

“Bei uns ist immer was los!”

## der 20. Juli—German Resistance Day

Attempted assassination – “Operation Valkyrie”

On July 20 1944, the German resistance movement around Ludwig Beck, Friedrich Olbricht, Helmut Graf von Moltke and Claus Schenk Graf von Stauffenberg tried to assassinate Adolf Hitler and tragically failed at the attempt. Colonel von Stauffenberg carried two small bombs in his briefcase to a meeting with military leaders in the Wolf's Lair, one of Hitler's military headquarters. In a series of fateful events, Stauffenberg, who was handicapped from war injuries, was only able to arm one of the bombs. Then, a staff officer unsuspectingly moved Stauffenberg's briefcase behind a large wooden desk, which ultimately shielded Hitler from the blast. Whereas four others died, Hitler was only mildly injured in the explosion.



Claus Schenk Graf von Stauffenberg



Germany's first Federal President Theodor Heuss

Hitler and his propaganda apparatus had tried to cast the attempt as a plot that was “carried out by a tiny group of ambitious and unscrupulous officers.” In fact, the group brought together members of many different backgrounds: blue- as well as white-collar workers, civil servants, Christians as well as secular humanists. The conspirators exchanged ideas on a regular basis and were in contact in the Kreisau Circle, which brought together military, civilian, intellectual and political resistance groups.

The military coup d'Etat (codenamed Operation Valkyrie) which was to have followed Hitler's death, also failed. That night already, Stauffenberg, Olbricht and two other co-conspirators were executed by firing squad in the courtyard of the military headquarters, known as the Bendler Block, in Berlin. In the following weeks and months, the Gestapo rounded up some 7,000 people associated or suspected in the resistance and killed them.

Today, the Bendler Block complex remains the home of Germany's defense ministry and also houses the German Resistance Memorial Center. Military and government leaders hold an annual commemoration of the July 20 plot in the courtyard of the Bendler Block and at the Plötzensee Memorial Center, where the Nazis tried, imprisoned and executed thousands unjustly. It has also become tradition that new soldiers of the Bundeswehr are sworn in on this day every year in a ceremony with high-ranking guest speakers in Berlin.