

## СЕКЦІЯ СТУДЕНТІВ ІІІ КУРСУ THE PLOT TO ASSASSINATE HITLER JULY 20, 1944

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The 20 July plot of 1944 was a failed attempt to assassinate Adolf Hitler, the leader of Nazi Germany.

Oberst Claus Schenk, Count von Stauffenberg lost his left hand and fingers from his right fighting in Tunisia. As a member of the aristocracy, he had double contempt for Hitler, and joined the plot to kill him. General Ludwig Beck, Chief of Staff back in 1938, was the nominal leader.

The Normandy Landings inspired the plotters to attempt an assassination in the face of the Allied breakout. Von Stauffenberg placed a briefcase with a bomb inside Hitler's "Wolf's Lair" — his command post for the Eastern Front in Rastenburg, Prussia. The bomb was one of many British bombs confiscated by the Abwehr, the German intelligence organization. Stauffenberg had to activate the bomb with tongs. He placed the bomb under the conference table and left. He and the other plotters believed Hitler was dead and prepared to seize Berlin with Home Army troops. Hitler was not dead.

Meanwhile, Stauffenberg was shot at midnight by a firing squad, loyal Army officers rounded up conspirators, many of whom tried to spare their lives by informing. Implicated was Erwin Rommel, who had been approached by the plotters but did not join. Rommel was recovering from wounds at home. For his failure to inform Hitler, he was given a choice: take poison and get a state funeral, or refuse and see your family executed as well. Rommel took poison. The man who had the best ability to change Germany's fortunes of war was gone. Also forced to commit suicide or sent to concentration camps were thousands of family members of the plotters. Hitler used the July 20 Plot as an excuse to destroy anyone in the Army he feared would oppose him. The traditional salute was replaced with the Nazi Sieg Heil. Eventually 20,000 were killed or sent to concentration camps in the purge.

Hitler, a manic hypochondriac, became obsessed with his health after the assassination attempt. The failure of the July 20 plot precluded any possibility of Germany negotiating a peace with the Allies. Hitler intended to fight to the death in a struggle that would see the end of National Socialism or the end of Germany's enemies.