

ZEUGENSCHRIFTUM

Name: ARNOLD, Wilhelm Gen.Maj.	ZS Nr. 2058	Bd I	Vermerk:
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Arnold

WAR DEPARTMENT HISTORICAL COMMISSION
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HISTORICAL BRANCH, G-2

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INTERROGATION REPORT

75-2058-2

SOURCE : Genmaj. Wilhelm ARNOLD
DATE : 25 August 1945
PLACE : SAIC
INTERROGATOR : Lt.Col. O.J.Hale

Institut für Zeitgeschichte ARCHIV	
Nr. 4637/71	Best. 75 2058
Rep.	Cal.

Personal Data : Source was Chief Signal Officer of the 21st Army in Norway until July 1944 when he became Chief Signal Officer of the OKH in Berlin. He states that he participated in the plot to remove Hitler but that his participation was not discovered by the investigating authorities. Source is a Prussian career officer and states that he has always been an opponent of National Socialism. He appears to be a credible witness.

C O N T E N T S

- I. Putsch of 20 July 1944
- II. Von Kluge's Suicide.

I. Putsch of 20 July 1944

Source stated that as a career officer and a religious man he could not accept National Socialism. It was a grave matter of conscience to plot against one's commander in chief. A large group in the Officers Corps was Anti-Nazi from the beginning and opposition of Army officers to the Party grew with the unrolling of events on the Eastern Front. The mistreatment of able and trusted officers, the spying of the Gestapo and the preference shown to the Waffen-SS widened the breach. It became impossible for officers to express freely their opinions to one another without danger of arrest and dismissal or worse. After Stalingrad Army officers began to speak about getting rid of the disastrous personal and Party regime that was leading the country to disaster. The Offizierhass (officer hatred) against Hitler was intense. In January 1943 source's superior, Gen. Fellgiebel, spoke to him the first time about plans to remove Hitler and the Nazi leadership. The first plans did not mature. Source became seriously ill and was inactive for six months while recovering. He was then sent as Chief Signal Officer to the 21st Army Group in Norway. In this capacity he was called frequently to Berlin. On one of these journeys he was initiated into the plot by his immediate chief, Gen. Thiele, Chief of Signals at the OKH. Source agreed to undertake the execution of necessary action in Norway--mainly the removal of Terboven and the arrest of the SS leaders and any persons opposing the Putsch. Source, however, was in Berlin on 17 or 18 July when Gen. Thiele informed him of what was impending. He went to his home in Stettin on 20 July and on 21 July returned to Berlin to confer with Thiele. He went to the Bendlerstrasse, found the War Ministry surrounded by Waffen-SS and did not attempt to enter the building, but instead went back to Stettin.

In the first 48 hours only those of the inner circle among the conspirators were arrested. Among

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was Gen. Fellgiebel, who was succeeded by Gen. Thiele. He then appointed source Chief of Signals at the OKH on 23 July. Members of the second or outer circle of conspirators, including Thiele, were arrested some days later. Source feared that he would be taken in the next wave and for a month slept with his pistol on the table by his bed. "I was determined to commit suicide rather than be shamefully hanged." Among the Signal Corps Officers of the OKH who were arrested and executed were Col. Hasse and Lt. Col. Köllner, who was a participant in the events that transpired at the OKH, is now a PW in American hands.

Source did not witness the following details of the Putsch but learned them from friends who were present. In his opinion one of the reasons for the failure of the plot was the quick discovery of Stauffenberg's role and the orders sent to Berlin to counteract the plot. Hitler was saved from death at the time of the explosion because he rose from the table and stepped over to a recessed window to look out just as the bomb exploded. Other persons present at the conference were also between him and the bomb when it exploded. There was no way of knowing who had placed the bomb in the room -- it might have been a workman or one of the service personnel. Neither was it known at first that the bomb was the beginning of a Putsch. However, when the adjutant went to the entrance to the bunker and asked the guard if he had observed anyone bringing any object into the room, the guard remembered that Stauffenberg was the only person who had gone in with a brief case and that he had departed without it. As Stauffenberg was then flying to Berlin, an order was given for his arrest and he was seized when his plane landed at the airport in Berlin.

A second factor in the early failure of the action was the uncertainty and confusion that developed in the dispatch of the orders from the OKH to the Wehrkreis Commanders to act against the Gauleiters and the Police Commanders. The message center of the OKH was in a large bunker located in the central court of the HQ in the Bendlerstrasse. The officers in charge were not initiated into the plot, which according to source was poor planning, and when Beck's orders came down for transmission some were dispatched but most of them were held up because the officers insisted on confirmation.

Meanwhile, Major Remer, Comdr of the Wachbataillon of the Grossdeutschland Division, had got in touch with Dr. Goebbels, who told him that Hitler was alive and that a Putsch was being attempted. Goebbels had one of the few direct private telephone connections to Hitler's Hq. He called the Hauptquartier and Hitler personally issued new orders to Remer. The latter then returned to the OKH to arrest the leaders of the plot.

With regard to Fromm and his part in the plot, source states that there is still some question about the conclusiveness of the evidence. When the armed detachment arrived at the outer door to Fromm's office he notified Col. Gen. Beck, who had occupied an adjoining office, that he would give him ten minutes in which to decide whether he would surrender himself or commit suicide. Beck chose the latter course. Fromm then ordered the arrest of several officers of his immediate staff and had four of them executed at once in the courtyard. Naturally the suspicion arose that he had those executed who had knowledge of his personal involvement in the conspiracy. Source thinks that perhaps he acted to save what could still be saved. Goebbels later ordered Fromm's arrest and he was tried by the People's Court and hanged.

Source stated that investigation of the conspiracy and the arrests were carried out by a staff of Gestapo specialists under Kaltenbrunner's immediate direction. He heard from a first hand witness that after the first wave of trials and executions the President of the People's Court, Freisler, said: "We have settled with the activists, now we shall deal with the Schadelaute", meaning the sympathizers. Source is of the opinion that feeling against the regime was so strong that the public would have welcomed its overthrow. The one newspaper account of the trial of the leaders

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of the plot produced such intense reaction in the German Officers Corps that the subsequent trials were kept secret. Source stated that Freisler, the President of the court had been expelled as a reserve officer from the Officers Corps, hence his bearing and language during the trial. Source regrets that Freisler was killed in a bombing attack upon Berlin because the Army officers only wanted an opportunity to deal properly with him. Freisler was helping to remove files and records from the burning building, which housed the People's Court, when he was killed.

II. VON KLUGE'S SUICIDE

Asked if he knew anything of the alleged intention of von Kluge to surrender his forces in the West on 15 August 1944, source stated that from the messages transmitted at that time he only knew that von Kluge and Hitler had broken completely, and that von Kluge was ordered to give up his command and leave the front. On his way back he committed suicide. Source has no information as to von Kluge's connection with the 20 July plot.

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