

SECRET

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Ref No SAIO/2
10 Apr 45

SEVENTH ARMY INTERROGATION CENTER
APO 758 US ARMY

THE 20 JULY PUTSCH

I. SOURCE

VON PFUHLSTEIN, Alexander, GENMAJ a.D. (retired) has been a professional soldier since 1917, but he acts and talks like a businessman rather than a German general. He is related by birth and marriage to many a family of German high nobility. However, he is not a land owner, does not have independent sources of income, and has been living on his soldiers' pay. He seems to be strongly under the influence of his wife. He has six children, all of whom are being brought up not to believe in the ideas of soldiering or of National Socialism.

At the time of the interviews source was highly nervous and excited, due to the fact, he explained, that he had gone through a great deal of suffering and that, at last, he considered himself out of danger. He talked freely and without hesitation or doubt on any subject, and his story is believed to be accurate and to the best of his knowledge.

Gen VON PFUHLSTEIN is extremely anxious to be employed by the Allies in any capacity.

Rating: B-2 Date of Information: See Text Interrogator: W.M.B.

II. PERSONAL HISTORY

17 Dec 1899 Born in Danzig.
1912- 1917 KADETTENANSTALT (Military Academy) POTSDAM-LICHTERFELDE.
19 Mar 1917 Entered Army as FAEHRICH with 4 Guard Regt.
14 Dec 1917 Commissioned LT.
1918 In 100,000-man Army.
1 Apr 1925 Promoted to O/LT.
1 Apr 1933 Promoted to HPTM.
1933 Secondary General Staff position to the Arty FUEHRER III, BERLIN.
1935 CO, JAEGER Co in HIRSCHBERG/Silesia.
1936- 1937 Ic, XI Corps, HANOVER.
1937 Promoted to OBSTLT.
1938 Ia, 19 Div.
1939 Ia, 58 Div
1941 CO, 154 Inf Regt, Eastern Front.
1 Feb 1942 Promoted to OBST.
1 Feb 1943 CO, BRANDENBURG Div.
1 Jul 1943 Promoted to GENMAJ.
1 Apr 1944 Relieved of command because of political unreliability.
1 Jul 1944 CG, 50 Div, Eastern Front.
18 Jul 1944 Wounded.
1 Aug 1944 CG in charge of defensive fortifications, HOHENSTEIN-ORTELSBURGER-WALD, East Prussia, by order of Gen GUDERIAN.
1 Sep 1944 Arrested by SD because of participation in plot against HITLER on 20 July 44.
14 Sep 1944 Officially dismissed from Army and imprisoned in BERLIN.
24 Nov 1944 Transferred from BERLIN Prison to KUESTRIN Prison (Concentration Camp for officers politically unfavorable to HITLER).
30 Jan 1945 Dismissed from prison, where he was under HIMMLER's custody as a political prisoner.
2 Apr 1945 Surrendered voluntarily to an American unit at WERTHEIM.

Present address: KREUZWERTHEIM, near WERTHEIM/Main. In the castle of his cousin FUERST zu LOEWENSTEIN-WERTHEIM-FRUDENBERG.

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III. BRANDENBURG DIV

At the time source took over the BRANDENBURG Div, on 1 Feb 43, its personnel was composed exclusively of volunteers who knew of its special purpose. A number of SS men were also in the Div at that time. During 1943 HIMMLER took out some of the SS personnel and used them as political spies in foreign countries. In summer 44 elements of the Div, viz, 2-300 men commanded by OBSTLT WALTHER and his former adjutant, O/LT GERLACH, were transferred to the SS and placed under the command of SKORZENY. The force behind the move to return all reliable SS men under the command of the SS was O/LT VON FOLKERSAM, a native from the Baltic states.

IV. 20 JULY PLOT

Note: The following is an account of the happenings connected with the German generals' plot culminating in the attempt to assassinate HITLER on 20 July 44, in source's own words. For the sake of continuity, and for the general interest it may present, the story of the actual assassination attempt has been included, despite source's absence from the scene of the event.

1. Preparations of the Plot

"On 1 Feb 43 I was relieved as regtl CO on the Eastern front and given the command of the newly organized BRANDENBURG Div. GENMAJ OSTER, C of S, ABWEHR ABTEILUNG, disclosed to me, in numerous official conversations, substantially the following:

a) "In the opinion of a considerable number of enlightened officers, including Field Marshals VON KLUGE and VON MANNSTEIN, GEN DER INF VON STUELPNAGEL, and many others who were well informed, the war could no longer be won militarily. Every day that the war was prolonged meant unnecessary bloodshed and would ultimately lead to the complete collapse of Germany. The newly appointed Chief of General Staff, GENOBST ZEITZLER, was of the same opinion since the STALIN-GRAD debacle.

b) "It was of primary importance to end the war somehow, as quickly as possible. The prerequisite for this would have to be the elimination, or at least the exclusion of HITLER and the Party, since any negotiations between the Allies and HITLER were impossible, - HITLER and his close supporters would never take such steps, in the first place. My opposition to HITLER and the Party had been known to Gen OSTER for years. Field Marshals VON KLUGE and VON MANNSTEIN, GENOBST BECK and GEN VON FALKENHAUSEN have decided to remove HITLER, at first from the military command only, at the earliest opportunity. The plan was approx as follows: On the appointed day the FUHRER's Hq in East Prussia was to be seized by trustworthy anti-Nazi troops. VON KLUGE and VON MANNSTEIN, together with other officers, then wanted to see HITLER and confront him with the following demands:

- i) Appointment of a REICHSGENERALSTABSCHEF (REICH Chief of General Staff) with full powers of command for the entire conduct of the war in all theaters;
- ii) Subordination (UNTERSTELLUNG) of all three WEHRMACHT branches to a single person;
- iii) Re-appointment for the vacant post of Army C in C (OBERBEFEHLSHABER DES HEERES);
- iv) Establishment of a single General Staff for all three WEHRMACHT branches.

Should HITLER not accede voluntarily to this plan, suitable steps to apply

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force were to be taken. These measures would probably consist of placing HITLER under temporary arrest. Preparations were made to cut off all communications between the FUEHRER's Hq and the outside world at the designated time, until the desired decision would be reached one way or another. BERLIN was to be seized by anti-Nazi troops at the same time.

The intentions were further to incorporate the WAFFEN SS into the Army, with the appointment of a REICH Chief of General Staff.

Along with this plan there were other designs, of a political and economic nature, with the details of which I am not familiar. It is fairly certain that it was hoped to establish contact with America and England through the Vatican, with the purpose of negotiating for an armistice. I think that the Vatican was chosen as the neutral meeting place for the diplomats concerned; I do not know whether the cooperation of the Pope himself was sought.

c) "It was further made clear to me that my appointment as Commander of the BRANDENBURG Div was only a blind, that it would be my task to occupy a certain district of BERLIN with elements of the Div which were located in the town of BRANDENBURG and, above all, to eliminate Party officials, the SS, and the SD.

d) "GEN DER INF OLBRIGHT handled the technical preparations in the interior. But he was unable immediately to make any headway with his preparations, due to the lack of capable and dependable officers. He finally succeeded in obtaining OBST GRAF VON STAUFFENBERG as chief, and only with the arrival of this officer did the preparations begin to make progress. All preparations had to be handled with the greatest care. Only very few officers could at first be let in on the secret. Spying by HIMMLER, the SD, and the Party increased daily. The fact that the Chief of the Army Personnel Office (PERSONALAMT), GENLT SCHMUNDT, was a 100% Nazi and could not be told about the plot made the situation especially difficult, because officers who were urgently desired for the accomplishment of the proposed coup could not be secured.

e) "The further arrangements of the plan called for holding the Eastern front under all circumstances, at least to protect the German border from a Russian invasion. It was intended that a British-American invasion in the WEST should not be opposed; German troops were to be withdrawn to the interior of the REICH and to reinforce the Eastern front. The plan was to let in the Americans and British, without fighting and as fast as possible, far into Germany. The necessary preparations in the WEST were in the hands of GEN DER INF VON STUELPNAGEL, Military Commander of France, and GEN VON FALKENHAUSEN, Military Commander of Belgium.

f) "In the course of time it developed that Field Marshal VON KLUGE was somewhat undecided and had postponed the date of the undertaking. In spite of all pressure he kept postponing the appointed time for the coup. Weeks and months passed, in summer 43, during which I and many others came to the conclusion that the plan would never be carried out because of the indecision of VON KLUGE. VON KLUGE was advised, and even urged by his Ia, GENMAJ VON TRESKOW, to go on with the plot. OBST SCHULTZE-BUETTGER, Ia to Field Marshal VON MANNSTEIN, was also let in on the plans.

g) "I received the mission of determining, during a visit to the OKH, the position and attitude of GENOBST ZEITZLER and the Operations Sec (OPERATIONS ABTEILUNG) of the Army High Command. It was essential to know whether ZEITZLER could be let in on the plot. Through several conversations with the officers of the Operations Sec, particularly with OBST GRAF VON KIELMANNSEGG and OBSTLT SMEND, I received the impression that ZEITZLER, while he had taken over the position of Chief of the General Staff with great confidence in HITLER, realized after a few weeks that HITLER was totally incompetent as far as military matters were concerned and was making one catastrophic decision after another.

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ZEITZLER was especially shocked by the fact that losses in men which ran into hundreds of thousands, as at STALINGRAD, did not make the slightest impression on HITLER. ZEITZLER learned within those short weeks to recognize HITLER's military incompetence and to hate and despise him because of his personal characteristics. But he was not yet thinking about the overthrowing of the FUEHRER. He rather considered it his duty, come what may, to remain at his post. The inevitability of the collapse was painfully clear to him and to the officers of the Operations Sec. They continued to work out of a sense of duty, and without any hope.

I communicated this impression to Admiral CANARIS; the decision was reached NOT to inform ZEITZLER of the plans.

h) "In the course of the year 1943, particularly in the fall and winter, the determination to overthrow HITLER ripened. There were various ideas as to the methods of realizing this aim. For a long time it was hoped that an opportunity would present itself during one of HITLER's so-called "visits to the front" (FRONTREISEN). HITLER's visits usually carried him only as far as Army Group Hq. At Army Group Center as well as at Army Group SOUTH preparations for an assassination were made. It did not come to pass, because HITLER could no longer be persuaded to make a visit to the front. Thus the decision was gradually reached to bring about the overthrow of HITLER, and if possible also HIMMLER, in the FUEHRER Hq.

i) "In Jan 44 I was reported by a junior officer, O/LT BOECKEL, as having a suspicious political outlook. I was classified politically unreliable and, therefore, relieved on 1 Apr 44 of the BRANDBURG Div command and placed at the disposal of the OKH. After I left BERLIN, I had no opportunity to witness the further unfolding of the plan. I was sent to a div commanders' course at HIRSCHBERG. Having been appointed OG 50 Inf Div on 1 July 44, I was on the Eastern front at the time of the attempted assassination on 20 July".

V. THE EVENTS OF 20 JULY, 1944

"In KUESTRIN, while under detention, I had occasion to speak to the following officers, HITLER's political prisoners like myself: OBST VON CANNSTEIN, Commandant of the Cav School, BROMBERG; MAJ VON HASSELT, son of the diplomat; and MAJ VON KLUGE, son of the Field Marshal. These three officers were apprehended just after me, and were able to give a detailed account of the attempted execution of the plan. The greatest part of the story, as far as I can recall, was told by OBST VON CANNSTEIN.

OBST GRAF VON STAUFFENBERG, as C of S to the Commander of the Replacement Army, had to report to the FUEHRER Hq to give an account on the state of the replacement forces. This report was to be delivered as part of the so-called situation conference (LAGEBESPRECHUNG) in which HITLER, KEITEL, JODL, ZEITZLER, WARLIMONT, and other officers took part daily. Often HIMMLER, and occasionally GOTRING were also present. STAUFFENBERG had no control over the appointment of the date for his report. On the designated day STAUFFENBERG flew in his private plane to the FUEHRER Hq at LOETZEN, East Prussia. He had with him large maps and special large graphs for his report, and also a briefcase with a strong explosive charge. After arriving at the FUEHRER Hq, STAUFFENBERG declared that before the conference he would have to go into the conference room to lay out his maps and graphs. Thus STAUFFENBERG had the opportunity, immediately before the conference, to go alone into the conference room. He spread his maps out on the table so that the view of the floor beneath the table was obstructed. Under the map table, protected from sight, he placed the briefcase with the explosive charge and probably a time fuze.

Since the situation conferences usually lasted several hours, and STAUFFENBERG was to be the last to report, it was not noticeable that he left the FUEHRER Hq at the beg of the conference. Without waiting for the explosion he flew back to BERLIN and there reported to GEN OLBRIGHT that the assassination was accom-

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plished. Based upon this belief, the program proceeded further. All the prepared orders were given. These concerned first of all the taking over of the most important government offices in BERLIN and the arrest of the most important Party and SS members such as the higher-ranking SS police officials, GAULEITER, etc. GENOBST BECK tried at the same time to get in touch with the army groups by telephone. As I understand it, the following conversation took place:

GENLT KINZEL, C of S, Army Group NORTH, received the telephone call from BERLIN. A voice, probably that of STAUFFENBERG, said, "I am turning over the call to GENOBST BECK". GENOBST BECK then said, substantially, "I am not sufficiently informed regarding the details of the situation in the Army Group NORTH. However, I am giving you the following directions for the further conduct of the struggle: Take care that Army Group NORTH under no circumstances be cut off and lose contact with the REICH. If necessary the Army Group front must be withdrawn towards East Prussia". With these words the conversation ended. It can be assumed that GENOBST BECK, GEN DER INF OLBRICHT, and OBST VON STAUFFENBERG gave numerous orders and directives in the same vein. Thus it was easy for the SD later to grab a high percentage of all officers connected with the case, since through the unhappy outcome of the attempted assassination practically all the cards were on the table.

I know that many officers who were not immediately apprehended, their nerves strained by mental uncertainty, sought and found death on the front or through suicide. This was the case of OBST VON VOSS, C of S, Army Group Center, and probably of HPTM VON KOEHNEN and HPTM Helmut PINKERT of BRANDENBURG Div. Some officers, such as MAJ VON HASSELT, are of the opinion that a high percentage of the officers involved in the plot were ^{not} seized by the SD and that perhaps only one-fifth were ~~seized~~. I personally know of only one, GENLT VON ROST, C of S, III Corps, in BERLIN, who was definitely involved in the preparations for the coup. Until recently he was CG HOCH-UND DEUTSCHMEISTER Div on the Eastern front, EAST of VIENNA. At first instrumental in the plans for the overthrow of HITLER, he later got "cold foot" and stopped aside".

VI. RSHA PRISON, BERLIN

"On 1 Sept I was arrested by the SD, thrown into the RSHA Prison, BERLIN, PRINZ ALBRECHT STRASSE, and shackled. The prison cells were located along two corridors in the collar. I was confined to Cell No 13 from 1 Sept to 24 Nov. 30 single cells were occupied. In this SD prison I saw the following persons, some of whom I came to know personally, and others whom I know only by sight.

- i) REICHSMINISTER SCHACHT, Cell 4. Probably released Jan 45.
- ii) MINISTER POPITZ, Prussian Finance Minister. Probably hanged.
- iii) GENOBST HALDER, Cell 17. Probably now out of prison and in a concentration camp in MECKLENBURG.
- iv) GENOBST FROMM. Fate unknown to me, probably not hanged, but certainly still detained.
- v) The diplomat GRAF VON DER SCHULENBURG. Certainly sentenced to death, and hanged.
- vi) The diplomat, VON HASSELT, certainly hanged.
- vii) OBERBURGERMEISTER GOTRDELER (LEIPZIG). Sentenced to death. He was bound hand and foot, then probably hanged. Cell 7 or 8.
- ix) GENMAJ OSTER, C of S, ABWEHR ABT, almost certainly subsequently hanged.

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- x) OBSTLT GRAF VON KIELMANNSEGG, C of S in the Operations Sec, OKH. Confined near me in Cell No 12 for six weeks, then released because of insufficient evidence. Is supposed to have command of an armed regt now.
- xi) GENLT SPEIDEL, C of S, OBERBEFEHLSHABER WEST, under RUNDSTEDT and KLUGE. Detained only for a very few days. I met him again later in the KUESTRIN Fortress.
- xii) My personal friend, PRINZ ERNST AUGUST VON HANNOVER. Is supposed to have been released subsequently. He is probably with his parents in BLANENBURG/HARZ.
- xiii) The two personal adjutants of GENOBST ZEITZLER, - OBSTLT SMEND and the other, whose name is unknown to me. SMEND was to be hanged or shot later.

There were 32 small single cells in all, and during my stay at the prison most of them were continuously occupied. As soon as one occupant was hanged another was brought in.

About 200 to 300 persons were held in the prison of the Criminal Court in MOA-BIT, BERLIN. All of these were confined because of participation in the 20 July incident. Among these 200 persons were numerous other officers, members of the Foreign Office, economists, merchants, intellectuals. Another prison was located in FUERSTENBERG. In all the larger cities the jails were filled with similar personalities. These were all somehow involved, or suspected of having been involved in the 20 July affair. GENOBST ZEITZLER was probably also apprehended. His whereabouts are unknown to me. A BERLIN lawyer, whose name has escaped me, was asked for advice by my wife. This lawyer, who was well informed on these matters, told my wife that in his estimation about 25,000 persons had been arrested in connection with the 20 July incident".

VIII. FORTRESS OF KUESTRIN

"On 24 Nov I was transferred from the RSHA Prison to the KUESTRIN Fortress. Here the SCHLOSSKASERNE was designated as a concentration camp for politically unreliable officers. There were about 25 persons in KUESTRIN among whom I recall the following:

- i) GEN DER KAV VON ESEBECK; last assignment: Acting OG in VIENNA;
- ii) GENLT SINZIGER, Commandant of VIENNA;
- iii) GENMAJ VON STUELPNAGEL, Siegfried, discharged. Last assignment: Commandant of STETTIN.
- iv) GENLT SPEIDEL, C of S, OB WEST;
- v) MAJ VON HASSELT;
- vi) MAJ VON KLUGE, son of the Field Marshal;
- vii) OBSTLT HOEPFNER;
- viii) HPTM VON PAULUS, son of the Field Marshal;
- ix) OBST CANNSTEIN, Commandant of the Cav School, BROMBERG.

When the Russians stood before the gates of KUESTRIN on 30 Jan 45, the fortress of KUESTRIN was evacuated in panic, and many of the prisoners released in utter rashness. I myself was able to go home. The fate of the other officers

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is not known to me. A new concentration camp for officers was to be set up in Central Germany, in the neighborhood of ERFURT, but I do not know whether these plans have been realized".

VIII. TREATMENT OF OFFICER PRISONERS

"After the 20 July Putsch GOERING approached HITLER and asked him to treat the arrested generals humanely and in a manner befitting their position. This request was rejected by HITLER in the roughest manner possible, and GOERING was thrown out together with his request. SS OBERGRUPPENFUEHRER (Lt Gen) Sepp DIETRICH (also ROMMEL?) reportedly supported this request. All three fell subsequently into disgrace."

IX. SEPP DIETRICH

"In KUESTRIN GENLT SPEIDEL told me the following: SS OGRUF Sepp DIETRICH had realized a long time ago that HITLER's policy and his methods of waging war would lead to a catastrophe. SPEIDEL told me that DIETRICH saw those things as they really were. It must be remembered that Sepp DIETRICH, as a unit commander, got his impressions directly from the front and from his contacts with many Army officers, - impressions completely different from those of HITLER, able only to estimate the situation from behind a desk. There exists mutual mistrust between HIMMLER and DIETRICH; HIMMLER felt that DIETRICH had grown too powerful and that he might become a dangerous rival in the future.

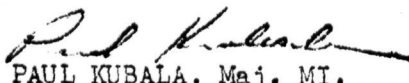
SPEIDEL described DIETRICH as an uneducated country yokel, but having sound common sense. I saw a chit of paper on which DIETRICH had written to SPEIDEL in fall of 44: "With cordial greetings, Yours, Sepp DIETRICH (and not HEIL HITLER)" (MIT KAMERADTSCHAFTLICHEM GRUSS, IHR SEPP DIETRICH (UND NICHT HEIL HITLER)).

X. PERSONALITIES

- i) SONDEREGGER, - KRIMINALKOMISSAR, interrogator in RSHA Prison, BERLIN. Medium height, slim; narrow, wrinkled face. Brown hair, balding.. Slightly sloped shoulders. Southern dialect. Brown eyes. About 40 years old.
- ii) HUPPENKOTHEM, - SS STUBAF (Col), interrogator in RSHA Prison, BERLIN. 1.80 m tall, Westphalian origin. Broad shoulders, slender, strongly built. Remarkably round head, round smooth cheeks. Large, slightly protruding blue eyes. Dark blond, thick hair. Swaying walk. About 30 years old.
- iii) KALTENBRUNNER, - SS OGRUF (Lt Gen), Chief of the SD. Medium height, broad shoulders, stocky. Large, fat hands. Dark blond, almost black hair. Talks quietly. Slight Austrian dialect.

10 April 1945.

SEVENTH ARMY INTERROGATION CENTER


PAUL KUBALA, Maj, MI,
Commanding.