

## The Bomb

SFX - Berlin city noise; footsteps along the footpath; knock at a door; door opens; the city becomes muffled as the door closes again

On the evening of 4 July 1944, Adolf Reichwein arrived at a Berlin house. He was there for a meeting with a group of leading communists. Reichwein was an educator, a member of the Kreisau Circle, and staunchly opposed to the Nazi regime. Attending the rendezvous for the Social Democrats, his aim was to enlist communist support for the coup.

SFX - fast movement; shoes scuff on floorboards; a pistol is cocked

Within moments of entering, Reichwein was surrounded by men in dark coats.

It was a Gestapo trap.

SFX - a whistling kettle; newspaper pages being turned; toast being buttered; tea gets poured

MX in - Bruckner's 7th Symphony - fourth movement (public domain) (through a radio filter)

The next morning, leader of the Social Democrats in Germany and former Reichstag deputy Julius Leber was breakfasting with his wife while looking over the newspaper. He was on edge, having not heard from Reichwein the night before.

But then...

SFX - thumping on the front door

Leber's heart sank. Only one group of people knocked that way. He farewelled his wife.

SFX - sounds fade

MX in - Bruckner's 7th Symphony - fourth movement (public domain)  
(becomes unfiltered)

Julius Leber was a close friend of Claus von Stauffenberg. After the Nazis rose to power in 1933, he had been sent to a concentration camp, where he remained for four years. After his release, he was instrumental in building the network of German resistance. Rather than Carl Goerdeler, Claus wanted Leber to be chancellor of Germany after the coup. But Leber declined.

For the resistance, the arrest of Leber and Reichwein sounded the alarm. Leber in particular knew all the details of their plans. There was no knowing how long he could withstand the Gestapo's 'intensive interrogation'. It was imperative to implement the coup before he could speak. A successful coup also presented the only realistic possibility of freeing the two men.

MX in - theme

As Claus told Leber's wife 'We know where our duty lies'.

This is *Treason*, the remarkable true story of Claus von Stauffenberg and the plot to assassinate Hitler.

Episode seven, "The Bomb".

MX fade

SFX - German countryside

On 11 July 1944, Claus was summoned to the Berghof to confer with Hitler. He took the bomb and he intended to use it.

His aide, Werner von Haeften, was ill. Claus took another young officer of the conspiracy, Captain Friedrich Klausing.

SFX - car approaches from the distance; card door opens and shuts;  
footsteps over a pebbled ground

Nestled in the Bavarian Alps the Berghof stood at the head of a long steep approach road. At its base, SS troops stood guard, searching visiting cars and checking papers. They telephoned guards further up the route. Claus secreted the bomb in his briefcase, which sat resting on his lap.

As Claus entered the Berghof, Klausning remained with the car so it was ready for the downhill run back to the airport. There, a pilot had been instructed to hold the plane for them.

In Berlin, the conspirators waited for the code word to set 'Operation Valkyrie' in motion.

The officers senior to Claus in the conspiracy were adamant that not only Hitler should be killed, but also Himmler and Göring. These men might be able to keep the regime going and suppress the revolt.

Their requirement was unrealistic. The chances of a conspirator being in a conference with Hitler, Göring and Himmler were small. Waiting for that opportunity could delay the coup indefinitely. Indeed, as Claus entered the conference room, he quickly took stock of attendees and saw that neither Himmler, nor Goring were present.

Bowing to the clear instructions of his superiors, Claus did not proceed with the assassination attempt. Later that night, Claus and his aide flew disconsolately back to Berlin.

SFX - insects buzzing

Three days later, on 14 July, Hitler abruptly moved his headquarters from the Berghof, in Bavaria, to the Wolf's Lair near Rastenburg, in the forests of East Prussia.

### MX in - swampy drones

The name is a pun on the diminutive for Adolf, but had a mythical ring all the same. It was a gloomy place – amid forests and insect-infested swamps. Its gloomy atmosphere was summed up by General Alfred Jodl as ‘half monastery, half concentration camp’.

Its location was a closely guarded secret. Camouflage netting covered the buildings. The site bristled with anti-aircraft guns. Hitler slept in an underground bunker.

Russian forces were scarcely 100 kilometres away, and advancing in force. It was as if, by placing himself at Rastenburg, Hitler sought to hold back the Red Army tide by sheer force of will.

Claus and Fromm received orders to attend a conference with the Führer the next day. The meeting presented another opportunity to the conspirators.

The two flew to Rastenburg with Klausning, the bomb once again hidden in Claus’ briefcase. Fromm had no knowledge that Claus planned to kill Hitler that day. Although he knew that planning for a coup against Hitler’s regime had occupied his chief of staff for some time.

Fromm had kept his options open, letting the conspirators think that at the right time he would join them. On one occasion, yet again exasperated with Keitel’s unreasonable demands, Fromm burst out to Claus: ‘When you have your *putsch*, for God’s sake make sure you put that Keitel up against a wall.’

### SFX - insects buzzing returns

On arrival, they were given breakfast before conferring with Field Marshal Keitel. Resistance member, General Stieff was also present. At about one

o'clock they went to the briefing hut. While Keitel and Claus were standing outside, Hitler emerged from his bunker.

Claus was in a difficult position. He was carrying a bomb with a time-delay fuse, but without an opportunity to activate it. It would be impossible to arm the bomb while going into the conference without attracting suspicion.

In Berlin, Olbricht and Mertz had ordered an alert some two hours earlier. Troops were moving into position – actions that would be difficult to explain if there was no assassination.

Although Himmler was present at the Wolf's Lair that day, he did not attend the conference. Claus wavered on whether or not to go through with the assassination.

After the initial half-hour meeting with Hitler, Claus was excused. Leaving the bomb-laden briefcase under the table, he left the room and rang the Home Army Headquarters in Berlin. He spoke to Colonel Mertz who conferred with Olbricht and Beck. A lengthy discussion ensued.

As the generals exchanged opinions, and appeared to deliberately prolong their conference, Mertz began to have a sinking feeling that he alone had the courage and determination to take the plunge. And so, he was forced to relay to Claus that the generals were opposed to carrying out the attack if Himmler was not there.

Claus pushed Mertz for his personal view, free from the consensus of his superiors.

Mertz replied: "Do it."

MX in - tense up-tempo (a taste of the MX for later on July 20)

Claus hung up the phone and strode back towards the briefing hut. He would find a way.

But his phone call had taken so long that Stieff had taken the briefcase containing the bomb out of the briefing room. Perhaps this was a panicky attempt to stop the assassination in the absence of Himmler, perhaps concern to avoid detection, perhaps even a futile attempt to set the fuse.

In Berlin, news that the assassination had fallen through replaced the tension amongst the officers at the Bendlerblock with 'a kind of euphoric mood'. It was as if they all felt they had had a narrow escape. But the situation was serious: Olbricht had ordered Valkyrie manoeuvres without authority from Fromm, and in his absence. He covered up by driving to the units concerned and lavishing praise on the troops for their good performance in the 'exercise', which he now cancelled.

When Carl Goerdeler – designated chancellor if the coup succeeded – heard that yet another assassination attempt had come to nothing, he said, half laughing, half crying: 'My God, they'll never do it!'

After arriving back in Berlin, Claus went to see General Ludwig Beck. He told him what had happened. 'Next time I will act,' he said. 'Come what may.'

MX out - the end of this chapter

On 16 July, in France, Field Marshal Erwin Rommel was directing the defence of Normandy. So far the Allied invaders were confined to the narrow area around the beaches and the Cotentin peninsula, but their superiority in the air and in material resources was already marked.

Given the situation, Rommel signed a joint memorandum with his own superior, Field Marshal von Kluge. Couched in blunt terms, it was addressed to Hitler, and set out the stark military situation in the west and warned that

the enemy must shortly break through into the French hinterland. There were inadequate panzers to deal with the threat. The Luftwaffe was conspicuous by its absence. Rommel added the final words: 'It is necessary to draw the political conclusions from this situation.' He was persuaded to delete the word 'political'.

It was very dangerous for Rommel to write such a document to the Führer. Hitler had already cautioned the Field Marshall against intruding into politics. But Rommel told a friend that he would open the front to the west if Hitler refused to accept the consequences.

### MX in - Resistance theme

That night the key conspirators met in the Stauffenberg brothers' flat in Berlin. Talk centred on whether opening the front in the west without assassinating Hitler should be attempted. After all, so many attempts to kill Hitler had failed, and there might be a better way. In the end all agreed that assassination and subsequent coup gave the best chance of success.

### SFX - car starts and takes off; then a plane flies low on approach; bullets firing

The next day, 17 July 1944, Rommel visited the Caen sector of the Normandy front by car. He mainly took back roads, but during his return journey that afternoon the car turned onto the main road. The air sentry, riding on the back of the car, yelled out that enemy aircraft were coming along the road from behind, low and fast. There was a shout to the driver and the car raced ahead to a turn off, where there might be shelter, but the lead aircraft opened fire. The car went into a ditch. Rommel was badly injured.

With Rommel out of action, Kluge did not send on to Hitler the ultimatum he had jointly authored. The resistance had lost a major player.

That night Claus spoke by telephone to Nina for the last time. Nina had recently learned she was pregnant with the couple's fifth child and was

heading to visit Claus' mother in Württemberg. Without being able to explain why, Claus told her that he did not approve of them going away just then. Claus knew his family would be safer if they remained at their Lautlingen estate – a more isolated and remote place. But Nina would not be put off.

#### MX in - dark drones

On 18 July Claus was told that he would be required at the Wolf's Lair in two days' time to brief the Führer about the blocking divisions he was organising. Officers in the coup quietly sent out alerts to participants throughout the Reich.

In Berlin, the coup depended on the troops of the *Grossdeutschland* Guard Battalion. Lieutenant General von Hase was the commandant of Berlin and responsible for their deployment, but in immediate command of this detachment was Major Otto-Ernst Remer.

#### MX in - drones include a brief melody for Remer

A former Hitler Youth leader, he had recently been awarded the Knight's Cross by Hitler personally. He was a staunch supporter of Hitler and the regime, and knew nothing of the coup, yet he would be giving orders to troops on the ground when the coup began. Several officers suggested to Remer's superior, General von Hase, that Remer was a danger to the coup, and that he should be sent away on an assignment. Hase refused, saying that Remer was a good officer who would obey orders when the time came.

#### MX out

The same day a friend gave Claus alarming news: a rumour was circulating in Berlin that the Führer would be blown up in his headquarters. This suggested a breach of security, but possibly that their secret was out. They speculated that Julius Leber might have revealed their plans under torture. Whatever the case, the conspirators now faced a clear threat that the Gestapo might come



calling at any time. 'Then there is no alternative,' Claus responded. 'We have crossed the Rubicon.'

### MX in - Resistance theme (muted; drones)

The conspirators knew that the chances of bringing off their insurrection were small. Even Claus admitted in early July that 'It was questionable whether it would succeed.' Tresckow confided to a friend 'The attempt will very likely go awry. In all likelihood everything will go wrong.' When he was asked 'Is the action necessary nevertheless?' Tresckow responded: 'Yes, even so.'

On 19 July, the day before Stauffenberg would meet Hitler, frantic preparations proceeded in the Bendlerblock. Officers came and went from Claus's office all day. He summoned key officers and ascertained troop strengths, availability, and the time troops would take to reach Berlin. He held a two-hour conference with some thirty officers of the Headquarters staff. In it they finalised details of Operation Valkyrie.

During the afternoon Claus sent his driver to collect a parcel from an officer in Potsdam and take it to his flat.

### MX out

It was the bomb.

That evening Claus visited Martin Niemöller's church in Dahlem. Claus was a Catholic, but this was a protestant church. It was a kernel of anti-Nazi resistance. Claus went inside, and remained there for some time. When he came out, his driver took him home.

That evening Claus tried to telephone Nina. Although an operator tried to connect him, an Allied air raid on Ebingen had wrecked the exchange. Despite Claus's persistent requests, he was unable to get through.

### SFX - morning dawns; a car pulls up; doors open and close; the car takes off

The morning of Thursday 20 July 1944 dawned early in Berlin. Claus's driver picked him up as arranged. Claus carried with him the briefcase. Inside was the bomb. Berthold came in the car to the Rangsdorf airfield south of Berlin to see his brother off. At the airport, Claus was met by Haeften and General Stieff.

Instead of accompanying Claus and Haeften to the Wolf's Lair, Stieff would be heading for the nearby Mauerwald army headquarters. The conspirators had developed detailed plans to use troops from Mauerwald to take control of the Wolf's Lair. We can't now be sure, but Stieff probably had some role in this.

### SFX - a small plane starts up and idles

The Deputy Chief of the General Staff had supplied them with his personal Heinkel HE-111. Faster than the usual courier aircraft, it could also wait for Claus at the airfield near the Wolf's Lair. This would ensure the minimum delay in his return to Berlin.

Claus and the other officers climbed aboard, sharing the plane's small cabin. The flight took between two and three hours.

### SFX - interior of the plane as it flies

It was a flight freighted with significance. One man carried enough explosive to send the plane into oblivion. All three on a mission of immense importance and facing enormous risks, but only able to exchange occasional snatches of conversation in the racket of the cabin.

At Rastenburg airfield Claus was met by a courier car, which immediately took him, together with Haeften, along the country lanes to the Führer's headquarters.

### SFX - insects buzzing; a car approaches

A high, patrolled, fence surrounded the Wolf's Lair – one of three concentric perimeter fences. To enter or leave the Führer compound a visitor had to negotiate three checkpoints, each guarded by SS troops slung with machine guns, who were expected to maintain the strictest security.

### SFX - the car stops; boom gates are raised; the car drives off

Claus arrived mid morning. At successive barriers, SS officers inspected his papers and raised boom gates or moved chevaux-de-frise to enable the car to pass on. Finally Claus approached the highest security area – the Führer compound.

### MX in - tense drones

At about eleven-thirty, Field Marshal Keitel invited Claus and others to a preliminary conference. He wanted to iron out remaining problems with submissions to be made to the Führer.

### SFX - footsteps pace left and right

Haeften remained outside in a waiting area. He struggled to maintain his composure. Staff Sergeant Vogel walked past, noticing an object wrapped in camouflage material on the floor near his office door. He asked Haeften if the object belonged to him. Haeften said that it did, and that Colonel Count von Stauffenberg required it for his presentation to the Führer. Vogel went into his office. Haeften paced up and down the corridor outside Vogel's open door. Vogel looked out again. The object had gone.

Emerging from his conference with Keitel, Stauffenbeg asked Keitel's adjutant, Major Ernst John von Freyend, if there was somewhere he could change his shirt and freshen up before the Führer conference. He was shown to a sitting room.

### MX in - tense, heartbeats

With Haefthen's help, Claus changed his shirt and then took out the first of two lumps of plastic explosive.

Claus planned to kill every person in the conference room – to make sure he killed Hitler.

Claus had brought the same captured British time fuses the resistance had used for the failed Cointreau bomb. The fuses were tubes which, when squeezed, broke a small glass globule to release acid, which corroded a wire to release a spring-loaded striker.

Although Claus took at least one thirty-minute fuse with him, the plan was to use ten-minute fuses. Thirty minutes was too long – too many things could happen. Ten minutes left the best chance that Hitler would still be in the room when the bomb went off.

For a man with one eye, and only a thumb and two fingers, setting these fuses was highly taxing. The obvious solution would be for Claus to have his adjutant arm the bomb. But Haefthen did not do so. Arming the bomb was to assassinate Hitler. Haefthen's conscience balked at this, leaving Claus's three fingers to carry out the task.

Claus had practised activating the time fuses. He had fashioned a special tool to enable him to squeeze them, and now, Claus armed several and pushed them in the first lump of plastic explosive. The Cointreau bomb had been armed with a single fuse. From the conspirators' point of view, more fuses must increase the chances of success.

### MX out

SFX - phone ringing; German voice through the phone says: "Colonel Stauffenberg"

Now General Fellgiebel, in charge of communications for the conspirators, and fussing about the details, made one of the worst-timed telephone calls in history. He rang Keitel's office and asked to speak with Claus.

SFX - phone is hung up; footsteps down the hall

Vogel pushed open the sitting room door. Partly blocked by Claus's back, he saw Claus and Haeften 'whispering and working on some object'.

Having passed on the message, Vogel stood, watching through the partly opened door. He asked them to come along, as Field Marshal Keitel was waiting.

The first explosive was due to detonate in ten minutes. Now this staff sergeant stood nosing about, Claus wondered if he had time to arm the second. The second kilogram of plastic explosive would not merely double the force of the explosion – it would multiply it many times over.

Vogel's presence prevented Claus from arming the second bomb.

Claus answered Vogel in an agitated and brusque manner – as well he might – but Vogel did not leave. Complicating matters further, John von Freyend came, calling out 'Stauffenberg, come on!'

John von Freyend and Vogel were nosing around at the door, and this now hindered Claus from the next best course – placing the second explosive on top of the armed explosive. The explosion of one would have been enough to set off the other.

Claus covered up the single lump of plastic explosive in his briefcase. He must have believed that with proper placement the single charge would be enough to do the job. Haeften took the other, and hid it.

Claus walked out of the sitting room, carrying his briefcase. He exchanged fiery glances with John von Freyend, who placed his hand on the briefcase to carry it. Claus tore it out of John von Freyend's grasp.

Haeften left the area as Claus strode towards the briefing hut.

General Fellgiebel saw Claus and telephoned out the code message, to be relayed to Berlin 'The signals equipment is leaving.'

SFX - voice through a phone (in German): "the signals equipment is leaving"

In Berlin, a last minute liaison took place between the army, the police, and others. Count Wolf Heinrich von Helldorf, the chief of police in Berlin, had called a conference of leading Berlin Nazis in his office that afternoon to discuss security. The conference was timed to begin at about the time 'Valkyrie' commenced. Then he would arrest them all.

Unobtrusively, civilian and other conspirators made their way to Home Army Headquarters in the Bendlerblock.

At the Wolf's Lair, Claus was in the anteroom to the briefing hut. As protocol required, Claus removed his cap and belt. Now he accepted Freyend's offer to carry the briefcase. He asked to be placed as close as possible to the Fuhrer, so he could catch everything he needed for his briefing.

As Claus entered, tall and commanding, all eyes turned to him. Around two dozen people were in the room, but Himmler and Göring were not among them. This would not stop Claus this time.

MX in - tense; this is it

Keitel introduced Claus to the meeting. Hitler greeted Claus warmly, clasping his maimed hand.

The solid oak briefing table's top was eight centimetres thick and covered with maps. At each end, massive wall-like supports ran perpendicular to the table. Officers stood around with Hitler at the middle of the table.

John von Freyend arranged a place for Claus close to Hitler's right hand side. Only one officer, or possibly two, stood between Claus and Hitler. John von Freyend placed the briefcase on the floor in front of Claus, who reached down, pushing the bomb to Hitler's side of one of the supports.

Hitler's eyesight was poor, but he was too vain to wear glasses. He studied the maps using a magnifying glass while leaning well forward over the table.

Having placed the bomb, Claus had very little time to get out of the room and away. He whispered to John von Freyend about making a telephone call, and walked out with him. They were not missed amongst the hubbub.

Claus had placed the briefcase close to Colonel Heinz Brandt. He was the man who had unwittingly carried the 'Cointreau' bomb onto Hitler's plane the previous year. After Claus left the room, Brandt knocked the briefcase over, and then moved it away placing it on the far side of the table support away from Hitler.

In the briefing hut's anteroom Claus asked to be put through to General Fellgiebel. He was connected, and watched as John von Freyend returned to the briefing room. When he was gone, Claus calmly replaced the receiver, and walked out. He did not collect his cap or belt.

Outside, he strode purposefully from the hut. His path took him out of the Führer compound and through the first checkpoint.

Inside, the head of the Army Operations Section was briefing the Führer on the situation in the east. A general observed that Claus could provide the necessary information on one point. Keitel asked: 'Where is Stauffenberg?' Hitler asked for him as well.

Claus found Haeften and General Fellgiebel outside the adjutants' building. They had a view towards the briefing hut as they made small talk.

Claus could have headed off immediately. After all, he was needed in Berlin. But he wanted confirmation that this time the first part of the task had been successful.

MX out

Shortly after twelve-forty...

SFX - bomb blast; wood and masonry explode; small fires crackling

A thundering blast shattered the drowsy silence. A sheet of blue and yellow flame shot into the air from the briefing hut. Metal and masonry flew in all directions amid a rain of insulation and burnt papers.

Claus gave a violent start and quickly took his leave. He climbed into the front seat of the open staff car which stood waiting. Haeften sat in the back.

MX in - driving beat; trapped

Claus had battlefield experience. He knew what an explosion could do. And he had placed the bomb not two metres from the Führer. He was sure Hitler was dead.

SFX - car starts and drives off

Once in the car, Claus told the driver to take them to the airfield. They drove close to the briefing hut, already an ants' nest of running orderlies and chaos. Claus saw a body being carried out on a stretcher. It was covered with Hitler's personal cloak.



### SFX - car stops and idles

To reach the airfield they had to pass through two more guard checkpoints. At the first, guards had heard the explosion and had lowered the boom. As his car came to a stop Claus showed their passes. He said that he must go to the airfield at once. The lieutenant looked at the imposing figure of the highly-decorated, wounded staff officer, and thought for a moment. Then he ordered the boom lifted. Claus drove through.

### SFX - car gets into gear and drives off; an alarm sounds

-With the alarm raised, orders went out that no one was to be permitted to leave the Wolf's Lair. The final checkpoint bristled with guards and the barrier was in place. The Sergeant Major in charge would let no one through. In a parade ground tone Claus demanded to pass. The Sergeant Major would not budge. SS guards, weapons slung ready, made it impossible to escape. Once the full story was out, there would be no explaining why he was trying to leave so suddenly. Claus and Haeften were trapped.

### SFX - picking up an old phone; faint connection

Thinking quickly, Claus strode into the guardroom and asked to make a telephone call. He rang the office of the commandant of the Wolf's Lair and spoke to a Captain there. The Captain knew Claus. Although he knew there had been an explosion, he didn't know it had been in the briefing hut. Despite having no authority to do so once the alarm sounded, he gave permission for Claus to leave. The Sergeant Major had to let him pass.

### SFX - car drives off

Fellgiebel telephoned out the signal that the bomb had exploded: 'The signals equipment has left.'

### SFX - voice through a phone (in German): "the signals equipment has left"

It seemed everything had gone to plan.

SFX - all sounds fade

But Hitler was not dead.

MX in - swampy drones

In the silence following the explosion the map room filled with smoke. The occupants had been knocked to a floor knee-deep in splinters of glass and timber. They struggled to get out. 'The Führer! Where is the Führer?' cried Keitel. In the smoke-filled wreckage he found Hitler and stumbled out with him.

Hitler's aides took him to his bunker where his doctors examined him. Both his eardrums were pierced. His right ear was filled with blood. He had a contusion of the right elbow and abrasions on the backs of his hands. He suffered burns on both legs. Hitler walked with a limp for the rest of his life. His arm was prone to shake after the explosion. Thereafter, in public, he always held it with his other hand.

After Hitler had been examined, he walked out into his enclosure – shaky but unassisted. Fellgiebel caught sight of him. He was stunned to see that it was indeed Hitler and that he had survived. The conspirators had not anticipated Hitler surviving the bomb explosion. There was no code word for this eventuality, but Fellgiebel had to let them know. Phone lines were routinely tapped by the Gestapo, so he could not speak openly.

SFX - voice through a phone (in German): "something terrible has happened. The Fuhrer is alive."

He called Berlin and told a fellow conspirator 'Something terrible has happened. The Führer is alive.'

### SFX - interior of the car as it races along

On the road to the airfield, Claus urged his driver to make all haste. The car sped along the winding forest road. Even so, In his rear vision mirror the driver noticed Haeften throw a parcel out of the car.

### SFX - car pulls up; doors quickly open and shut; small plane starts up and takes off

At one-fifteen they reached the airfield, leapt from the car, and sprinted to the waiting plane. The engines screamed into life. The aircraft swept into the sky toward Berlin.

The code word for the assassination reached the conspirators in Berlin within minutes of the bomb blast. However, Fellgiebel's cryptic message that Hitler had survived reached Berlin at almost the same time. This left the conspirators with more questions than clear directions.

### MX in - Resistance theme (minimal)

His message about something terrible having happened was guarded. It could mean the attempt failed, or there had been no attempt at all. Maybe Claus had been arrested or had even died in his attempt. Clarification could not be sought over an open telephone line. The Berlin conspirators were racked with doubt and apprehension.

With the possibility that the assassination had failed, generals in Berlin pondered whether to throw caution to the winds and issue the Valkyrie orders anyway. Fromm might help if he thought the success of the coup was assured, but he could not be relied on while no one knew what had happened. Even Claus might disown the action on his return.

The generals dithered. Like a ghostly apparition, the real possibility of the war ending there and then floated before the officers in Berlin. They had only to reach out and grasp it. But they remained frozen with fear and uncertainty.

The SS inadvertently helped the conspiracy by ordering their own blackout. Operators in the exchange were ordered to move their chairs back one metre from their consoles. Calls were ruthlessly cut off. The communications network was available for the conspiracy.

But the conspirators did not use it.

In the Bendlerblock, Colonel Mertz von Quirnheim was beside himself, sensing that there was no going back, and urging immediate action. He relentlessly urged and cajoled his uncertain superiors, including the hesitating Olbricht, to strike.

Instead, trying to maintain normal habits so as not to arouse suspicion, they went out to lunch.

At two o'clock, without authorisation, Mertz issued the alerts for Valkyrie.

At police headquarters in Berlin, the police chief, Count Helldorf, waited anxiously in the heat of the day for word from Home Army headquarters. Late morning, and then early afternoon wore on. Still no word came about the assassination.

Then Helldorf's Nazi guests arrived for the strategically-timed three o'clock meeting to discuss 'security measures', and still no call came. Helldorf extended the meeting, delaying the departure of the guests with several pretexts, but in the end there was nothing further to discuss, and all the key Nazi leaders in Berlin left his office and dispersed. His opportunity to arrest them passed.

MX out

Finally, around a quarter past three, a call from the Wolf's Lair reached the Bendlerblock. It provided the first eye-witness account of the explosion.

Mertz seized on this, and finally persuaded Olbricht to launch the coup. General Olbricht gathered the Valkyrie orders from the safe and prepared to rush them to Fromm for signature.

MX in - change of location; more downbeat; Nazi theme (minimal)

At the Wolf's Lair, Nazi leaders hurried to console the Führer. Hitler had photographs taken of himself with Göring and Himmler. Germany would need to see images of the Führer to prove he had survived.

At times in discussions, Hitler flared up, uttering furious threats that from now on he was going to be ruthless. 'He would wipe out the lot of them and throw women and children into concentration camps – no mercy was to be shown to anyone!'

Hitler read and commented on drafts of the speech he was to make as soon as radio facilities permitted.

There was still a great deal of confusion. Investigators and officers ran about assessing the extraordinary events. Emergency repair staff tried to sort out the wrecked telephone lines. Disposal experts searched for more bombs.

SS investigators began piecing together the evidence in an attempt to find out who had planted the bomb. Initial suspicion fell on workers who were carrying out renovations in the area.

But the telephone operator in the briefing hut had noticed Claus replace the receiver and leave without his cap, belt, or briefcase. He raised his suspicions with some of the officers in the area, who eventually told Hitler.

At first the investigators assumed that Claus was still in the enclosure, which had been sealed off quickly. When his rapid departure from the Wolf's Lair emerged, suspicion hardened. His driver was interviewed, and mentioned the parcel which Haeften had thrown out of the car. SS units were sent to the area and conducted a systematic search. They found the unused plastic explosive.

MX in - show theme

It was now clear that Colonel Count Claus von Stauffenberg, a decorated officer of the General Staff, had tried to kill the Führer of the German Reich. He had obviously gone mad. The Nazis assumed he would be escaping to neutral territory – Sweden or Switzerland. No conception was entertained at the Wolf's Lair that he might be heading to Berlin, or that the day's surprises were not yet over.

The Nazis issued orders for Claus's plane to be shot down.