him overthrown would not commit themselves to any of the conspirators plans. There were many reasons for this but one of them was certainly the Unconditional Surrender policy imposed by the Allies.

Policy left no incentive What incentive was there for any senior German general to become involved in a very high-risk coup or assassination attempt when all doors for negotiation to end the war were closed. Better to stay with the devil they knew.

How the unconditional surrender policy came about. And how did the Unconditional Surrender policy come about? Well rightly or wrongly it was certainly not an agreed policy between the three Allied leaders at all. It happened during the Casablanca conference. President Roosevelt held a lone press conference for the American press and he just announced the policy unilaterally. It then became international news. This announcement came as a complete surprise to both Churchill and Stalin and to Roosevelt's staff. Once declared however the other two leaders were hardly in a position to disclaim it publicly. But that is another story.

