Hortensienstrasse 50. The Kreisau Circle and the 20th of July

Thomas Childers

University of Tennessee - Knoxville

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[Signature]
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[Signature]
Edward T. Tannier

[Signature]
[Signature]

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[Signature]
Vice Chancellor for
Graduate Studies and Research

July 19, 1971
HORTENSIENSTRASSE 50. THE KREISAU CIRCLE
AND THE 20TH OF JULY

A Thesis
Presented to
the Graduate Council of
The University of Tennessee

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

by
Thomas Childers
August 1971
ACKNOWLEDGMENT

This study of the Kreisau Circle of the German resistance movement against National Socialism and its relationship to the coup d'etat of July 20, 1944, was undertaken with the guidance of Dr. Arthur G. Haas in January 1969. During the following academic year, a Fulbright grant allowed me to pursue this investigation in Germany, where the facilities of the Institut für Europäische Geschichte in Mainz were at my disposal.

To the many people who kindly granted me interviews or provided me with valuable unpublished material, I owe my deepest thanks. I would especially like to express my appreciation to Frau Dr. Marion Gräfin Yorck von Wartenburg, who gave me considerable help in many aspects of my research. To Dr. Arthur G. Haas, who not only inspired this project but also first aroused my interest in history, I am greatly indebted. Finally, I want to thank my wife Betsy, my mother, and my father for their steadfast support and assistance. To them, this work is dedicated.

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The Kreisau Circle of the German resistance movement to National Socialism was first organized by Count Helmuth James von Moltke and Count Peter Yorck von Wartenburg in 1940. The circle's membership was composed of socialists, representatives of the Christian Churches, members of the Foreign Office and governmental administration, and East-Elbian aristocrats. Until May 1943 the circle concentrated primarily on the formulation of a plan for the reconstruction of German society in a post-Nazi Europe. In drafting the program, three large conferences were held at Moltke's estate of Kreisau in Silesia, from which the circle derived its name.

Between May 1943 and the early months of the following year, the circle passed through a transitional phase in its development. With the plans for a new government and society essentially completed in the summer of 1943, the circle gradually turned to concrete organizational preparation for X-Day, the day of Hitler's fall. The death of Carlo Mierendorff, one of the circle's leading figures, the arrest of Helmuth von Moltke, and the arrival of Colonel Claus von Stauffenberg in Berlin, all contributed to a reorientation of the circle's activities.

The circle did not collapse after the loss of Moltke, its co-leader. Instead, Yorck assumed the role of "business
manager," and the circle continued to meet in his small house in the Hortensienstrasse until July 20, 1944. Yorck's cousin Stauffenberg, who became the center of the military resistance and planned to assassinate Hitler, gradually drew the Kreisau Circle into the active plans for the coup d'etat. Rather than being the "conscientious objectors of the resistance," as the Kreisauers are so often portrayed, Yorck, Adam von Trott zu Solz, Julius Leber, and their friends participated in the political preparations for X-Day, which came on July 20, 1944.
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INTRODUCTION

In 1967 Ger van Roon's basic study of the Kreisau Circle of the German resistance movement against National Socialism appeared in Germany. Until the publication of Neuordnung im Widerstand. Der Kreisauer Kreis innerhalb der deutschen Widerstandsbewegung no comprehensive treatment of the circle existed. While standard works on the German opposition dealt with the Kreisau Circle within the broad context of the entire resistance movement, van Roon's extensive research concentrated exclusively on the development of this important circle. The result was an impressively detailed, well-documented, and apparently authoritative account of the circle's activities from its origin in 1940 until its collapse in 1944.

Nevertheless, there are gaps. In an imposing volume comprising over six hundred pages, only three are dedicated to an examination of the circle's activities between January 19, 1944, and July 20, 1944. These were critical months for the German resistance, and the role of the Kreisau Circle during this period deserves more attention. This remarkable gap in van Roon's otherwise thorough treatment is, of course, no oversight. Helmuth von Moltke, who along with Peter Yorck von Wartenburg founded and led the circle, was arrested on January 19, 1944, and thereafter, van Roon contends, the
circle's diverse membership lacked a common, cohesive center. The Kreisau Circle, according to van Roon, therefore dissolved in early 1944. But what exactly happened to the Kreisau Circle after Moltke's arrest? Was Peter Yorck able to hold the circle together? Were the Kreisauers really the "conscientious objectors of the resistance"? If the circle collapsed in January of 1944, how does one explain the involvement of several of its leading members in the plot of July 20? These are questions which prompted this investigation—a project, it should be added, which could hardly have been undertaken without the foundation laid by van Roon's study.

Any attempt to reconstruct the developments within the Kreisau Circle after January 1944 must begin with the role of Count Peter Yorck von Wartenburg. Although other Kreisauers, especially Adam von Trott zu Solz and Julius Leber, played equal or even greater roles in the active conspiracy, Yorck's position at the circle's nucleus is vital in understanding the structure and operating procedures of the circle after January 19, 1944. Since Yorck and his friends, as security precautions, rarely recorded their actions in writing, the researcher is confronted with obvious problems. Letters and unpublished compositions, especially the Materialsammlung of Frau Dr. Clarita von Trott zu Solz, contribute greatly to the surmounting of these problems, as do interviews with friends,
relatives, co-workers, and the few living members of the Kreisau Circle. Most important in this regard are Frau Dr. Marion Gräfin Yorck von Wartenburg, Yorck's widow, and Dr. Eugen Gerstenmaier and Dr. Paulus van Husen, two Kreisau members who were very close to Yorck in 1944. Countess Yorck remained with her husband in Berlin throughout 1944 and shared in his resistance work. Dr. Gerstenmaier, later the President of the West German Bundestag, lived in the Yorcks' small house in the Hortensienstrasse during this period, and Dr. van Husen was in almost daily contact with Yorck. Supported by published and unpublished material and checked against documented accounts of the period, their recollections provide an authoritative picture of Yorck's activities in the months before July 20, 1944.

Although the major emphasis of this study is, therefore, focused on the circle's activities in 1944, their significance can be accurately assessed only when viewed against the background of the circle's development since 1940. A chapter on the circle's origins and composition is, therefore, necessary. Moreover, since the Kreisauers considered the formulation of a political-social program for a post-Nazi Germany as their primary duty and since this task occupied their attention until the summer of 1943, a chapter dealing exclusively with the Kreisau program is also included. This study is, therefore, not intended as a comprehensive history of the Kreisau
Circle. Its scope is much more limited. Yet, by concentrating on the activities of Yorck, Trott, Leber and their friends after January 1944 and their relationship to the events of the 20th of July, it is hoped that a contribution to the understanding of this remarkable group of men may be attained.
CHAPTER I

THE PARTICIPANTS: THE FOUNDING OF THE CIRCLE

On Thursday, May 21, 1942, the guests of Count Helmuth James von Moltke were arriving for a short holiday at his country estate of Kreisau near Schweidnitz in Silesia. It was the week of Pentecost, and the religious nature of the holiday was not without significance. The guests were said to be colleagues of Count von Moltke from Berlin and were lodged partly in the Schloss, the large imposing house which served as the focal point of the estate, and partly in the Berghaus, a smaller and somewhat secluded dwelling situated in the rough Silesian landscape above and away from the Schloss. The large, rambling estate of Kreisau to which the guests had been invited had come to the Moltke family through Count von Moltke's illustrious great-grand uncle, Field Marshal Helmuth von Moltke, who had acquired it in 1866. Upon the death of the Feldmarschall, who himself had no male heirs, Kreisau was bequeathed to Helmuth James' grandfather, but the atmosphere of history which pervaded the grounds did not diminish with the great military man's passing. His austere living quarters in the Schloss were left untouched, and his
tomb, situated on a small knoll in the estate's extensive park, continued to attract visitors to Kreisau.\footnote{Ger van Roon, Neuordnung im Widerstand. Der Kreisauer Kreis innerhalb der deutschen Widerstandsbewegung, hereafter cited as Neuordnung, Munich, 1967, pp. 56-57.}

The estate actually consisted of three distinct areas, Wierischau, Kreisau, and Nieder Graeditz. The nucleus of the estate, however, was Kreisau, where the gates of the Schloss opened onto the main street of the small rural village which had grown up around it. On one of the many ridges in the Nieder Graeditz section of the estate overlooking the hollow in which the\underline{Schloss} and the village of Kreisau were nestled stood the charming white-walled\underline{red-roofed Berghaus}, where Helmuth James von Moltke, his wife Freya, and two small sons lived. There in the spacious high-ceilinged rooms of this comfortable house and in the pleasant, relaxed atmosphere of its large open porch and meticulously cultivated garden, Count and Countess von Moltke entertained their frequent guests. Leading a traditional country life as the Moltkes did, weekend guests were quite common on the great estate, and those arriving on that Thursday did not appear out of the ordinary.\footnote{Interview with Countess Freya von Moltke, Heidelberg, January 22, 1970.} Yet, if in terms of numbers these weekend guests at Kreisau were not very striking, their composition was indeed exceptional.
There was Hans Peters, an international lawyer and professor of law in Berlin; Harald Poelchau, a Lutheran chaplain at Berlin's Tegel prison; Hans Lukaschek, a former governor of Upper Silesia and Center party member; Adolf Reichwein, a former professor of political studies at the Pedagogical Academy in Halle and a socialist; Father Augustin Rösch, the Father Provincial of the Bavarian Jesuits; Theodor Steltzer, a former Landrat in Schleswig-Holstein and now a transportation officer in the Wehrmacht; and, accompanied by his wife Marion, Count Peter Yorck von Wartenburg, descendant of a historic and noble Prussian family, who since the summer of 1940 had become, along with Moltke, the vital nucleus around which this highly heterogeneous circle of colleagues had centered.3 On May 22 the Moltkes met with their guests in the Berghaus, and discussions were begun which, within the next three days, were to produce the "Declaration of Basic Principles" of what Constantine FitzGibbon credits as being the "intellectual force which epitomized the opposition to Hitler and Nazism," the Kreisau Circle.4

Since the early months of 1940 this highly diversified group had cautiously expanded to encompass representatives of both Protestant and Catholic Churches, former German Socialist (SPD) and labor leaders, members of the Foreign Office

3Ger van Roon, Neuordnung, pp. 252-53.

and the governmental bureaucracy, as well as distinguished men from the academic community. Aside from those who attended that initial meeting at Kreisau in May of 1942, there were others who played significant roles in shaping the Kreisauer Kreis.

The very formidable socialist influence within the circle was contributed by Carlo Mierendorff, Theo Haubach, Adolf Reichwein, and, in the final phase of the circle's work, Julius Leber. Supporters of the Young Socialism movement of the early twenties, which sought to reform the Social Democratic Party and make it more responsive and relevant to the changed conditions of postwar German society, Mierendorff, Reichwein, and Haubach were drawn in the course of the decade to the religious-socialist ideas of philosopher-theologian Paul Tillich. By contributing to Tillich's influential Christian-Socialist journal Neue Blätter für den Sozialismus, to whose advisory board both Haubach and Reichwein also belonged, Mierendorff became a prominent socialist journalist in the Weimar Republic. With the ominous growth of National Socialism, Mierendorff through his constant and energetic attacks against Hitler and his movement, proved himself to be among the SPD's staunchest and most active opponents of the Nazis. At one time he organized twelve mass rallies throughout Germany within a single week.\(^5\) Elected to

the Reichstag in 1930, his influence and reputation within the party and with the public steadily increased. Soon after Hitler's Machtergreifung in 1933, however, Mierendorff was among those who disappeared during the first great wave of arrests. In 1938, after five excruciating years of imprisonment, Mierendorff was released, his political will supposedly broken. 6

Theo Haubach, a very close friend of Mierendorff and a student of Karl Jaspers in Heidelberg, had also been a militant opponent of National Socialism in the years before 1933. As Harald Poelchau notes, Haubach was "somewhat military in his manner" and "through and through a political fighter." 7 He was an inspiring speaker and a talented political organizer. Although considered a specialist in foreign affairs for the social-democratic Hamburger Echo, Haubach was not content with journalistic forays against the spread of Nazism. He put his political ability to work in organizing the militant street organization of the SPD, the Reichsbanner Schwarz Rot Gold, which hoped to counteract Hitler's SA and the Communist Rotfront. Through Haubach's diligence the Reichsbanner developed into a mass organization, designed to defend the beset Weimar Republic. Yet, shortly after

January 30, 1933, his suggestions for an energetic confrontation with the Nazis were rejected by a confused and weary SPD leadership. After more than a year of continual harassment by the new regime, Haubach was arrested in November 1934. He emerged two years later from the concentration camp Esterwegen-Boergermoor; his spirit, too, remained unbroken.

These men were eventually brought into contact with Helmuth von Moltke by Adolf Reichwein, the widely respected educational theorist and frequent contributor to the **Sozialistische Monatshefte** and the **Neue Blätter**. A man of keen academic and intellectual ability, Reichwein also possessed a restless sense of adventure which led him across the North

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10 In his memoirs Carl Zuckmayer reports, however, that Moltke actually first met Mierendorff and Haubach in Zuckmayer's Austrian home in the summer of 1927. He recalls that "Moltke, though bound to his Christian-conservative tradition, was already inclined toward socialism, while the German Young Socialists displayed a lively interest in the train of thought and concepts of the English Young Conservative." Zuckmayer, *Als wär's ein Stuck von mir*, Frankfurt, 1969, p. 53. Aside from this single encounter, it seems that contact between Moltke and Zuckmayer's socialist friends was not maintained in the following decade and was not reestablished until 1941.
American continent and into Asia. He had taken a great interest in the voluntary work camps, which brought together young Germans from all walks of life with the goal of overcoming class, regional, and religious antagonisms. Through them he had first met Helmut von Moltke, and, in the 1930's, contact between the two was renewed. Simultaneously, Moltke was introduced to the circle of younger socialist leaders who had gathered around Mierendorff since his release from the concentration camps. Among them were Weimar's most prominent representatives of the new postwar generation of socialists--Haubach, Leber, Gustav Dahrendorf, Emil Henk, Ludwig Schwamb, Hermann Maass, and others. Through Mierendorff Moltke was able to establish contact with the older SPD and labor leaders like Wilhelm Leuschner and Jakob Kaiser.

Among the younger socialist leaders the figure of Julius Leber was to emerge as the most imposing political force. Leber was a former Reichstag member and a tough-minded political realist. Arrested in 1933 on the steps of the Reichstag, he endured four and a half nightmarish years of SS brutality including an entire year in solitary

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12 Ger van Roon, Neuordnung, pp. 100-108.

13 Ibid., p. 227.
confinement in a darkened cell. He, like his colleagues, began to renew his old contacts. Leber, like Mierendorff, maintained close ties with Leuschner and was also in contact with Fritz von der Schulenburg who served as an important liaison between the later military conspirators and the major civilian groups. But Leber's impact on the circle of friends around Moltke and Yorck was felt only indirectly until the final weeks of 1943. Although he was kept informed of the activities of the group and was favorably inclined toward its work, Leber tended to remain somewhat aloof, skeptical of what seemed an overly theoretical approach of the Kreisau group. It was only after January 1944, as the circle became increasingly involved with the leading military conspirators around Claus von Stauffenberg, that Leber's role within the circle began to expand.

The hub of the expanding resistance circle to which these socialist leaders attached themselves in 1940-41 was represented, remarkably enough, by the friendship of two young Prussian noblemen. While Moltke and Yorck were the bearers of old and respected Prussian names and were justly proud of their respective family heritages, both were far from the stereotyped East-Elbian aristocrat. Moltke realized


that aristocratic privilege no longer had a place in German society and thus opposed the preferential financial aid given to noble estate owners by the government. His intense concern with socioeconomic problems and their political consequences led him during the bitter depression years to help found and organize the Loewenberger Arbeitsgemeinschaft in Silesia and the voluntary work camps associated with it.16 Through these camps Moltke hoped, as FitzGibbon eloquently phrases it,

that thus a group of people would be created who, though they might have nothing else in common, would be free of the narrow political and social strait-jacket which is the curse of the century, men who would respect one another's humanity and who therefore might provide the seed for a kinder and more intelligent society in which self-interest would assume its proper, subordinate place.17

To the astonishment of his Junker peers the independent Moltke, in a fashion reminiscent of Tolstoy, divided a portion of his estate among the local peasants,18 and even allowed himself to be photographed with hammer and sickle, though he was by no means enamoured with Communism.19 From his British mother, Dorothy Rose Innes, Moltke had early developed an interest and deep respect for the democratic principles and

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17 Constantine FitzGibbon, 20 July, p. 105.
19 Interview with Countess von Moltke, Bad Godesberg, January 16, 1970.
traditions associated with the Anglo-Saxon world. Thus, while recognizing its faults and weaknesses, Moltke remained in support of the troubled Weimar Republic and was, of course, an implacable anti-Nazi. His feelings were certainly no secret, and consequently the judicial career for which he had prepared was closed to him after January 30, 1933.

Moltke opened a private international law practice in Berlin, through which he was often able to aid those persecuted by the Nazis. In order to maintain contacts outside the increasingly stifling atmosphere of Hitler's Germany, he prepared for the British law examinations in 1935. With the fatherly assistance of Lionel Curtis, a close friend of his mother's family, Moltke was introduced to influential circles in Great Britain, and England became a second home for him. In 1938, as the international situation was ominously sliding from one crisis into another, Moltke gained admittance to the English

20 Ger van Roon, Neuordnung, p. 65.

21 Aside from his outspoken criticism of Hitler and the Nazis before January 30, 1933, Moltke often demonstrated his opposition to the regime through gestures which today might seem inconsequential but were in the totalitarian system overt and dangerous acts. For details see: A German of the Resistance. The Last Letters of Count Helmuth James von Moltke, ed. Lionel Curtis, London, 1946, p. 13. Dr. Paulus van Husen surmises that Moltke and Yorck were able to show their opposition to some degree because of their position in Prussian society. "Moltke and Yorck were--besides Bismarck--the two names which represented Prussian tradition." To take action against them, the Nazis would jeopardize the so-called "spirit of Potsdam," which they had so abused. Paulus van Husen, "Report on my participation in the enterprise of the 20, July 1944," unpublished report, 1945.
Bar. 22 After the outbreak of the war, Moltke became an advisor on international law to the German High Command, and also established contacts with leading resistance figures. Among them was Count Peter Yorck von Wartenburg. 23

Peter Yorck was the highly educated descendant of a noble Prussian family with a tradition of social responsibility and intellectual activity. The family was long known for its appreciation of philosophy and the arts, and among its illustrious acquaintances had been artists and philosophers like Rubenstein, Liszt, Hegel, Schelling, Tieck, and Dilthey. But above all, it was Feldmarschall Yorck von Wartenburg who brought the family its most widespread notability. It was he who disobeyed the King of Prussia by signing the Treaty of Tauroggen with Russia in 1812 thereby setting the stage for the Wars of Liberation. 24 This tradition of responsible opposition remained a significant influence within the family, and its implications for the situation in Germany after 1933 were not lost on Peter Yorck.

Yorck had studied law in Bonn, but because of his grasp of economics and finance he chose a career in the civil service. In Breslau he served as an important advisor to the

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23Ger van Roon, Neuordnung, p. 214.
24Ibid., p. 77.
Silesian administration, and, in 1938, he became an influential advisor to the Reich Commission for Prices in Berlin. For Peter Yorck, who was more closely bound to his Silesian-Prussian heritage than Moltke, "foreign domination, whether from without or within, was unbearable." He viewed National Socialism with its macabre inhumanity and monstrous perversion of German life as an odious stain on the honor and decency of his fatherland. He deep aversion to the Nazis had developed steadily since 1933, but the infamous Reichskristallnacht ignited his loathing into determination to act against the regime. After a short visit to the newly incorporated Sudetenland in 1938, where he witnessed National Socialist occupation methods at close range, Yorck assembled a group of anti-Nazi friends and relatives. These included Nikolaus Graf Üxküll, Berthold Graf Schenk von Stauffenberg, Fritz Graf von der Schulenburg, Caesar von Hofacker, and like-minded associates from economic and administrative circles including Otto Ehrensberger, Hermann Abs, Günther Schmölders, and Albrecht von Kessel. They often met in Yorck's small house in Berlin and at his estates of Kauern and Klein Oels in

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26 Interview with Countess Marion Yorck von Wartenburg, Berlin, April 7, 1970.
Silesia. The former group, with the very notable addition of Claus von Stauffenberg, was to form the heart of what was later to be labeled by the Gestapo the "Grafenkreis" (circle of counts), while several of the latter group were to perform important services as technical advisors to the Kreisau Circle in the field of economic policy. The work of this circle around Yorck was upset in 1939 by the outbreak of the war, and only after returning from the Poland campaign was he once again able to turn to the incredibly difficult and dangerous task of organizing responsible opposition in moments of national triumph. It was then, after a chance meeting and a lively exchange of letters in the early months of 1940, that the friendship between Peter Yorck and Helmuth von Moltke was renewed.

As this close personal friendship matured, it formed the solid foundation upon which the Kreisau Circle was built.

During 1940-41 new contacts were made and old ones intensified. Along with the socialists, Moltke and Yorck drew into the circle a distinguished group of responsible men


28 Ibid., p. 215. Moltke and Yorck had been acquainted with one another for some time, though the contacts between them were few until 1940.
with backgrounds in various aspects of public administration. In the fall of 1940 Theodor Steltzer, until 1933 a state councilman in Schleswig-Holstein, was introduced to Moltke. Steltzer was to become a principle figure in formulating the cultural and ecumenical facets of the Kreisau work. However, until 1941, the circle was to remain a loose group of friends, a Freundekreis, bound together by their mutual abhorrence to National Socialism, but as yet without a clear conception of how best to translate their rejection into meaningful action.29

Hans Lukaschek, the former governor of Upper Silesia who had been forced out by the Nazis in 1933 for his refusal to suppress a Catholic newspaper, also belonged to this loose Freundekreis in 1940.30 His unshakable devotion to the Catholic Church had made him politically "unreliable" for the National Socialists, and after his retirement from public office in 1933 he turned to a private law practice in Breslau. This brought about numerous professional ties with Moltke which led, after 1938, to extensive discussions of the political situation.31 His ample knowledge of government on the


30 Ger van Roon, Neuordnung, p. 119.

state or Land level drawn from years of experience was to be a valuable contribution to the plans of the Kreisau Circle.

Lukaschek's close friend Paulus van Husen was also brought into the growing group around Moltke and Yorck in 1940. In distinction to the pervasive youthful character of the circle (nearly all the Kreisauers were between thirty and forty years of age), Husen, like Lukaschek, Steltzer, and Father Augustin Roesch, belonged to the generation of Germans that had reached maturity before the outbreak of the First World War. He had studied law and political science in Munich, Münster, Geneva, and Oxford before the Great War and in the postwar years had served as a member of the Polish-German Commission created by the League of Nations to guarantee minority rights in areas of highly mixed population. In 1940 Husen arrived in Berlin, summoned to a staff position in the Wehrmacht which was later to prove important for the work of

388. These documents provide a wealth of information concerning the 20th of July and the figures involved in the events that led to it. One must, however, use considerable caution in dealing with these reports, since they are, in fact, the work of the Gestapo and were intended for a vengeful Hitler.

32 Moltke, Yorck, Trott, Haeften, König, Delp, Gerstenmaier, and Einsiedel had not yet reached the age of forty by July 20, 1944. Of these men, the first six were dead before their fortieth birthdays. Reichwein, Mierendorff, Haubach, and Peters were in their forties in 1944. Of them, only Peters lived to be fifty, and Mierendorff was the victim of an allied air raid in December 1943. Leber, Husen, and Roesch were in their early fifties, while Steltzer and Lukaschek were both born in 1885.
the circle in 1944. Here he came into contact with Helmuth von Moltke and soon was integrated into the expanding circle, bringing with him an extensive knowledge of the theoretical and practical aspects of international law. 33

Moltke's cousin Carl Dietrich von Trottha and his friend Horst von Einsiedel were also active in the circle in 1940-41. Both had enthusiastically participated in the German youth movement and the work organizations associated with the Loewenberger project, and both had studied in Breslau under the unique conditions found in the universities of the Eastern border provinces of post-Versailles Germany. In the universities of these frontier zones, where Germans and non-Germans lived and worked side by side, the role of the national state was discussed with fervor. As Hans Rothfels points out:

Supranational and federalistic solutions were here most seriously discussed, a separation of nationality from politics for which the form of cultural autonomy offered itself. . . . The whole stress of these efforts circled round the problem of peace between peoples as they only sound basis for peace between states. Fundamentally, the affirmation of a divine order was sought which would assure the dignity of the individual and the family, the dignity of all work, . . . and the dignity of every national community, so supplying an inner impetus to a new national and international society. 34

33 Ger van Roon, Neuordnung, pp. 196-198.
The effects of this background are clearly reflected in the later Kreisau program and helped to build common ground for cooperation with the socialists.

Trotha and Einsiedel were highly trained and qualified in matters of economic theory and organization, and Einsiedel, a former SPD member and acquaintance of Reichwein, was to become one of the leading figures in formulating the Kreisau economic plans. Trotha, from his position in the Reich Economics Ministry, and Einsiedel, a member of the Reich Economic Group for the Chemical Industry, had made beginnings at organizing resistance cells within their respective ministries. Both had established contacts with Arvid Harnack, the Communist resistance leader associated with the famous spy ring, the "Rote Kapelle" or "Red Orchestra." Their contributions to the circle's work were to lie exclusively within the programmatic phase of the circle's development.

During April and May of 1941 two important additions were made to the circle: Adam von Trott zu Solz and Hans-Bernd von Haeften, both of the Foreign Office. Moltke had met Trott in England during the 1930's where the latter had

35 Ger van Roon, Neuordnung, pp. 91 and 97. The Rote Kapelle (Red Chapel or Red Orchestra) was the name given by the Gestapo to a group of communists at work in Göring's air Ministry. The group, headed by Arvid Harnack and Harro Schulze-Boysen, actually transmitted military information to the Soviet Union until the ring was uncovered in August, 1942. None of the Kreisauers who established contacts with this group were involved in its activities.
studied as a Rhodes scholar at Oxford. Actually, he spent much of the 1930's traveling abroad. Furthermore, although trained for the legal profession, Trott was also very interested in philosophy, especially in Hegel. By 1938, despite his youth, he had been drawn toward the center of German resistance circles, standing in close contact with Carl Goerdeler, Ludwig Beck, Hjalmar Schacht, and Wilhelm Leuschner, and had acted as their representative in England where he was granted interviews with several prominent English politicians and diplomats, Lord Halifax and Lord Lothian being among them.\(^{36}\) After the outbreak of the war, Trott again acted as a spokesman for the German resistance in confidential talks in the United States with various British and American diplomatic spokesmen.\(^{37}\) The remarkable young Adam von Trott, who possessed contacts with the major resistance groups as well as with prominent diplomats, was to become an important figure in Kreisau's inner circle and came to be the circle's expert on foreign affairs.

Another foreign policy specialist was Hans-Bernd von Haeften, who, like Trott, had also been an exchange student


in England and joined the Foreign Office in 1933. Due to his membership in the Protestant Confessing Church and his repeated refusal to join the Nazi party, his position remained precarious, and this prevented him later from ever journeying to Kreisau. However, his conceptions of a new foreign policy, which were often presented formally to the circle by his friend Trott, were a considerable aid in the Kreisau discussions, and his projected reorganization of the Foreign Office contributed to the overall concrete planning for X-Day. 38

Hans von Haeften was a man of devout religious conviction and delicate physical constitution. His courageous spiritual and physical struggle under the intense unremitting pressures brought about by his role in the planning and execution of X-Day belongs to the central theme of the circle's development in the first six hectic months of 1944.

Hans Peters, another of Moltke's friends with a career in law and public life, was also integrated into the circle in 1941. Peters had known Moltke from the Loewenberger days of the late 1920's and the two had met off and on thereafter. Then in 1941 both men found themselves in Berlin; Peters drafted as a staff officer into Göring's Luftwaffe and Moltke called as an advisor on international law to the Supreme Armed Forces Command (OKW). Within the Luftwaffe ministry

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Peters was in contact with Harro Schulze-Boysen and other members of the Communist "Rote Kapelle" group, but his contribution to the German resistance movement was to lie in his Kreisau work with Kulturpolitik and the shaping of a new German society purged of Nazism. The introduction of Moltke to Count Preysing, the Catholic Bishop of Berlin, was also an important service of Peters', for with Moltke's visit to Bishop Preysing in September, 1941, the third major element in the complex composition of the Kreisau Circle was introduced: the Christian Churches. 39

Following close upon the heels of Moltke's September visit to Bishop Preysing came a second important contact with the Catholic Church. Father Augustin Rösch, the Father Provincial of the Bavarian Jesuits, had arrived in Berlin for discussions with the Army High Command in October, when he was directed by a friend to Moltke's tiny apartment in the Derfflingerstrasse. The Nazi campaign against the Churches was at its height, and Rösch, who sought to protect his Church and clerical order, expressed interest in Moltke's ideas concerning resistance activity. In December, after being visited in Munich by Moltke, the Jesuit Father was again in Berlin, where he joined Steltzer, Yorck, and others in preparing for the first of the large meetings at Kreisau. 40

At the same time Father Lothar König, Rösch's indefatigable young secretary, was also brought into the circle, becoming a trusted courier between Father Rösch and the circle's active core in Berlin. König continued to perform in this capacity until shortly before July 20, 1944. 41

Not only Catholics were won for the Kreisau work; efforts to enlist support from the Protestant camp also proved successful. Harald Poelchau, a young Lutheran theologian and chaplain in Berlin's somber Tegel prison, was brought to Moltke by Hans von Haeften. 42 Poelchau had studied with Paul Tillich in Marburg and Frankfurt and adhered to Tillich's concept of religious socialism. During his considerable interest in theological and social matters, Poelchau readily accepted an invitation to work with the Kreisau group considering questions of Kulturpolitik. 43 He was among those who took part in the first large conference at Kreisau in May of 1942 when cultural policy and church-state relations were discussed.

As a result of the success of that first Kreisau gathering, Moltke asked Father Rösch to supply a representative

41 Ibid., pp. 200-204.
42 Interview with Dr. Harald Poelchau, Berlin, April 6, 1970.
of his order who was well-versed in sociological matters for the next large meeting. Father Alfred Delp, who had served as a consultant on social questions on the editorial staff of the Jesuit paper *Stimmen der Zeit*, was his choice. Delp was a very fortunate selection, for within a very short time he was to become one of the intellectual leaders of the Kreisau Circle. By the end of July, 1941, Delp had met with Mierendorff and other socialist leaders, and after initial misgivings and uneasiness on both sides, a mutual rapport of friendship and respect was quickly established.  

His very important contributions to the Kreisau work were to lie in the philosophical and social sphere, and Theodor Steltzer considered him one of the most revolutionary members of the circle. Delp was to play a prominent role in the two remaining large conferences of the circle at Kreisau and in numerous smaller meetings of the group's inner core in Berlin.

Finally, in late 1942 Eugen Gerstenmaier was introduced into the circle by Trott and Haeften. Gerstenmaier, who later became president of the West German parliament, was a member of the Foreign Affairs Office of the German Evangelical Church and served as the Berlin representative of Bishop

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Wurm, the Protestant bishop of Württemberg. When the war broke out, Gerstenmaier was asked by his church to care for the spiritual needs of foreign workers brought into the Reich. Beginning in late 1942, he took part in the frequent discussions in Berlin and at the final two large gatherings at Kreisau. He was considered a representative of the Protestant viewpoint in cultural questions and also contributed to the circle's foreign policy conceptions. Gerstenmaier soon became the circle's most outspoken activist, and his activities in the confused and tension-filled period between Moltke's arrest and July 20, 1944, are of considerable significance in the history of the Kreisau Circle.

These, then, were the men who together made for the remarkably complex character of the Kreisau Circle. In light of this unique and somewhat paradoxical composition, Hermann Graml's description of the circle as a "fascinating group of highly unorthodox Christian socialists, socialist Christians, and Christian socialist aristocrats" seems quite apt. Fitz-Gibbon, however, claims that the Kreisau Circle was "never in any way a political party or even a conspiracy," but "a cross-section of what should have been the German ruling class"

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which set out amid the nihilism of National Socialist Germany to devise "the fundamental principles on which a moral and cultural renaissance might be founded." Thus their thought, while being politically oriented, was at the same time ethical, philosophical, and theological. "Indeed," FitzGibbon concludes, "it would not be an exaggeration to say that the Kreisau Circle was as much a religious movement . . . as a political one." Gerhard Ritter likewise characterizes the Kreisau activity as a "religious protest against National Socialism and its brutal rule of force." The Kreisauers in fact are called the "conscientious objectors of the Resistance" by John Wheeler-Bennett. He praises them for "the distinction of their principles and the high merit of their virtue," but he suggests that they failed "to take cognizance of Christ militant."  

However, as Margaret Boveri writes, "it is clear that for these men Politik represented only a component of what was to be done and they did not believe it possible to combat the evil of National Socialism with only political means. Therefore, they did not think primarily of a Staatsstrech."  

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48 Constantine FitzGibbon, 20 July, pp. 103 and 112.
51 Margret Boveri, Verrat, p. 65.
Gerstenmaier explains the Kreisau position further:

Military matters were not their department. They were neither army commanders nor did they possess any other organized power. Their field was thought, their task, the drafting of a new and just order, their will, to overcome the ideology of the total state, their goal, to rebuild Germany in the spirit of Christianity and social justice and to integrate it into a united Europe.52

For Kreisau, then, the essential task was to prepare the intellectual, spiritual, and practical foundation for "die Zeit danach," the time after the fall of the Nazi regime.53 Thus, Wheeler-Bennett correctly states that Moltke, Yorck, and their friends felt it "more important to prepare for the sequel than to hasten the catastrophe," and that to them "the conflict was not against a regime so much as against the perversion of the human spirit and the dignity of man." However, this approach to resistance activity, as we shall see, by no means prevented the circle from playing an active and significant part in the events of the 20th of July. Furthermore, his conclusion that the Kreisau program was "little more than an amalgam of Prussian Christian Socialism,"54 is sadly superficial. In a letter smuggled to his British friend Lionel


54 John Wheeler-Bennett, Nemesis, p. 546.
Curtis in 1942, Moltke presented his conception of Kreisau's basic role within the German resistance:

We can only expect to get our people to overthrow this regime of terror and horror if we are able to show a picture beyond the terrifying and hopeless immediate future. A picture which will make it worthwhile for the disillusioned people to strive for, to work for, to start again and to believe in . . . this is a question of religion and education, of ties to work and family, of the proper relation of responsibility and rights. 55

The Kreisau drafts of 1942 and 1943 present in broad outline the synthesis of these factors and represent a reflection of a new order not only for Germany, but for Europe as a whole. As Mother Mary Alice Gallin has pointed out in her study on the ethics of the German resistance, "there is nothing particularly 'Prussian' about such a program; rather it is universal and Christian in the best sense of the term." 56

CHAPTER II

THE PROGRAM: THE CIRCLE'S PROGRAMMATIC PHASE

During the winter of 1941-42 Moltke, Yorck, and their friends undertook the systematic study of political, social, and cultural topics, from which, it was hoped, a unified and coherent program for a future Germany could be molded. Under the sinister and oppressive conditions of National Socialist Germany, where the Gestapo haunted the lives of every "Volksgenosse," the organization of such an enterprise was subject to immense hardships and dangers and demanded the most rigid security precautions. In a letter smuggled to Lionel Curtis in 1942, Moltke wrote:

Can you imagine what it means to work as a group when you cannot use the telephone, when you are unable to post letters, when you cannot tell the names of your closest friends to your other friends for fear that one of them might be caught and might divulge the names under pressure.1

For this reason much of the Kreisau work was done in small groups which met mostly in Berlin and Munich, each concentrating on relevant questions within particular areas of social, economic, cultural, or foreign policy.2 As a rule,

1Helmuth James von Moltke, Last Letters, ed. Lionel Curtis, p. 29.
2Margret Boveri, Der Verrat, v. II, p. 64.
the work of these groups was so independent that their participants knew only those who were directly involved in their own small group. Poelchau, who worked with those considering cultural-political questions and who attended the first large conference at Kreisau, learned only much later the true extent of the circle's membership. In this way the knowledge of Kreisau's experts (Sachverständiger) in technical fields such as economic and agricultural planning could be drawn upon without necessarily bringing these men into the center of the circle. Furthermore, as a necessary security procedure, only those persons who were particularly qualified to contribute to the discussion of a certain topic were informed of the meetings. Thus, at each of the meetings, whether large or small, the participants varied according to the topic under consideration. While the circle acquired its name from the three large conferences held at Kreisau during 1942-43, the foundations for these gatherings had

3 Harald Poelchau, Die Letzten Stunden, p. 108.
6 The appellation "Kreisau Circle" was never actually used by Moltke, Yorck, and their friends. In discussions the group was referred to simply as "the friends" or "we." Interviews with Frau Barbara von Haeften, Heidelberg, May 27, 1970, Frau Rosemarie Reichwein, Berlin, July 15, 1970, and
been painstakingly laid in the smaller meetings, primarily in Berlin, where the apartments of Moltke and more often Yorck, served as the "real home" of the circle.  

Only Moltke and Yorck, who together served as the "business managers" of the circle, knew the names of all those involved in the Kreisau work and had an overall view of the circle's activities. However, the German-American historian Peter Hoffmann, by stressing the independence of the individual Kreisau members, rightly challenges the generally accepted conception of the nature of Moltke's leadership within the circle. All too often the ideas and attitudes of this truly extraordinary man are accepted as those of the entire circle. Yet, Hoffmann goes too far when he claims that the Kreisau Circle had "no real leader." Until his arrest in January 1944, Helmuth von Moltke was the prominent Countess Yorck von Wartenburg, Berlin, April 7, 1970. According to Roger Manvell and Heinrich Fraenkel, the term was first coined by Roland Freisler, the infamous Nazi judge of the Volksgerichtshof during the trials of the conspirators following the 20th of July, 1944. Roger Manvell and Heinrich Fraenkel, The Men Who Tried to Kill Hitler, New York, 1966, p. 206.

7Eugen Gerstenmaier, "Helmuth von Moltke," Reden und Aufsätze, v. II, Stuttgart, 1962, p. 234. The circle's "real home" was found in the Hortensienstrasse 50 in Berlin-Lichterfelde in the small house in which Marion, the wife of Count Peter Yorck was always a friendly and helpful hostess.

8Ger van Roon, Neuordnung, p. 251.

personality of the Kreisau Circle, but he was, as Bodo Scheurig indicates, "primus inter pares." He neither monopolized the drafting of the circle's program, though much of his thought is reflected in the Kreisau documents, nor did he consider himself in a position to prescribe the activities of the other members. Thus, van Roon's opinion that Moltke "could be strict and allowed no 'Seitensprüinge'" and that "the others submitted to this leadership" leaves a false impression of the relationship which existed between the members of the circle. Moltke's leadership was essentially derived from his role as an initiator, organizer, and an energetic and skilled coordinator.

The numerous meetings in Yorck's small house in Berlin were almost always conducted late in the evening and usually did not adjourn until the early morning hours. Physical and mental exhaustion from a full day's work in their respective offices and the unremitting pressure concomitant with their resistance activities often proved to be considerable obstacles to Moltke, Yorck, and their friends when they gathered for discussion of the prearranged topic. While Yorck's calm resolve and Mierendorff's gregarious warmth consistently

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emerged as antidotes to the omnipresent tension, Moltke's determination to accomplish the evening's goals, to reach definite conclusions, and to record them in written form provided the necessary stimulus and direction for the discussions. When his friends would stray from the business at hand, as Mierendorff in his affable manner was apt to do, Moltke would soon begin to drum his long, slender fingers nervously on the table before him, obviously impatient with the digressions. As Countess Yorck later mused, it was as if Helmuth Moltke somehow knew just how little time they all had.12

By late 1941 Moltke and Yorck had won representatives of both Christian confessions as well as labor and socialist leaders for the circle, and it was at this juncture, as Steltzer explains, that the group's work entered a new and more significant phase.

It was no longer a matter of theoretical studies, but of concrete preparatory work for a definite situation [the collapse of the Nazi regime], which can be characterized as political general-staff work. It was necessary to fix in black and white a type of program, which could be presented to the different Christian, conservative, labor, and socialist groups not yet compromised by National Socialism.13

For this purpose Count von Moltke and his friends met at Kreisau on the weekend of Pentecost in May of 1942. That initial meeting was exploratory, and whether more conferences on the same scale would be held depended on its results. Its success encouraged the group to schedule a second conference in the following October, and finally a third again at Pentecost in 1943. During these three meetings at the Moltke estate the Kreisau program was formally drafted.

The heterogeneous nature of the circle precluded a dogmatic or doctrinaire approach to the discussions, and the program was, therefore, the result of compromise and mutual agreement. There were no votes and no majority decisions, only voluntary agreements among the individual members.14

As Eugen Gerstenmaier recalls, "what resulted was not perfect, [but] it did, however, create a broad basis for all."15

This manner of decision-making is reflective of the highly flexible nature of the circle and has prompted the Dutch historian Ger van Roon to describe the group as an Überkreis. Not only did this loose circle of men represent diverse and influential elements within German society, but also possessed contacts with a wide range of groups within the German resistance. The Kreisauers were, indeed, independent personalities,
but their common spiritual and intellectual center, nevertheless, remained the Kreisau Circle.16

As representatives of all the circle's various components assembled for the first time at Kreisau in May of 1942, the programmatic phase of the circle's work yielded its first tangible results. The principle topic was to be Kulturpolitik, a topic well prepared by previous discussions of both an organizational and thematic nature dating back to late 1941.17 The conference at Kreisau was held in the security of the Berghaus, where the central theme of cultural policy was broken down into discussions dealing primarily with the relationship between church and state and educational reform. The Protestant Steltzer and the Catholic Father Rösch discussed church-state relations. Hans Peters, drawing upon his experience in international law, reviewed the question of the existing concordat between the Reich and the Papacy. Moltke then brought up the possibilities for educational reform of the German high school system, and a paper by Reichwein on pedagogical questions was considered.18 After deliberating on these reports, Steltzer and Rösch were asked

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17 Ger van Roon, Neuordnung, p. 252.
18 Theodor Steltzer, Von Deutscher Politik, p. 74.
to draft a summary of the discussion results which would emphasize the points of agreement. The draft was discussed and revised by their colleagues, and a new copy was typed up by Countess Moltke, who, at the close of the weekend, concealed it carefully in the attic of the Schloss. Thus a procedure was established which was followed at all subsequent meetings at Kreisau.\(^\text{19}\)

In the following weeks and months numerous smaller but important meetings took place which relayed the results of the conference at Kreisau to the different groups represented within the circle. In June, Moltke learned from Fathers Rösch and König that the influential Archbishop of Munich Michael Cardinal von Faulhaber, had been informed of the meeting and had approved of its results. In Berlin Bishop Preysing was also being drawn closer to the circle. Cooperation from the Protestant Church was also confirmed in June, when Bishop Theophil Wurm, considered by many to be the head of the resistance forces within the German Evangelical Church,\(^\text{20}\) visited Moltke in Berlin. These contacts with the bishops, whose support was considered essential for a meaningful continuation of the Kreisau work, were progressively

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\(^\text{19}\) Interview with Countess von Moltke, Bad Godesberg, January 16, 1970.

\(^\text{20}\) This is particularly the case after the arrest of Martin Niemöller. See Karl Schumacher, *Theophil Wurm in den Krisen und Entscheidungen seiner Zeit*, Bad Cannstatt, 1958; also Ger van Roon, *Neuordnung*, p. 241.
intensified so that by mid-1942 influential persons within both Christian confessions were familiar and favorably impressed with the basic outline of the circle's program.21

Also during the summer of 1942 Mierendorff introduced Moltke to Wilhelm Leuschner, the former Deputy Chairman of the General German Trade Union Alliance. Leuschner, who had assembled many of his union and socialist friends around his small factory in Berlin, had used the pretext of "business trips" to establish a net of resistance cells throughout Germany. He also served as an important link between the labor movement and the military conspirators around General Beck.22 Moltke and Leuschner agreed that the latter should have a representative at Kreisau, and, in July, Hermann Maass, a close associate of Leuschner and a former leader of the socialist youth organizations,23 assumed this task.24

21Ger van Roon, Neuordnung, pp. 240-242. Van Roon claims that "both churches had been won for the Kreisau program." Dr. van Husen, however, feels that this is somewhat of an exaggeration. Interview with Dr. Paulus van Husen, Münster, April 16, 1970. The Kreisauers could, indeed, count on support from bishops of both denominations, but it should be remembered that Bishops Wurm and Preysing, for example, were also in close contact with Carl Goerdeler, Hans Rothfels, The German Opposition to Hitler, p. 85.


24Ger van Roon, Neuordnung, p. 231.
Throughout the summer months preparatory talks were conducted for a second conference at Kreisau. In August these preliminary discussions were climaxed by a meeting at which Leuschner, Mierendorff, and Maass agreed with Fathers Rösch, Delp, and König that the work begun at Kreisau in May could be endorsed by the groups they represented. Having completed the final organizational details during September, Count and Countess von Moltke once again received weekend visitors at Kreisau.  

At this second meeting at Kreisau the structure of the state and the economy were the central themes, with Steltzer, Gerstenmaier, Delp, Einsiedel, Reichwein, Maass, Yorck, and Moltke taking part. Constitutional considerations concerning a federalistic structure of the state, discussed by Moltke and Steltzer, dominated the two-day meeting. Economic discussions, led by Einsiedel, produced only a short introductory statement to the Kreisau conception of a new economic order.  

The third meeting at Kreisau began on June 12, 1943, and ended two days later, once again coinciding with the Pentecost holiday. At this final meeting at Kreisau the economic aspects of the circle's program were reconsidered as well as questions regarding foreign policy and the

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26 Ibid., pp. 253-54.
punishment of war criminals. The basis for the economic deliberations had been laid primarily by Einsiedel and Trotha, though Günter Schmölders had also contributed an economic paper at the request of Moltke and Yorck.

The three conferences at the Moltke estate were conducted in a more relaxed atmosphere than the clandestine meetings in Berlin. A reserved holiday mood pervaded the discussions, for pleasant walks in the Silesian countryside and convivial conversation were interspersed among the lengthy debates in the Berghaus. A relationship of mutual trust existed between the Moltkes and the servants who occasionally entered the Berghaus, and a refreshing sense of security and openness was therefore enjoyed by the guests.

From these conferences in Silesia and subsequent smaller meetings in Berlin during the summer of 1943 ten documents remain, which together comprise the Kreisau program. A thorough and penetrating examination of the circle's programmatic efforts deserve an entirely independent study.

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27 Ibid., pp. 254-55.
28 Günter Schmölders, Personalistischer Sozialismus, p. 69.
29 Interview with Countess von Moltke, Bad Godesberg, January 16, 1970.
30 The best comparative study of the programs of the various resistance groups is to be found in Graml, Mommsen, Reichhart, and Wolf, Der deutsche Widerstand gegen Hitler,
Still, within the bounds of a presentation of the program in outline form, certain interpretive comments are appropriate. The program may, in general terms, be broken into three primary categories: **Kulturpolitik**, with emphasis on church-state relations and educational reform (discussed at the initial conference at Kreisau); the state, its structure and position within the European community of nations (considered at the second Kreisau meeting); and the reshaping of the economic system (the subject of the final large conference).

In the realm of **Kulturpolitik** the Kreisau statement of Basic Principles emphasizes "the freedom of conscience, the dignity of the individual, protection of family life and an organic development of communal life."\(^31\) The public practice of the Christian religion was to be guaranteed, and the organizations of the Churches were to be restored, as were religious publications and films. Autonomy and self-administration were to be assured to the German Evangelical and Roman Catholic Churches.\(^32\) As for the relationship between church

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and state, the "Basic Principles for the New Order," dated August 9, 1943, declared: "The Government of the Reich welcomes the determined cooperation of the two great Churches in the work of shaping public life."\(^3\) With this statement, as van Roon correctly asserts, the desire of the Kreisau Circle for the Christian permeation of the foundations of public life is clearly expressed.\(^4\) Indeed, the "Declaration of Basic Principles," a product of the first meeting at Kreisau, commences with the proclamation:

We see in Christianity the most valuable force for the religious and moral renewal of the people, for the overcoming of hatred and falsehood, for the rebuilding of the Western world, for the peaceful coexistence of nations.\(^5\)

In a later draft this idea is elaborated:

The point of departure is man's obligation to recognize the Divine Order which supports both his inner being and outward existence. Only when this Divine Order has been made the standard of relations between individuals and between states can the disorder of the age be overcome and a genuine condition of peace brought about. The internal reorientation of the Reich is the basis for the achievement of a just and lasting peace.\(^6\)

The specific legal relationship between the Reich and the two major confessions was to be settled "on a friendly understanding with the two Churches." In the meantime, the future

\(^3\)"Grundsätze für die Neuordnung," August 9, 1943, in van Roon, Neuordnung, p. 565.

\(^4\)Ibid., p. 354.

\(^5\)Ibid., p. 561.

\(^6\)Ibid., p. 561.
Regional Commissioners (governors) were to establish prompt relations with the representatives of the Churches. Evangelical and Catholic primates were to be appointed to negotiate with the national Government through the Reich Chancellor, while the remaining administrative matters in the area of church-state relations were to be handled by the Minister of the Interior. 37

At the first Kreisau conference Poelchau and Reichwein suggested the establishment of a "German Christendom" to which all Christians might belong regardless of denomination. This proposal was motivated by the desire to insure the collaboration of the two Churches on all administrative levels, thereby securing a truly ecumenical approach to the reconstruction of German society. Its goal, however, was not a theological merger of the two, for within the circle there reigned a unanimous loathing of the "positive Christianity" espoused and artificially nourished by the Nazis. 38 The proposal, though not formally rejected, was not incorporated into the circle's program.

The Kreisau conception of church-state relations was, then, less liberal than that of the Weimar Republic with its

38 Interview with Dr. Harald Poelchau, Berlin, April 6, 1970.
insistence on separation of the two spheres. Although, as Gerhard Ritter notes, "the term 'Church-State' is avoided," the Kreisau Circle sought a fundamental relationship of cooperation between the spiritual and temporal institutions of society, which corresponded to the cooperative ideal of Catholic social teaching as well as Lutheran conceptions. The socialists within the circle were able to support this arrangement because, as Husen explains, "it was absolutely clear between us that our plan had nothing to do with 'clericalism.' In concordance with the churches the participation of clergymen in the political life was thought of as undesirable and to be avoided."40

However, the Kreisau emphasis on the importance of a revived and reinvigorated Christianity in a post-National Socialist Germany was not unique within the German resistance movement. Indeed, the Christian Churches occupied a significant position in the plans of nearly all the major resistance groups.41 Yet as Hans Peters indicates, in no other group did Christianity ("das Christliche") represent a "fundamental building block (Wesensbaustein) of a new society."42 For

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41 Mary Alice Gallin, German Resistance to Hitler, pp. 1-79.
while practical administrative considerations demanded by the organizational planning for X-Day compelled the circle to turn logically to the established churches as the basic organizations of the Christian faith, it was the Christian ethic, the elemental moral force of Christianity, rather than its formal, organizational manifestations that inspired the hope of the Kreisauers. 43

The Kreisau drafts, therefore, stressed the public school as a Christian school, in which religious instruction according to the denominations was to be a compulsory subject. The universities were to be classified as higher schools (Hochschulen) or Reich universities, the higher schools catering to advanced technical training while the Reich universities were to be centers for research and study of a universal nature. The educational task of the university was the scholarly training of those who would perform in

43 Reflecting on the circle's conception of Christianity as well as Socialism, Countess von Moltke believes that the almost three decades that have elapsed since those meetings at Kreisau have allowed her to recognize that her husband and his friends were groping for something beyond established Christianity and Socialism. They believed, although they did not (perhaps at that point could not articulate it) that regardless of the fate of organized Christianity and formalized Socialism, these two forces would always remain vital currents in man's moral and intellectual being. Therefore, the edifice of a new Germany could not rest on solid foundations without these two cornerstones of human morality. Interview with Countess von Moltke, Bad Godesberg, January 16, 1970.
public service, and the imbuing of the necessary traits of leadership and the "highest sense of responsibility." 44

Ultimately, education, administered by the school, in cooperation with family and church, was charged with awakening and strengthening the moral powers of the individual. It was to shape:

... a decent human being who, on a religious basis, is capable of making rules of conduct consist of honesty and justice, truth and uprightness, love of his neighbor and loyalty towards his own conscience. A man so brought up will possess the maturity needed to make decisions in the consciousness of responsibility. 45

For the Kreisauers this awakening of a "consciousness of responsibility" was the crucial function of education and is the Leitmotiv of the entire Kreisau program.

This intense concern for the fate of the individual human being in an age of ever-increasing atomization and impersonal collectivization was the basic point of departure for the Kreisau drafts, and it is from this vantage point that the circle's proposals for the reconstruction of the state must be examined. Within the circle, as, indeed, in nearly all resistance groups, 46 the effects of modern

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46 Hans Mommsen, "Gesellschaftsbild und Verfassungspläne des deutschen Widerstandes," in Der deutsche Widerstand gegen Hitler, pp. 82-83.
industrial society were roundly condemned. Modern industrial society, the Kreisauers were convinced, had eroded the moral foundations of Western man by undermining the fundamental beliefs upon which a stable and just order had to be established. It was thus considered to be the ignominious creator of the alienated and insecure "mass-man," upon whose frustrations and fears Adolf Hitler had laid the foundations of the Third Reich. This mass-man felt himself, according to Steltzer, to be the victim of forces beyond his control. "He sees himself in the service of a power which he can neither escape nor trust." Uprooted from the traditional life style of his ancestors, his fundamental beliefs profoundly shaken or lost in the chaos of secularized, industrial society, modern man is left without the inner substance to resist or combat these developments and consequently "... seeks security (Geborgenheit) in the crowd." Massification is, therefore, the product of a spiritual and psychological identity crisis in modern society."47

Twentieth century mass-man, Father Delp lamented, had grown incapable of independent decisions and had come to view himself merely as "ens vegetativum et sensitivum,"

47 Theodor Steltzer, Von Deutscher Politik, pp. 61-62. See also Hannah Arendt, The Origins of Totalitarianism, New York, 1958, p. 446. "Nothing perhaps distinguished modern masses as radically from those of previous centuries as the loss of faith in a Last Judgment; the worst have lost their fear and the best have lost their hope."
Contemporary man is to a considerable degree not only godless... he has fallen into a way of life in which he is incapable of accepting God... Wherein exists this incapacity for God? It exists in the withering of certain human organs which no longer perform their normal functions. But also in the structure and form of human life which demands too much of the individual and prevents him from being himself...

The dilemma of social "massification" was viewed by Moltke and Yorck as a consequence of the dissolution of the concept of universalism following the Middle Ages and the steady advance of the modern nation-state, which, they believed, had reached its logical terminus in Hitler's totalitarian Germany. Gradually all loyalties and relationships outside the state had been curtailed and all energies employed in the service of the state, reducing the individual to an anonymous bureaucratic functionary. Not only had the emotional bond that once existed between the citizen and his state become perverted, the relationship between the individual and his neighbor had become warped. The state and its social structure had grown too complex, too impersonal, and the individual had, therefore, become progressively alienated from his society. He no longer understood his state or his place within it, and could not feel himself responsible for its actions. With the loss of his individuality mass-man had forfeited his sense of responsibility.

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The circle, however, rejected a return to traditional liberal individualism, which Steltzer felt "denied every metaphysical element and sought to construct human society on purely pragmatic grounds."\(^{50}\) Although the individual was, indeed, the focal point of the Kreisau drafts, it is an individual tempered by an awareness of responsibility for the whole of his society. This is evident in Delp's statement:

> Man always appears chiefly as an individual but never as a solitary traveler (Einzelgänger). The full realization of his being requires companionship, partnership, and a conscious existence within the natural groups. These groups (family, occupational and social organizations, Volk, and state) sustain, consolidate, and influence the life of the individual. He is always more than himself. The practice of freedom occurs within the reality and order of these groups and draws from them an expansion as well as a limitation of its possibilities.\(^{51}\)

A social and political structure of an organic nature is implied in Delp's "natural groups" as it is in Moltke's concept of small near-autonomous groups, which were intended to represent the foundations of a revolutionary governmental structure. To overcome mass existence Moltke believed that the modern state in its "mechanistic, hypertechnical form" would have to be eliminated. In its place a federal system of highly decentralized groups was to be formed. The

\(^{50}\) Theodor Steltzer, *Von Deutscher Politik*, p. 29.

\(^{51}\) Alfred Delp, *Der Mensch und die Geschichte*, Kolmar, 1943, p. 35.
isolated individual could then be reintegrated into these small manageable groups, where "man as an individual would be taken seriously" and "where there can be a reawakening of a sense of responsibility and where true fellowship can flourish."52 As van Roon indicates, these groups were not to be special interest groups but rather local organizations sharing common general interests such as a volunteer fire department, neighborhood sanitation, neighborhood kindergarten, preservation of local resources, and cultural and educational enterprises. Moltke's goal was a "social structure with largest possible number of the smallest possible groups (Gemeinschaften)." 53 In this manner Moltke and Kreisau Circle sought to shape a synthesis which was beyond individualism or collectivity and which began with developing the truly socially integrated person ("gemeinschaftsgebundene Person"). 54 Thus, as Rothfels points out, "political responsibility was first to be developed in small circles, that is, by responsible participation in recognizable neighborly units

52 Hans Mommsen, "Gesellschaftsbild und Verfassungspläne," p. 86.
53 Ger van Roon, Neuordnung, p. 403.
54 Hans Mommsen, "Gesellschaftsbild und Verfassungspläne," p. 86.
and within the framework of the tasks with which the man in
the street was familiar. 55

The men of Kreisau conceived of their task as the
creation of a system in which, as FitzGibbon states, "power
should exist in human, not numerical form, or to put it in
other terms, [in which] the people could be enabled to admin-
ister their own affairs and therefore accept that element of
responsibility without which no man can be a truly useful and
satisfied member of his society." 56 To accomplish this, in
Ritter's words, "the loosening of the fabric of state is car-
ried very far. " 57 The underlying principle of the reorgan-
ization of the Reich was an almost radical decentralization
and federalism. The Reich, while remaining the supreme
authority of the German nation, would be divided into nineteen
states (Länder), which displayed little reverence for tradi-
tional Land boundaries. To prevent the ascendency of any one
state, each Land was to have three to five million inhabitants,
thereby dismembering both Prussia and Bavaria. 58 Fritz von der
Schulenburg, whose relationship with the circle will be dealt
with in the next chapter, contributed significantly to the

55 Hans Rothfels, The German Opposition to Hitler, p. 117.
56 Constantine FitzGibbon, 20 July, p. 119.
57 Gerhard Ritter, The German Resistance. Carl Goer-
deler's Struggle against Tyranny, p. 201.
58 Ger van Roon, Neuordnung, p. 396.
circle's work in the area of territorial reorganization. He is said to have followed the principle of "as much uniform leadership at the top as necessary, as much freedom and self-responsibility of the members as possible."\(^{59}\)

The Kreisauers hoped to avoid the establishment of large political parties, which they felt had been too large, too bureaucratic, and politically irresponsible. "We were," Gerstemaier relates, "burned children, so to speak, of the Weimar party constellation and didn't wish to return to that situation."\(^{60}\) "The parties of the Weimar state," Countess von Moltke later wrote, "had led the republic ad absurdum; the inability of the Germans to work constructively within the party system led them through a one party dictatorship into the abyss."\(^{61}\) Thus, to avoid the party system, which they were convinced had led to mass dictatorship, and to foster political involvement on a grass-roots level, only local and county representatives were to be elected directly. Each citizen over the age of twenty-one was eligible to vote, but the heads of families were to be given an extra vote for


\(^{61}\)Countess Freya von Moltke, "Der Aufbau Deutschlands aus dem Gedankengut des 'Kreisauer Kreises,'" unpublished composition.
each child below voting age. Eligibility for election was restricted to a minimum age of twenty-seven, while civil servants and members of the armed forces were eliminated from candidacy. Municipal and county councils, elected directly, would then elect the state (Land) assemblies or Landtage, and these in turn would elect the national parliament or Reichstag. One half of those elected were to come from outside the electing bodies. The Landtag would then elect a governor or Landesverweser, and the Reichstag a president, or Reichsverweser, for a term of twelve years. The Reich Chancellor was to be appointed by the Reichsverweser with the approval of the Reichstag, which could also remove him from office with a qualified majority, provided a successor was simultaneously suggested. A Reich Council, consisting of the governors, the Reichstag President, the Reichsverweser, and other members appointed by him, was to serve as an upper house. It was to serve primarily as an advisory body, although it was also to have a disciplinary jurisdiction over the national and state governments.62

The formation of this federalized Reich and the revival of Christian principles were in themselves insufficient to restore man's individuality and sense of responsibility. Delp clearly recognized this.

I can preach as much as I want and deal adeptly or incompetently with people as long as I want; as long as human beings must live in shabby, subhuman conditions, most will succumb to these conditions and neither pray nor think. A fundamental change of the living conditions is needed. The twentieth century revolution acquires at last its theme and the possibility of creating new and lasting opportunities for human beings.  

It was, therefore, considered essential that man be given a greater interest, both financially and spiritually, in his work and that industry become an act of cooperation between owners and employees. To accomplish this, the government of the Reich was to promote the development of each industrial concern into an economic community. In such communities, referred to as factory unions (Betriebsgewerkschaften), the owner and the representatives of the employees would agree on a system according to which all employees would share in the control and profits of the concern. This arrangement, it was hoped, would once again awaken in the working man that pride and interest in his work which modern "massification" and impersonalization industry had so greatly diminished. Furthermore, steps were to be taken by the "economic leadership" to insure a standard of living in keeping with human

63 Alfred Delp, Im Angesicht des Todes, pp. 132-133.
64 "Grundsätzliche Erklärungen," in van Roon, Neuordnung, p. 548-549.
65 "Grundsätze für die Neuordnung," in van Roon, Neuordnung, p. 566. The industrial leadership consisted of the state, the German Trade Union, the factory unions, and the individual.
needs and dignity, for, as Trott stated, the whole of the Kreisau endeavor was an "attempt to preserve the core of personal, human integrity." Although a "German Trade Union" was foreseen, the massive, bureaucratic unions of the Weimar period were hopefully to be avoided. Therefore, the "German Trade Union" was viewed as a temporary expedient in the transitional phase and was eventually to turn over its responsibilities to the autonomous industrial communities and the state.

Aside from the formation of the decentralized and self-responsible factory unions, certain key industries such as the mining, iron, steel, fuel, power, and basic chemical concerns were to be nationalized. Further nationalization projects, however, seem to have been discouraged by the circle's economic experts. Thus, the economic system


67 Hans Mommsen, "Gesellschaftsbild und Verfassungspläne," pp. 148-149. With the exception of Mierendorff, the factory unions had been rejected by the socialists, especially Haubach, Hermann Maass, and Wilhelm Leuschner. Moltke and Yorck, on the other hand, frowned on the establishment of large trade unions of the Weimar scale. The creation of the German Trade Union, which was to exist only temporarily, was, therefore, a compromise.

68 Günter Schmölders, Personalistischer Sozialismus, pp. 51-56. Schmölders contends that the nationalization of these basic industries was a matter of grave doubt and should not be considered a definite tenet of the Kreisau economic policy. This assertion seems, however, highly unlikely since nationalization of these industries is included in every formal Kreisau document concerning the future economy.
envisaged by the Kreisau Circle may be summarized as a mixed system of "competition carried out within the framework of an industrial direction by the state, and insofar as competitive methods go, under constant supervision of the state." 69

This is, in very abbreviated form, the basic outline of the Kreisau conception of the new domestic order for Germany. But a discussion of these principles for Germany's reorganization would be only partially complete without consideration of Kreisau's plans for the development of a genuine European community after the war.

Moltke and Yorck, as earlier noted, saw in the idolatry of the modern nation state not only a constant threat to world peace, but also the chief factor in the alienation of man from his society. Therefore, just as the circle sought to loosen the control of man by the state through a system of far-reaching domestic federalism, it also conceived of a sort of international federation of federations which would allow the development of the rule of law and peace in Europe. Adam von Trott zu Solz, who might be called the foreign minister of the circle, wrote in this regard: "for us nationalism is an illusion for the masses, a tragic and frightful force which must someday be transformed into internationalism." 70


70 Hermann Graml, "Die aussenpolitischen Vorstellungen des deutschen Widerstandes," in Der deutsche Widerstand gegen Hitler, p. 45.
Throughout the Kreisau compositions, as Hermann Graml notes, "the central Leitidee is the rationalization of European foreign policy, the transformation of Europe from a continent of Machtstaaten ... into a continent with a pluralistic society of states, which would be in a position to settle its conflicts in a rational spirit."\(^{71}\) This aspect of Kreisau thought has often been characterized as sheer utopianism. Indeed, Moltke believed that "the end of the war offers a chance for a favorable reordering of the world, which mankind has not witnessed since the fall of the Medieval Church."\(^{72}\) Yet, perhaps the most eloquent expression of the Kreisau position on postwar Europe lies in Moltke's words to Lionel Curtis:

> For us Europe after the war is less a problem of frontiers and soldiers, of top-heavy organizations or grand plans, but Europe after the war is a question of how the picture of man can be established in the breasts of our fellow citizens.\(^{73}\)

The Kreisau program has been lauded for its idealism, its concern for the individual, and its internationalism, and yet condemned for its antiliberal, conservative characteristics. It has been accused of representing merely an extension

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\(^{71}\)Ibid., p. 46.

\(^{72}\)Ger van Roon, Neuordnung, p. 456. Compare Steltzer's statement: "We were convinced that in our epic something old was sinking and something new emerging." Theodor Steltzer, Sechzig Jahre Zeitgenosse, p. 160.

\(^{73}\)Helmuth James von Moltke, Last Letters, ed. Lionel Curtis, p. 28.
of the antidemocratic thought of the so-called "Conservative Revolution" of the Weimar period, and its plans for an organic reorganization of the state have been labeled "authoritarian." The men of Kreisau were, indeed, distrustful of modern mass democracy, which in Germany had not only failed dismally but had ended with the triumph of the Nazis. Gerstenmaier admits that the fiasco of those last chaotic years of the Weimar Republic had created a vivid impression on the circle's thinking, and there was little inclination to return to the risks and insecurities of Weimar parliamentarianism. It should, however, be remembered that these men were not ideologues and were by no means ideologically opposed to the practice of democracy. Mierendorff, Haubach, and Leber had, in fact, distinguished themselves in the struggle to preserve the Weimar parliamentary government. But as the Kreisauers reviewed the failure of Germany's initial experiment with Western democracy, the essential sense of personal political responsibility in public affairs, which had been accumulated through generations of democratic government in England and


75 See Hans Mommsen, "Gesellschaftsbild und Verfassungspläne."

France, seemed obviously lacking in their fellow countrymen. Political pragmatism, rather than an ideological distaste for parliamentary democracy, seemed to dictate the Kreisau efforts to impart this sense of responsibility so vital to democratic government. This public sense, they felt, could be developed most effectively through the participation of the individual in the self-administration of small, manageable groups (_Selbstverwaltung der kleinen und überschaubaren Gemeinschaften_) within an organic governmental structure.  

George Romoser has criticized the German resistance, including, of course, the Kreisau Circle, for its underestimation of "the possibility of achieving the political community through party-parliamentary methods," and one may legitimately question the indirect elections and organic nature of the Kreisau program. However, by 1943, when the final Kreisau draft was completed, Germany had been subjected to ten years of the most extensive, concentrated, and apparently effective propaganda that modern technology could muster. For ten years the Nazi Party had dominated public life, and responsibility for civil affairs had been removed from the man on the street. He had, in fact, been depoliticized.

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77 Countess von Moltke, "Der Aufbau Deutschlands aus dem Gedankengut des 'Kreisauer Kreises,'" unpublished composition.

(entpolitisier) by the totalitarian order, and to minimize the effects of these forces on the potential electorate of a postwar German government would have been to underestimate the frightening power of the totalitarian Nazi Reich. This the Kreisauers could not do. Moltke, Yorck, and their friends turned to the solutions advocated in the Kreisau program because of a particular historical situation, and the drafts must be understood as having been composed not only in the shadows of Weimar's collapse but in the abysmal isolation of Nazi Germany. From these circumstances spring not only the circle's remarkable idealism, its rather irrational hope, and even utopianism, but also its obvious shortcomings—particularly its mistrust of the masses and liberal parliamentarianism.

For a discussion of the Entpolitisierung in the totalitarian order see Hans Buchheim, Totalitäre Herrschaft. Wesen und Merkmale, Munich, 1962, pp. 83-90. Emil Henk, an active member of the resistance in socialist circles, explains how this depoliticization affected any plans for a widely based resistance movement:

It was clear: a revolutionary situation did not exist in Germany. Yes, it was even worse, it could not exist: it was unthinkable. The masses remained under pressure and remained inactive even under the great destruction of the land, the industry, and their own homes. They were lamed by terror. Under this despotism there are masses, but there are no political masses.

As for the thought of the circle's representing a continuation of the Conservative Revolution, even Romoser, who first introduced the thesis, isn't quite sure of what to make of the Kreisauers. Moltke admits he "was not a revolutionary conservative as were such persons as Fritz von der Schulenburg, Albrecht Haushofer, Jens Jessen, or Henning von Tresckow." He then adds that "socialists such as Julius Leber, Theodor Haubach, and Carlo von Mierendorff [sic] must be distinguished from opponents of the Weimar Republic." 80

Nevertheless, one finds certain similarities between the Kreisau Circle and conservative circles during the Weimar period. The leaders of the "Conservative Revolution" 81 were convinced that the dawning of a new age was at hand which would wash away the epoch of the liberal nation with all its defects and produce a new man with new values. It demanded an organic state and the end of the liberal pluralistic society with political parties, for only in such a reformed

80 George Romoser, "The Politics of Uncertainty," Social Research, 1964, p. 88. Following these statements, Romoser makes the remarkable observation that the socialist influence within the resistance was of little consequence. "Nevertheless, these Socialists played a very minor role in the conspiracy." This, of course, was not at all the case.

state could "eternal values" (Ewigkeitswerte) be reborn. A people, a Volk, was an organism, a Wesensorganismus, which knew no class struggle, no domestic political conflicts, and was to be educated to recognize this.\footnote{Kurt Sontheimer, Antidemokratisches Denken in der Weimarer Republik. Die politischen Ideen des deutschen Nationalismus zwischen 1918 und 1933, Munich, 1962, pp. 148-157.} The Kreisauers, especially Moltke and Steltzer, certainly saw at least the chance for the emergence of a new age which would allow man to return to certain fundamental values, and the Kreisau drafts did call for an organic political structure.

While these similarities exist, at least on a superficial basis, there are very significant differences. The most important unit in the conservative-revolutionary Weltanschauung was the organic Volk, and as Arnim Mohler points out, "in the Conservative Revolution the individual loses his intrinsic value and becomes a part of the whole."\footnote{Armin Mohler, Die Konservative Revolution in Deutschland 1918-1932. Grundriss Ihrer Weltanschauungen, Stuttgart, 1950, p. 154.} For the Kreisauers, however, the individual human being was firmly anchored in the center of all political and social considerations, and the gap which separates the Kreisau Circle from the Conservative Revolution is clearly visible in Delp's statement:
Man should realize his freedom and independence and should never forget them. He must never give or throw them away, for if he does, he becomes an object, a number, a tool of the decisions and orders of others.  

Furthermore, for the Conservative Revolution, the organic structure of the state was the ultimate realization by the Volk of its own organic nature, while for the Kreisauers it was simply the means by which the individual could be brought to recognize his own personal responsibility for the conduct of his state and society. The Kreisauers sought to find the precarious balance between the rights of the individual and his responsibilities toward his fellow man. Whether the political organization foreseen by Moltke, Yorck, and their friends was well-suited to accomplish this task is questionable, but the differences in emphasis between their efforts and those of Moeller van den Bruck and the Conservative Revolution are as unmistakable as they are crucial. Moreover, although there were many variations within the Conservative Revolution in regard to foreign policy, a cultural and/or political-military competition between the Völker was considered basic. This whole line of thinking, not to mention the racial ideas of certain groups within the Conservative Revolution, was totally alien to the Kreisau

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84 Alfred Delp, Der Mensch und die Geschichte, p. 33.

concept of cooperation and eventual unity of the European states. Rather than simply representing a continuation of the antidemocratic Conservative Revolution, the Kreisau Circle, according to Klemens von Klemperer, redeemed constructive conservative thought:

Their thoughts, their upright rejection of the totalitarian state, and, in turn, the violent Nazi reaction against them have restated the case for conservatism as a force for freedom and for decency. They may not have solved the dilemma but their example has demonstrated that, after all, conservatism, or in Hesse's terms, the business of 'ennobling' the 'image of man,' is a task not for 'fools' but for men.86

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CHAPTER III

THE PREPARATIONS: THE CIRCLE IN TRANSITION

The work of the Kreisau Circle, begun in 1940 with the exchange of letters between Moltke and Yorck and highlighted by the three major conferences at Kreisau, had reached the end of its programmatic phase by the winter of 1943-44. Aside from several papers dealing with foreign policy, the final Kreisau documents were composed in August 1943, and with the drafting of these documents, the circle's political preparatory work was essentially completed. ¹ Although differences remained, the basic outline for a new order in Germany had been drafted which could serve as a point of departure for a new German government of X-Day. ²

Work on the drafts certainly did not cease entirely after the autumn of 1943, nor did the circle consider its documents as composing an unamendable and sealed political program, for discussions of the documents continued well into the fateful summer of the following year. ³ Indeed, the

¹ Theodor Steltzer, Von Deutscher Politik, p. 77.
³ Interview with Dr. Paulus van Husen, Münster, April 16, 1970.
school issue was still a subject of debate a few weeks before July 20. What programmatic polishing was done was the work of Moltke, Yorck, and their friends in Berlin. The "First Instructions to the Land Commissioners" and the "Basic Principles for the New Order," the final Kreisau documents, were, in fact, results of the reworking by the "inner circle" in Berlin. Later versions of the documents were either lost or destroyed, but while they reflected changing political conditions within the resistance and contained modifications in


5Van Roon employs the term "der ganze innere Kreis" without specifying which members of the circle should be included. Van Roon, Neuordnung, pp. 256-57. The "inner circle" may be said to consist of Moltke, Yorck, Trott, Mierendorff, Haubach, Reichwein, Gerstenmaier, Steltzer, and Delp. The composition of the inner circle, however, was subject to change. The Kreisauers listed above certainly represented the inner circle during the programmatic phase of the group's work. However, for reasons which will become evident, after August 1943, the inner circle, as the term will be used henceforth, was composed of those Kreisauers in Berlin who were in regular day-to-day contact with Moltke and Yorck. In this regard, Gerstenmaier lists: Moltke, Yorck, Trott, Reichwein, Haubach, Husen, Mierendorff, and himself. Haeften was only occasionally present at the meetings in the Hortensienstrasse due to security precautions. E. Gerstenmaier, "Der Kreisauer Kreis," VfZ, July, 1967, p. 227. The actual drafting of the "First Instructions to the Land Commissioners" was done by Moltke, Yorck, Trott, and Gerstenmaier. Clarita von Trott, Matieralsammlung, unpublished, p. 229.
light of new developments, the fundamentals established at
the large conferences in Silesia were maintained. 6

Although the formulation of a political-social program
for the time "thereafter" was the primary concern of the
Kreisau Circle, its resistance activity by no means came to
an end with the completion of the programmatic stage of its
work. The blueprint for a new Germany having been drawn,
Moltke, Yorck, and the Kreisauers were able to turn their
attention to concrete organizational measures in preparation
for X-Day. This change in objectives was to have significant
implications for the general working arrangements within the
circle. From its inception, a basic tenet of the circle's
organizational procedure had been to consult or involve only
those persons who were specially qualified to deal with the
topic currently under consideration. 7 As long as the circle's
energies were primarily concentrated on formulating a program
which could be supported by both the Christian Churches and
the German working man, repeated consultation with all or
most of the circle's members was of great importance. The
large conferences at Kreisau were, therefore, indispensable

6 Countess Freya von Moltke and Countess Marion Yorck
Gerstenmaier and Haubach were entrusted with the revision of
the drafts in 1944. Their work on these later drafts will
be dealt with in conjuncture with the activities of the
circle in 1944.

7 Countess Freya von Moltke, "Helmuth James Graf von
in providing an expanded forum for debate and discussion and in fixing the circle's plans in written form. However, with the circle's program basically completed, the large conferences at the Moltke estate were no longer necessary, and after the conference in May 1943, no further meetings at Kreisau were planned.  

Finding trustworthy and qualified men to assume political responsibility in the different regions of the Reich on X-Day became the circle's primary task in the summer of 1943. The selecting and contacting of these Land commissioners, who were to act as governors in the initial period of transition, did not require consultation with the circle as a whole and could be carried out on a more individual level. In the same sense, revision of the drafts could be handled by Moltke, Yorck, and the Berlin Kreisauers without necessarily involving the entire circle. The real base of operations for the Freundekreis had always been Berlin, but after May 1943, the circle's activities began to center more and more around Moltke's garage apartment in Berlin-Lichterfelde and Yorck's small house at Hortensienstrasse 50. It was, in fact, the beginning of a trend which was to characterize the work and structure of the circle for the remainder of its existence.

8 ibid.
9 Ger van Roon, Neuordnung, p. 257. Selection of the Landesverweser had actually begun in late 1942.
The circle's efforts to find men willing to assume political leadership in the respective Länder on X-Day were not undertaken in a political vacuum, for the Kreisauers were not alone in their search for men to fill positions in a post-Nazi German government. Carl Goerdeler, the leading civilian figure of the German resistance and a member of the older generation, had also been engaged since early 1943 in discussions with the socialist circle around Wilhelm Leuschner and Jakob Kaiser concerning the selection of political appointees to serve as advisors to the military commanders in the defense districts (Wehrkreise) on X-Day. Although the technical preparations for the actual physical overthrow of the regime were quite naturally to be made by the military, the task of providing qualified and reliable men to assume political leadership throughout Germany fell to the various civilian groups within the resistance. Though the line between the military and political sectors was, indeed, fluid, this arrangement allowed the resistance leaders to meet the necessities of military planning while at the same time assuring the essential civilian character of the overall undertaking. This arrangement also presumed at least a minimum of cooperation between the leading civilian groups, and the attempt to establish this vital degree of

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unity was a major motif within the German resistance throughout 1943. The year had begun not only with meetings between Goerdeler and the Leuschner-Kaiser group, but also with the now oft-described confrontation between the older, more conservative leaders around Goerdeler and the Kreisauers at the Hortensienstrasse 50 in January. The Kreisauers, represented by Moltke, Yorck, Trott, and Gerstenmaier, had hoped for a penetrating comparison of the respective programs and a thorough discussion of the points of divergence, while Goerdeler unconvincingly attempted to gloss over the differences. As Goerdeler presented his governmental and social program, Moltke was moved to mutter "Kerenski!," and the results of the evening were disappointing to all.\footnote{Ulrich von Hassell, Vom Anderen Deutschland, Frankfurt, 1964, p. 260. Also see E. Gerstenmaier's letter in Hassell, pp. 331-332. Aside from Goerdeler, Ulrich von Hassell, Johannes Popitz, and Jens Jessen represented the older generation, while Ludwig Beck presided over the meetings without actively entering the discussion. Fritz von der Schulenburg was also present, standing somewhat between the two groups. While disagreement prevailed in most questions, those present were united in the conviction that the overthrow of the regime should be brought about as soon as possible.}

Peter Hoffmann, however, believes this January meeting to represent the "beginning of a collaboration between Kreisau's more active members and the group around Beck and Goerdeler."\footnote{Peter Hoffmann, Widerstand, Staatsstreich, p. 428.} Contact with the Goerdeler group was, indeed,
maintained, primarily through Fritz von der Schulenburg, a friend of Yorck's and a frequent visitor at the Hortensienstrasse. But to characterize the relations between the Kreisauers and Goerdeler as collaboration is certainly an overstatement. Yorck, who was definitely one of the circle's most active members and who had hoped for closer coordination between the groups before the January meeting, was apparently very disappointed by Goerdeler. In a conversation with Count Heinrich von Lehndorf later in the year, Yorck described men like Goerdeler and Popitz as too old and too reactionary to form a capable government. Haubach and Mierendorff also continued to warn Leuschner about associating himself with Goerdeler. As time passed, criticism of a Goerdeler cabinet grew within the circle. Nevertheless, the two groups remained in touch. Both Trott and Haeften had ties with Ulrich von Hassel, whom Goerdeler hoped to see as foreign minister, and the Kreisau socialists remained close to Wilhelm Leuschner, who since at least early 1943 had begun to

13 Interview with Countess Yorck von Wartenburg, Berlin, April 7, 1970. Also see Ritter, Carl Goerdeler und die Deutsche Widerstandsbewegung, p. 383.

14 Spiegelbild einer Verschworung, p. 257.


16 Ger van Roon, Neuordnung, p. 271.

work in closer cooperation with Goerdeler. Contact with the former Leipzig mayor, however, was best maintained through Yorck's friend Schulenburg.

Schulenburg, whose position on a special Wehrmacht staff provided him with an extensive view of personnel in the armed forces and civil service, was not only a very important contact-man between the military and civilian groups, but also often advised Goerdeler in matters concerning personnel. During the fall of 1943 Schulenburg consulted his Kreisau friends concerning the selection of personnel for X-Day, and through Mierendorff, Haubach, and Reichwein, who enjoyed good relations with Leuschner, the

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18 Gerhard Ritter, Carl Goerdeler und die Deutsche Widerstandsbe wegung, pp. 286-87.

19 Albert Krebs, Fritz-Dietlof Graf von der Schulenburg, p. 237. This was the "special staff of General von Unruh," created in May of 1942. Its function was to review all personnel in military, administrative, and economic organizations in order to ascertain whether all personnel were being put to their most effective use under the demands of the "total war" effort. Schulenburg was assigned to this special staff in January, 1943.

20 Gerhard Ritter, Carl Goerdeler und die Deutsche Widerstandsbe wegung, p. 363.

21 Theodor Steltzer, Sechzig Jahre Zeitgenosse, p. 158. Steltzer, who was stationed in Norway and only occasionally was in Berlin was present and took part in one such meeting with Schulenburg in Yorck's house in the fall of 1943 at which personnel for X-Day was discussed.

Kreisauers were able to maintain influence on the Leuschner-Kaiser group as well. Furthermore, the contacts between the Kreisauers and the Goerdeler group were somewhat intensified in November 1943, when Ludwig Beck, accepted in both military and civilian circles as the head of the German resistance movement, requested Goerdeler to draw up a cabinet list acceptable to the major groups.\textsuperscript{23} Schulenburg, in his role as mediator, was especially active during these months as discussions between the major civilian groups concentrated on the selection of personnel for X-Day.\textsuperscript{24}

\textsuperscript{23}Gerhard Ritter, \textit{Carl Goerdeler und die Deutsche Widerstandsbewegung}, p. 362. That the ties between the Beck-Goerdeler group and the Kreisau Circle increased to some degree may be drawn from Paulus van Husen's unpublished composition, "Report on my participation in the enterprise of the 20. July 1944." According to Husen's report, when Beck decided "to make the enterprise with Goerdeler," there was an increase of communication between the groups, whereby the Kreisauers made available information gained through their studies to the Beck-Goerdeler group. Furthermore, there is Hans Bohnenkamp's disclosure that in the early days of January (before Moltke's arrest) his friend Adolf Reichwein was concerned about the recently increased contacts with the Goerdeler group. Hans Bohnenkamp, \textit{Gedanken an Adolf Reichwein}, Braunschweig, 1949, pp. 19-20. Gerstenmaier also acknowledges that there were contacts with the Goerdeler-Beck group at this time, though it never came to a genuine collaboration. Gerstenmaier himself maintained contact with Johannes Popitz, but he does not recall that Reichwein even gave expression to his misgivings within the circle. \textit{Interview with Dr. Eugen Gerstenmaier, Oberwinter, June 3, 1970.}

\textsuperscript{24}Elfriede Nebgen, \textit{Jakob Kaiser}, p. 177. Frau Dr. Nebgen describes Schulenburg as the "driving force" behind the intensified efforts to select the political personnel for X-Day. Schulenburg told Kaiser and Dr. Joseph Wirmer that the military would take action against Hitler only when the list of political appointees was prepared and delivered.
It is difficult, as van Roon indicates, to ascertain with certainty which persons were contacted in this regard by the Kreisauers or for what purpose certain contacts were made. Van Roon asserts, however, that by mid-January 1944, the selection of Land commissioners was completed and that men stood ready throughout Germany and Austria. This seems unlikely. Frau von Trott reports that during a visit to Stuttgart in June 1944, her husband indicated that no Land commissioner had yet been found for that area. When she expressed concern, he replied that when the time comes, the right men would step forward.

The final lists of political and military appointees for the defense districts discovered by the Gestapo in the Bendlerstrasse on July 20, 1944, were primarily the results of consultations between Goerdeler, Schulenburg, and the Leuschner-Kaiser group. The Kreisau efforts to locate Land commissioners, however, were neither isolated nor divorced from the mainstream of the German resistance movement nor was the circle's influence in the selection of personnel for X-Day

25 Ger van Roon, Neuordnung, pp. 257-258. It is known that Hans Schlange-Schöningen was to hold the post in Pomerania, Hans Lukaschek in Silesia, Freiherr von Twickel in Westphalia, Theodor Steltzer in Schleswig-Holstein, and probably Joseph Ernst Fugger von Glött in Bavaria.

26 Interview with Frau Dr. Clarita von Trott zu Solz, Berlin, July 15, 1970.

27 Peter Hoffmann, Widerstand, Staatsstreich, p. 421.
insignificant. Several Kreisau members and persons close to the circle were included in these final lists, and Yorck, in fact, worked closely with Schulenburg on the selection of administrative personnel until shortly before July 20. Furthermore, the close contacts between Mierendorff, Haubach, Reichwein, and the socialist circle around Leuschner should not be overlooked.

While the search for political representatives in the Länder occupied the attention of the circle, the Berlin Kreisauers became involved in an issue of perhaps a more vital nature—the composition of the future cabinet. The Kreisauers were, of course, very interested in the membership of the cabinet and had their own preferences, but they were careful


30 Interview with Dr. Eugen Gerstenmaier, Oberwinter, June 3, 1970. According to van Roon, the Kreisauers hoped to see Reichwein as Minister of Culture and also planned to suggest Augsburg lawyer Franz Riesert for the post of Minister of Justice. Neuordnung, p. 259. Gerstenmaier, however, states: "It may be that some within the circle thought of Reichwein for the Minister of Culture, but I don't recall it being a demand of the circle. It is very certainly an
never to compose lists which might be discovered by the Gestapo. Neither Moltke nor Yorck sought official positions in a new cabinet, and many of the Kreisauers believed themselves too young to be considered for the top ministerial posts.\(^{31}\) Though they did not wish to be associated with Goerdeler's social-political concepts, they were reluctantly willing to accept him as chancellor of an interim, transitional government.\(^{32}\) Their real hopes, however, were placed on a "second wave," which they believed would sweep the socialist Julius Leber to the head of the government.\(^{33}\)

But Leber had not contributed to the programmatic work of the circle. He had not played a role in the preliminary exaggeration to assert that the 'Kreisau candidate' for Minister of Justice was Franz Riesert. I consider it possible that suggestions of this sort were brought to us from Bavaria, but I don't remember it being discussed or a decision being reached. In the Berlin resistance, including the Kreisau Circle, Josef Wirmer was considered to be the qualified man for that position in those years." E. Gerstenmaier, "Der Kreisauer Kreis," \textit{VfZ}, July 1967, p. 244.

\(^{31}\)Interviews with Countess von Moltke, Bad Godesberg, January 16, 1970, and Dr. Eugen Gerstenmaier, Oberwinter, June 3, 1970. That Yorck was later suggested by Staufenberg for the post of Staatssekretär in the Reich Chancellry did not result from negotiations on the part of the circle; this will be discussed in the next chapter.


\(^{33}\)Ger van Roon, \textit{Neuordnung}, p. 259.
discussions or the actual formulation of the Kreisau program. Although Leber remained aloof from the circle's meetings, he was kept informed of the circle's work through his friends Mierendorff and Haubach. While favorably inclined toward the Kreisau drafts, he was convinced that one could not foresee what situation X-Day would bring, and, therefore, he refused to commit himself to particulars. For Leber, the political activist, the first goal was the overthrow of the regime. "What follows," he said, "will take care of itself if we accept the will to responsibility and to creation as a compelling essential of life." Yet, like Moltke and the Kreisauers, he considered Goerdeler's political concepts and socioeconomic goals as insufficiently constructive.

Like Leber, Fritzi Schulenburg had remained on the fringe of the circle. But Schulenburg had been among the Kreisauers much more often than Leber and had not only followed the development of the circle's program, but had also offered important suggestions for improvement in certain areas.

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36 Ibid., p. 280.  

37 Ibid., p. 284.

areas. His plan for a federalistic territorial reorganization of the Länder had significantly influenced the Kreisau discussions.\(^{39}\) Because of his role as mediator between the groups and also his knowledge of administrative organization, Schulenburg had taken part in numerous Kreisau meetings in Berlin and, at times, seemed to be integrated into the circle, then, at other times, to drift away. This was not the case with Leber, who until December 1943 remained sympathetic but maintained his aloofness from the circle's work.\(^{40}\) Only in the wake of tragedy and owing to the efforts of the Kreisauers to draw him closer to the group did the gap between Leber and the circle begin to diminish.

Carlo Mierendorff, the circle's leading socialist member, could come only in secret to Berlin, the Gestapo having sought to restrict his movements to Leipzig where he worked. Mierendorff, who had spent three years in Nazi concentration camps, was acutely aware of the risks involved in his clandestine visits to his Berlin friends, and despite his unfailing humor and courage, he was troubled by the nagging dread

\(^{39}\) Ger van Roon, Neuordnung, p. 396. Also Krebs, Fritz-Dietlof Graf von der Schulenburg, pp. 269-278, and Steltzer, Sechzig Jahre Zeitgenosse, p. 158.

\(^{40}\) Interview with Countess von Moltke, Bad Godesberg, January 16, 1970.
of returning to the nightmarish "KZ." In the last days of November 1943, he once again dared a trip to Berlin and took part in a meeting at the Hortensienstrasse 50 along with Moltke, Yorck, Husen, Haubach, Maass, and perhaps others. The discussion lasted, as they often did, until the early morning hours, and as it finally adjourned, Marion Yorck peered from the front window to check the street. In the entrance, the door still closed, Mierendorff waited quietly with the bicycle he used for transportation in Berlin. As Countess Yorck prepared to open the door, the street empty, he turned to her and said in a tired and somber tone, "a strange life... always on the run. Somehow it is menacing for me just now." He paused for a moment and then stepped

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41 Interview with Countess Yorck von Wartenburg, Berlin, July 16, 1970. Mierendorff, who was always anxious to take some definite action against the regime, was also very aware of security precautions. He remained away from the meeting with Goerdeler in January 1943, "aus polizeilichen Gründen." See U. von Hassell, Vom anderen Deutschland, Letter from E. Gerstenmaier, p. 331. Frau Dr. von Trott also recalls a situation from the fall of 1943 which not only illustrates Mierendorff's cautiousness but also provides a revealing glimpse into the tension-ridden atmosphere which often shrouded the clandestine meetings in the Hortensienstrasse. The Trotts had come to the Yorcks' house on a Sunday afternoon to participate in a meeting of the circle. As usual all guests arrived at different times, and aside from Peter and Marion Yorck, Moltke, Haubach, and Mierendorff were present. Despite a lively discussion of the question of the Betriebsgewerkschaften, "Adam later said that Mierendorff had not spoken freely because no one had told him beforehand that I would be there and because he had never met me before." Clarita von Trott zu Solz, Materialsammlung, p. 230.
into the darkened Hortensienstrasse. Two weeks later he was
dead, the victim of an allied air raid on Leipzig.42

In both a political and personal sense Mierendorff's
sudden death was a grievous setback for the Kreisauers, for
his vitality, his incorrigible optimism and warm, vibrant
charm had eased many long and heated political discussions,
and his irrepressible humor had relieved the intense pressure
which hung over the small circle of friends. The loss of the
energetic Mierendorff was, of course, also deeply felt in the
circle's political work. It was indeed a tragic irony that
Mierendorff was torn away from his friends at the point when
the circle was becoming increasingly involved with problems
of a practical nature. Never completely satisfied with the
programmatic work, Mierendorff had hoped that an underground
resistance net of small groups could be organized, in part
using the "snowball" method: each member of an initially
small group would then contact one or two more people, who
would then do the same.43 He also considered the idea of
developing a symbol or flag which would be easily recogniz-
able and could be drawn or painted on streets or walls and
would become a rallying sign for all resistance forces in

42 Interview with Countess Yorck von Wartenburg, Berlin,
July 16, 1970.

43 Interviews with Dr. E. Gerstenmaier, Oberwinter,
Germany. Many such symbols were apparently discussed, but one in particular, a ring surrounding a cross, seems to have been accepted by at least the socialist members of the circle. Mierendorff hoped that a wide people's movement could thus be developed which would rise at the appropriate moment to help rid Germany of the Nazis. To this end several proclamations or summons to the German people were drawn up within socialist circles, and Mierendorff's "Summons to Socialist Action," composed in 1943, was kept by Moltke

44 Interview with Dr. P. van Husen, Münster, April 16, 1970. Husen recalls that many different symbols, flags, etc. were discussed, with a cross being the central feature. Yet he does not remember that any one was ever accepted by the circle, and the topic faded quickly after Mierendorff's death.

45 Ger van Roon, Neuordnung, p. 260. Mierendorff informed Harro Siegel, who had actually drawn the symbol, that "all parties concerned" (alle Beteiligten) had accepted the symbol. However, based on statements by Dr. Gerstenmaier, Dr. van Husen, Countess von Moltke, and Countess Yorck, it seems certain that Mierendorff was referring only to the socialist members. Gerstenmaier recalls receiving postcards from Mierendorff with this instead of a signature.

46 Spiegelbild einer Verschwörung, p. 501. According to the Gestapo reports, not only Mierendorff but also Leber and Reichwein composed similar calls to the German people. Haubach acknowledged before the so-called Peoples' Court that Reichwein, Leber, and Mierendorff together had drafted a "Volksaufruf," Volksgerichtshofprozesse zum 20. Juli 1944, Lautarchiv des Deutschen Rundfunks, April, 1961.

47 This is often referred to simply as Mierendorff's "Call to the German People." The later Landeshauptmann of Upper Austria Dr. Heinrich Gleissner reports that Mierendorff read this to him in Gleissner's apartment during Mierendorff's last visit to Berlin in late November 1943. Letter from Dr. Heinrich Gleissner, June 11, 1970.
along with the Kreisau documents. The Socialist Action, as envisioned by Mierendorff's proclamation was to be:

... a people's movement above all political parties for the salvation of Germany. It is fighting for the emancipation of the German people from the Hitler dictatorship, for the restoration of Germany's honor so trampled down by the crimes of Nazism, and for freedom within a socialist order. Representatives of the Christian elements, of the socialist and communist movements, and of liberal forces form the Action Committee. The struggle is led under the banner of Socialist Action, under the red flag with the symbol of freedom: the cross united with a socialist ring as a sign of the steadfast unity of the working people.48

Though this particular summons was discussed among the socialists within the circle49 and while most of its major points are not incompatible with the Kreisau texts, Countess von Moltke maintains that this summons to Socialist Action played no significant role in the Kreisau discussions.50 Gerstenmaier and Husen, too, are certain that this proclamation was not discussed within the circle in conjunction with the circle's program, though Mierendorff was continually seeking to win support for the sort of action outlined in his document. It should be stressed, however, that the

48 Mierendorff's 'Aufruf,' in van Roon, Neuordnung, pp. 589-590.
49 Letter from Dr. Heinrich Gleissner, June 11, 1970. Also see van Roon, Neuordnung, p. 260.
50 Interview with Countess von Moltke, Bad Godesberg, January 16, 1970.
skepticism these plans met within the circle was not directed at the political principles as presented in Mierendorff's proclamation, but at the possibility of organizing any wide movement in National Socialist Germany without immediate discovery by the Gestapo. Thus, while the chances of such a wide underground people's movement were discussed occasionally, it is reasonably clear that Mierendorff's document was not considered part of the Kreisau program.

Aside from his great vitality and perpetual readiness to undertake active steps against the regime, Mierendorff had made considerable contributions to the drafting of the circle's program. He had been especially close to Moltke since 1941, and much of the considerable socialist influence in the circle's work is due to Mierendorff. Thus, in early December 1943 the Kreisauers looked for someone to fill the gap left by his sudden death. They turned to Julius Leber.

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52 Ger van Roon, Neuordnung, pp. 130 and 233. "For Mierendorff, the man of action, it was hard to be able to do nothing and simply wait until the generals found the courage to act." Also see Leithäuser, Wilhelm Leuschner, p. 231.
Moltke particularly hoped to draw Leber closer to the circle, and as the new year began his efforts were already underway. "He is a decidedly good man," Moltke wrote in the first week of 1944, "especially now with Carlo gone. Yet he is very one-sided in practical things and places much less value on intellectual considerations than I do." But by January 1944 the Kreisauers were themselves increasingly occupied with questions of an immediate and practical nature. The composition of the future cabinet, the role of Goerdeler, the very pressing issue of Hitler's assassination and the overthrow of the regime were problems which dominated the conversations within the resistance groups in the winter of 1943-44. The Kreisauers were no exception. The circle, therefore, turned to Leber at a time when these problems were becoming increasingly acute. His response, while still reserved, was positive.

The group's activities had become even more concentrated around Yorck's house in the Hortensienstrasse since Moltke and Gerstenmaier had moved there after both their apartments were destroyed during the same air raid earlier in the winter. The Hortensienstrasse 50, an unpretentious row house of gray-brown stucco whose small garden in the

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53 Moltke's letter to his wife, January 2, 1944, in van Roon, Neuordnung, p. 234.
54 Ibid., p. 233.
rear stretched toward the adjacent S-Bahn station, had become the headquarters of the circle. 55 Here, against the periodic clamor of the S-Bahn trains as they shrieked to a halt, depositing and collecting passengers at the Botanical Gardens station, the meetings of the circle continued, and it was here that several meetings with Leber took place in the winter of 1943-44. 56 Even Marion Yorck occasionally acted as a courier, carrying messages to Leber in his small coal yard. 57 By early January Moltke was full of hope for Leber's integration into the circle. 58

At the same time Moltke hoped that Heinrich Gleissner, the former governor of Upper Austria with whom Haubach resided in Berlin-Grünewald, would also contribute to the circle's work. Gleissner had come into contact with the circle through Mierendorff and aside from him had become acquainted with Reichwein, Haubach, Moltke, and Yorck. He had taken part in many discussions with the socialist members of

55 According to Frau von Trott, the Hortensienstrasse was "eine Art Hauptquartier," Clarita von Trott, Matieralsammlung, p. 217. Gerstenmaier also refers to the Yorcks' small house in Berlin as the "real home of the circle." E. Gerstenmaier; "Helmuth von Moltke," Reden und Aufsätze, v. II, p. 234.

56 Interview with Countess von Moltke, Bad Godesberg, January 16, 1970. Countess von Moltke was present at one such meeting with Leber in the Hortensienstrasse at that time.

57 Interview with Countess Yorck von Wartenburg, Berlin, April 7, 1970.

58 Letter from Moltke to his wife, January 9, 1944, in van Roon, Neuordnung, p. 234.
the circle, and through him, the Kreisauers were able to establish contact with other Austrians active in the resistance in Berlin. In mid-January Moltke wrote to his wife that he had asked Gleissner to continue the work with the circle. Then on January 19, the Kreisau Circle was stunned by yet another staggering blow, and in its wake the very existence of the circle stood imperiled.

At just after 10 p.m. on January 20 the doorbell rang suddenly at the home of Paulus van Husen in Berlin-Grünewald. No one was expected that evening, and, in Hitler's Germany, an unexpected ring or knock at the door was always to be feared. Husen moved warily to the door and, opening it, found his friend Peter Yorck standing before him on the steps. For an instant Yorck stood silent in the chilly Berlin night, and then leaning slowly forward he whispered almost inaudibly, "They've taken Helmuth." Once again there was silence. Then the two men moved quickly into the house where they painstakingly gathered all papers dealing with the Kreisau work and loaded them into the furnace. The blaze lasted almost two hours.

On the morning of the previous day Helmuth von Moltke, an extremely punctual man, indicated to Peter Yorck as they

59 Letter from Moltke to his wife, January 13, 1944, Ibid., p. 342.

60 Interview with Dr. P. van Husen, Münster, April 16, 1970.
prepared to leave the Hortensienstrasse 50 for their respective offices, that he would meet that evening with Leber. He would, he said, return no later than ten o'clock.

For the three men living in the Yorcks' small house it had become a common practice to inform one another when an important meeting was planned by any one of them, and the meetings with Leber warranted special mention at that time.

That evening Yorck and Gerstenmaier returned from their offices, and although Moltke had not yet arrived, Abendbrot was eaten. Ten o'clock passed, and Moltke did not appear. After another hour slipped by the Yorcks and Gerstenmaier retired uneasily to their rooms, but no one slept. Moltke was rarely late. From his window which looked down onto the silent Hortensienstrasse, Gerstenmaier's attention was arrested after a time by the presence of a car, its lights burning, stopped a short distance from the house. After several moments he summoned Peter and Marion Yorck, and they too peered through the window at the car. An instant later their hushed conversation was interrupted by the shrill ringing of the doorbell, and the Yorcks, clad in robes, went below and opened the door. Before them in the doorway stood two men. The Gestapo had come.

While one of the two men slipped bruskly past Peter and Marion Yorck into the adjoining dining room where he began randomly inspecting the books and papers he found there,
the other stiffly handed Marion Yorck a small slip of paper on which Helmuth Moltke had written a short message. He was detained, it read. Pack his shaving utensils, etc. into a certain suitcase. Let Freya know that all was well so far. But where then, inquired Countess Yorck, was the Count von Moltke? Glancing into the dining room whose bomb-torn ceiling hung ragged and threateningly low over the table at which his comrad was leafing intently through several volumes, the Gestapo official snapped in contemptuous amusement, "He has at least better accommodations than here." To which the lounging man from the dining room scornfully echoed, "Two counts live in this?!” Marion Yorck, maintaining her composure, then climbed the stairs followed by the Gestapo official, to Moltke's room. As she hurriedly packed several things into a suitcase, her escort glanced sharply around the room. "Count von Moltke has been arrested," he blurted quite suddenly, but, despite Countess Yorck's cautious inquiry as to why, he would not elaborate. The bag was quickly packed, and the two intruders stood once again in the doorway. "You will hear from us," one said, and the door closed.

Almost immediately Gerstenmaier and Peter and Marion Yorck began to comb the house for any sort of incriminating papers. The search lasted several hours, and the furnace, filled with assorted papers, burned into the early morning. Only the most vital documents were kept and hidden securely.
A warning to the other friends that night was out of the question—the house might be watched, the phone tapped. During the following day the word was passed. 61

For the Kreisau Circle the end had come, or so it seemed. Helmuth von Moltke had been arrested, and the grounds for his arrest, so reasoned his friends, could only have been his Kreisau activities. It would now only be a matter of time before each of them would be visited by the Gestapo. Aside from destroying or concealing all possible incriminating evidence, the Kreisauers could now only wait. In the Hortensienstrasse 50, as in the homes of the other friends of Helmuth Moltke, preparations were made for the Gestapo's inevitable visit. But the Gestapo did not come.

Moltke's arrest was not at all connected with the Kreisau Circle, but was the result of his involvement in the "Solf Tea Party affair." On September 10, 1943, Anna Solf, the widow of the former German foreign minister and ambassador to Japan, had invited to tea several friends, who, like herself, were opponents of the regime. This group of friends, which often met for tea at the Solf residence, maintained contacts with several officials in the Foreign Office, one of whom was the former German Consul General in New York, Otto

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61 This account was pieced together from interviews with Countess Yorck von Wartenburg, Berlin, July 16, 1970, and Dr. E. Gerstenmaier, Oberwinter, June 3, 1970.
Kiep. Kiep was among the Solf guests on September 10 as was Elizabeth von Thadden, also a convinced anti-Nazi. However, accompanying the unsuspecting Fräulein von Thadden was a Swiss doctor named Reckzeh, who was, in fact, a Gestapo agent. Dr. Reckzeh offered to smuggle letters to German emigrants in Switzerland, and soon accumulated incriminating evidence on all the tea party guests. The Gestapo did not act, however, until January.62

Since 1939 Moltke had been an advisor on international law to the German Supreme Command (OKW) and had been attached to the Counter Intelligence Organization (Abwehr-Ausland) under Admiral Canaris. Under Canaris the Abwehr had become an important center of resistance activity,63 and through his position Moltke had been able to attain important information and, on occasion, had been able to warn intended victims of Nazi treachery. On one occasion he had been able to inform resistance sources in Norway and Denmark of the anti-Jewish measures planned by the Nazis in those countries.64


64 Ger van Roon, Neuordnung, p. 73. For a more detailed account of Moltke's service as an advisor on international law to the OKW see van Roon, "Graf von Moltke als Volkerrechtler im OKW," VfZ, v. 9, January, 1970.
Thus, when some time after the Solf tea party of September 10 Moltke stumbled across Gestapo plans to arrest all participants, he warned Otto Kiep. The warning was discovered by the Gestapo, and in January 1944 as the Solf guests were being rounded up, Moltke was arrested. In itself, the warning of Kiep was not a serious offense, and there is reason to suspect that Moltke's arrest may have been only one part of a Gestapo action against the Abwehr. Moltke's repeated objections against the constant infractions of international law had also become extremely annoying, and this alone could have justified his removal in the eyes of the Party.

The details surrounding Moltke's arrest were discovered by his friends after a relatively short though agonizing period in which the political work of the circle had come to an uneasy standstill. They soon realized that the warning of Kiep was not an overly serious affair, a "political traffic accident," and his friends hoped to see Moltke


66 Ger van Roon, Neuordnung, pp. 74-75.

67 Interviews with Dr. E. Gerstenmaier, Oberwinter, June 3, 1970, and Dr. F. van Husen, Münster, April 16, 1970.
released in the near future.\textsuperscript{68} Though imprisoned, Moltke was, in fact, placed under a form of protective custody and allowed to continue his advisory work on several cases for the military. While it was thus possible for Moltke to maintain indirect contact with the world outside his cell in Ravensbrück, it was, of course, impossible to inform him of developments within the resistance. Countess von Moltke was allowed an occasional visit with her husband and permitted to exchange letters with him, but no attempt was made to inform him of the activities of his friends. Although Countess von Moltke was frequently a guest of the Yorcks in Berlin and at Kauern after January 19, Peter Yorck made a conscious effort never to mention the circle's activities, and Countess von Moltke never inquired about them. It was simply too dangerous for all concerned.\textsuperscript{69}

Thus, Helmuth von Moltke, who along with Yorck had founded and guided the Kreisau Circle, who had "torn its members from resignation through systematic planning and work,"\textsuperscript{70} was lost to the circle. Within a short span of time the

\textsuperscript{68} Interview with Dr. E. Gerstenmaier, Oberwinter, June 3, 1970.

\textsuperscript{69} Interview with Countess von Moltke, Bad Godesberg, January 16, 1970.

Kreisauers had taken two severe shocks and in the last bleak days of January 1944 found themselves confronted by a greatly altered political environment. For Mierendorff's death in his aunt's Leipzig cellar, which had triggered Moltke's efforts to draw Leber and Gleissner closer to the circle, had set in motion a regrouping, an Umgruppierung, of the Kreisau Circle, and the sudden arrest of Moltke provided a second abrupt jolt in this transformation. The circle had, in fact, been undergoing a change since the previous fall, a metamorphosis generated in part by the shift from programmatic to more concrete, organization planning for X-Day, and in part by the sudden infusion of a vital new force within the German resistance movement.

On January 19, Peter Yorck was visited by his cousin Colonel Graf Claus Schenk von Stauffenberg. Coming on the day of Moltke's arrest, Yorck's meeting with Stauffenberg, who was to exert a crucial influence on the development of the circle in 1944, was, indeed, symbolic. Stauffenberg had come to Berlin in September, and his arrival was inextricably linked with the increased activity throughout the entire


72Helmuth James von Moltke, Last Letters, ed. Lionel Curtis, p. 48. Moltke mentions a visit by Stauffenberg to Yorck on the evening of January 19. Countess Yorck, who was at home with her husband that evening, does not remember such a visit. Stauffenberg usually met Yorck during the day, ostensibly in an official military capacity, and the meeting on the 19th probably took place in Yorck's office.
resistance movement in the autumn of 1943. Severely wounded in North Africa in April 1943, Stauffenberg was summoned to Berlin in August by his new commander, General Friedrich Olbricht, ostensibly for briefings concerning his new post as Olbricht's chief of staff in the General Army Office. Instead Olbricht, who had long been active in the military conspiracy, immediately initiated the young and willing colonel into the resistance. During the August visit Stauffenberg also met General Henning von Treskow, who was on leave from his post on the Russian front and who, along with Olbricht, was at work on the technical plan to eliminate Hitler and topple the Nazi regime: "Operation Walküre."

"Walküre" was not a secret code word, for on the surface it was a plan to be put into effect by the Army in the event of an uprising of the millions of foreign slave laborers in Germany. The plan could, however, be turned against the SS and the Nazi regime.

After a visit to family and friends in Bamberg and Lautingen, Stauffenberg decided to forego an operation for


74 See Harald Deutsch, Verschwörung gegen den Krieg, p. 216.

75 Joachim Kramarz, Stauffenberg, p. 135. The technical plans for Operation Walküre are elaborated in considerable detail in Hoffmann, Widerstand, Staatsstreich, pp. 355-370.
an artificial hand, and, early in September, he returned to Berlin, moving in with his brother Berthold in Berlin-Wannsee. In the remaining weeks before his official return to active duty on October 1, Stauffenberg vigorously joined in the work on "Operation Walküre," but his activities were by no means limited to the military sector, for he very quickly established contacts with the leading figures of the civilian circles. 76

Already in August Treskow had introduced Stauffenberg to Goerdeler, and in November he met with Ulrich von Hassel, Johannes Popitz, and Jens Jessen. 77 A much closer working relationship developed, however, with Fritzi Schulenburg, who was able to provide the colonel with many important contacts within resistance circles. Through Schulenburg, Stauffenberg was first introduced to Julius Leber. 78 The relationship between these two very active men quickly developed into one of mutual respect and friendship, Stauffenberg being attracted to Leber's experienced political judgment and his readiness for action, while Leber, mistrustful of the military, discovered to his surprise the same steadfast will and decisiveness in Olbricht's new chief of staff.

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76 Joachim Kramarz, Stauffenberg, pp. 135-143.
77 Ibid., p. 143.
78 Ibid., p. 136.
Neither wanted to see a "revolution of old men," and the first cabinet lists and set political programs occupied a secondary position in their list of priorities. For them the crucial task was to overthrow the Nazi regime and to seize power with the most capable political forces available. Thus, by early winter the political combination of Leber and Stauffenberg, which was to play such a central role in the complex developments within the German resistance in 1944, had begun to take form. 79

In November Werner von Haeften, whose brother Hans was a Kreisau member active in the Foreign Office, was assigned to Olbricht's command as Stauffenberg's ordinance officer. Through Werner, Hans von Haeften soon learned of the dynamic colonel and in turn brought Adam von Trott into contact with Stauffenberg. 80 As with Leber, a close relationship very quickly developed with Trott, who advised Stauffenberg in matters of foreign policy. 81 Frau von Trott later wrote of Stauffenberg and her husband:

It is quite possible that for Adam this friendship was the fulfillment of something which he had been seeking all his life in spite of the fact that he had so many friends to whom he was united by affection, respect, and by task and responsibilities

79 Eberhard Zeller, Geist der Freiheit, p. 297.
80 Joachim Kramarz, Stauffenberg, p. 138.
81 Eberhard Zeller, Geist der Freiheit, p. 151.
shared in common. He said to Mrs. Brau-Vogelstein in 1939, "I share only bits of myself and fragments of things with others" but now, after meeting Stauffenberg at a late stage in his life, this was no longer true.82

Shortly after his arrival in Berlin Stauffenberg also began to visit his cousin Peter Yorck von Wartenburg, and it was primarily through Yorck that he developed contact with the Kreisau Circle. Through his occasional visits to the Hortensienstrasse 50 and his more frequent trips to Yorck's office, Stauffenberg soon acquired a respect and trust in his cousin's political views which led to their intimate working relationship in the last hectic months before the 20th of July.83 The extent of Stauffenberg's familiarity with the Kreisau drafts in the period before Moltke's arrest is unclear, but he did take part in a discussion of Schmölders' paper on the mastering of economic problems following the collapse of the Third Reich.84 Furthermore, his discussions with Yorck dealt almost exclusively with political themes as opposed to military or technical aspects of the conspiracy.85

82 Christopher Sykes, Troubled Loyalty, pp. 409-410.
83 Joachim Kramarz, Stauffenberg, pp. 137 and 139. Also see E. Zeller, Geist der Freiheit, p. 293.
84 Ger van Roon, Neuordnung, p. 286.
85 Interview with Countess Yorck von Wartenburg, Berlin, April 7, 1970.
Although Stauffenberg and Moltke had been together several times in the Hortensienstrasse, an intimate relationship between the two had not matured before Moltke's arrest. From their few encounters, Stauffenberg had apparently mistaken Moltke's rather British reserve for arrogance and was, like Fritzi Schulenburg, uneasy about Moltke's predilection for abstraction in political matters. But van Roon's opinion that only a loose contact existed between Stauffenberg, Yorck, and Moltke is accurate only in regard to the relationship between Moltke and Stauffenberg.

Although Stauffenberg's impact on the development of the circle became manifest only in the months after Moltke's arrest, the seeds of his influence had been sown before January 19. His initiation into the resistance had given fresh impetus to the plans for the assassination of Hitler and a coup d'etat, and his influence was certainly evident in the circle's discussions of these questions in the autumn of 1943. Among the Berlin Kreisauers, Trott and Gerstenmaier were the foremost advocates of taking any measures, including the assassination of the "Führer," necessary to eliminate the Hitler regime, while Moltke, Yorck, and Haeften retained grave moral misgivings about political murder. Moltke once

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86 Interview with Countess Yorck von Wartenburg, Berlin, July 15, 1970.
87 Ger van Roon, Neuordnung, p. 286.
exclaimed, "why are we against the Third Reich? Why are we against National Socialism? Precisely because it is a system of injustice, and one must never begin something new, a renewal, with a fresh injustice. Murder remains a crime." 88

The circle's position regarding the Attentat will be dealt with in more depth in the discussion of the final phase of the circle's activity in 1944, but Stauffenberg's influence on the Kreisauers' deliberations on the question was perceptible by November 1943. Plans for the assassination of Hitler in November and then a month later were not carried out, 89 but the impact of Stauffenberg's plans on the circle is clearly reflected in Trott's letters to his wife from this period. During a weekend visit by her husband to the Trott estate in Emshausen in early November, Clarita von Trott suggested a code they might use to discuss political developments in their correspondence. It was based on the human anatomy—Moltke was the 'head,' Yorck the 'shoulders,' Haeften the 'heart,' and Gerstenmaier the 'stomach.' Thus, as talk of an Attentat grew rife in resistance circles later in the month, the course of the debate within the circle was cautiously revealed in Trott's report to his wife on his health:

88 Ibid., p. 285.
89 Joachim Kramarz, Stauffenberg, pp. 154-156. See also Hoffmann, Widerstand, Staatssstreich, pp. 378-392. The months of November, December, and January were filled with assassination plans which never came to fruition due to an assortment of uncontrollable circumstances.
... Head and shoulders are still causing me some pain—it looks like almost a chronic cold.

Less than a week later, on November 22, further difficulties were described:

Last evening I had a long intensive conversation in which I became clearer myself about a great deal. Shoulders and stomach, however, feel neither in agreement with one another nor with me . . . how long must it last until one has a complete organism, integrated and at one with itself and with the environment which is still to be shaped. Went ten times better with the heart today . . . .

Then, in an incautious letter which Frau von Trott later destroyed:

At the conclusion, differences of opinion were provoked on the question of whether one could "make weather" (ob man Wetter machen könnte), whereby I represented . . . a positive point of view.

Finally, on December 1, his condition showed some improvement:

... after an acute and painful attack, which I actively withstood, it is suddenly going much better with the head and shoulders, beyond my expectations, even good and correct . . . .

The imprudent comment on the question of "making weather" is an obvious reference to the Attentat and subsequent action to be taken, and Trott, who was already acquainted with Stauffenberg, had represented the activist position. Furthermore, aside from Stauffenberg's genuine friendship with Trott and Yorck, the death of Mierendorff and the resulting efforts to integrate Leber into the circle also ultimately

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established another vital link with Stauffenberg. In early January, when Werner von Haeften took up quarters with his brother Hans, yet another tie with the military conspiracy was gained. For from that time on, Hans von Haeften was well informed of Stauffenberg's activities.\footnote{Interview with Frau Barbara von Haeften, Heidelberg, May 27, 1970. Also see van Roon, \textit{Neuordnung}, p. 158.}

Thus, by mid-January 1944, the circle of friends had experienced a painful and convulsive stage in its evolution. Since completion of the programmatic work in August, the circle had gradually drawn closer to the military conspiracy and become an integral part of the endeavors of the civilian resistance to locate political representatives for X-Day. The shift from programmatic to more concrete political activity in preparation for X-Day also had profound repercussions in the organization of the circle. For the center of the civilian and military resistance was Berlin, and discussion of the future cabinet, the role of the respective groups, and the \textit{Attentat} proceeded on a day-to-day basis. While it was occasionally possible to inform those members who did not visit regularly or live in Berlin, they could not possibly stay abreast of political currents and events within the resistance. Therefore, Kreisauers like Steltzer and Delp, who had contributed so greatly to the formulation of the Kreisau program, had begun a gradual drift away from the
active center of the circle. The circle's activities were progressively constricting around the city of Berlin, and after August 1943, only the active members close to the Hortensienstrasse 50 remained in the mainstream of the group's operations. The loss of Mierendorff and Moltke, blows of severe personal and political consequence to their friends, had threatened the existence of the circle, but the intensified contact with Leber and the gradual emergence of intimate ties with Stauffenberg lent the circle new direction and purpose. The Kreisau Circle had, in fact, passed through a difficult transitional phase, and by the end of January had not only a transformed operational structure, but stood on the brink of the final stage of its development--the integration into the active military conspiracy.
CHAPTER IV

THE PLOT: THE CIRCLE AFTER JANUARY 19, 1944

Despite the loss of Helmuth von Moltke, the Kreisau Circle did not dissolve in January 1944. In fact, the frequency of the circle's meetings in Berlin increased rather than diminished in the early months of the new year, and the Hortensienstrasse 50 emerged from the transitional phase of the circle's development as the headquarters for the circle. In Yorck's small house the active Berlin Kreisauers continued to meet, and it was to the Hortensienstrasse 50 that those Kreisauers removed geographically from Berlin turned periodically for the latest information.

That the circle's highly diversified membership found itself deprived of its common center after January 19, 1944, is an assertion incompatible with the facts. With Moltke gone, the role of "Geschäftsführer," or business manager, was

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1 Interviews with Dr. Paulus van Husen, Münster, April 16, 1970, and Dr. Eugen Gerstenmaier, Oberwinter, June 3, 1970.

2 This is evident from comments in Hans Lukaschek, "Was war und wollte der Kreisauer Kreis?," unpublished speech, and Theodor Steltzer, Von Deutscher Politik, p. 78, Sechzig Jahre Zeitgenosse, p. 159.

assumed by Peter Yorck, and until July 20, he remained at the center of the circle's activities. Reichwein and Haubach maintained close contact with Yorck after January 19, as did Trott, Haeften, Gerstenmaier, Husen, as well as Leber. Heinrich Gleissner, who had close ties with Reichwein and Haubach, reports that his two socialist friends met very often with Yorck, "especially after the arrest of Count von Moltke." Trott's letters to his wife from this period also attest to a very close relationship with Yorck, as do those of Hans von Haeften. Gerstenmaier, of course, lived in the Hortensienstrasse 50, and Husen was in almost daily contact with


5 Letter from Dr. Heinrich Gleissner, June 11, 1970. Haubach moved into Dr. Gleissner's apartment after his had been destroyed in an air raid. His apartment was the scene of numerous meetings of the socialist members of the Kreisau Circle.

6 Between January and July 1944 Trott's letters to his wife indicate, as Frau Dr. von Trott comments, that "they were continuously together" ("dass sie dauernd zusammen sind"). Trott's letters from February 2, 1944, February 14, 1944, March 3, 1944, and April 30, 1944, for example, all make mention of discussions with Yorck.

7 Haeften's letters throughout the first months of 1944 make repeated reference to visits, meals, etc. with "Peter and Marion," and several letters mention bicycling to the Hortensienstrasse 50. Frau von Haeften states that the contacts between Yorck, Trott, her husband, and the other Berlin Kreisauers became more intensive after Moltke's arrest because of the changing political situation. Interview with Frau Barbara von Haeften, Heidelberg, May 27, 1970.
Yorck until shortly before July 20. Leber's role within the circle, despite his rather infrequent attendance at the meetings in the Hortensienstrasse, also grew considerably after January.

Furthermore, Yorck's increasingly close relationship with his cousin Claus von Stauffenberg, who by early 1944 was clearly emerging as the real "motor" of the German resistance, made him an important link between the military conspirators and his Kreisauer friends and contributed greatly to his central role in the circle's development after January 1944. Stauffenberg's efforts to convince Yorck of the necessity for action against the regime proved successful, and Yorck's conversion in early 1944 heralded a new course for the Kreisau Circle.

As before, the meetings in this period were not conducted on a regular basis. When an important issue arose or an event occurred which required consultation, the word was passed, and a meeting was held. This operating procedure is perhaps illustrated best by the circle's deliberations

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10 Interviews with Dr. Eugen Gerstenmaier, Oberwinter, June 3, 1970, and Dr. Paulus van Husen, Münster, April 16, 1970. Often Yorck would telephone the members to inform them of the meetings.
on the intention of Leber and Reichwein to contact the Central Committee of the underground Communist Party. Reichwein, acting independently, had gotten in touch with Communist functionaries early in 1944, but before entering talks with the Central Committee, he sought the support of the circle during a meeting in the Hortensienstrasse 50 in late June.\footnote{This meeting will be dealt with in more detail below.}

Although the circle's meetings in this period were held at different places, including the apartments of Trott, Husen, and Haeften, Hortensienstrasse 50 was most frequently the scene of the circle's deliberations.\footnote{Eugen Gerstenmaier, "Der Kreisauer Kreis," VfZ, p. 227. Interview with Countess Yorck von Wartenburg, Berlin, April 7, 1970. Trott's letter to his wife, March 30, 1944, mentions a meeting at his apartment by Haeften, Yorck, and Gerstenmaier.} Attendance also varied slightly from meeting to meeting, as, indeed, it always had. The participants, however, were drawn almost exclusively from the active core of Berlin Kreisauers--Yorck, Trott, Gerstenmaier, Haeften, Husen, Reichwein, Haubach, and, increasingly, Leber. Only during their rare visits to Berlin could Steltzer, Lukaschek, or Father König, the usual representative of the Bavarian Kreisauers, participate in the circle's activities, and thus their contribution to and knowledge of day-to-day developments grew progressively meagre. Steltzer's contention that the circle's work came to a halt in
January 1944 is perhaps understandable, but certainly misleading. Only when viewed against the backdrop of the continuing meetings and mutual consultation between the Berlin Kreisauers from January through July 20, do the actions of the individual Kreisauers, which might otherwise seem disconnected or isolated, acquire their proper perspective.

The increased frequency of the circle's meetings in 1944 was a reflection of changing political currents within the resistance and renewed activity within the military sector. The catalyst unleashing these permutations was Claus von Stauffenberg. Until then Carl Goerdeler, with Beck's
support, had enjoyed political preeminence within the resistance. He had been nominally accepted by the major civilian groups, with the notable exception of the Communists, as the chancellor of a new German government. The emergence of Stauffenberg on the scene in the fall of 1943, however, soon weakened Goerdeler's position. Unlike most of his military colleagues, Stauffenberg was unwilling to restrict himself exclusively to the military aspects of the conspiracy, and, at one of his first encounters with Goerdeler, he demanded to take part in the political discussions as well. Goerdeler's protests were overcome only through mediations by Beck, and although he at last relented, it was with considerable reservations. 14 Goerdeler's irritation was further exacerbated by Stauffenberg's inclination toward the political concepts of Goerdeler's younger rivals. Stauffenberg's relationships with Yorck, Trott, and Leber, which matured into close political cooperation in the early months of 1944, gave clear indications of his political preferences. 15 Like his

14 Joachim Kramarz, Stauffenberg, p. 171.

15 Max Braubach, Der Weg zum 20. Juli 1944. Ein Forschungsbericht, Cologne and Opladen, 1953, p. 32. According to Gerhard Ritter, Stauffenberg was "plainly more inclined toward the romantic 'socialism' of the Kreisauer counts, members of his own generation than to the bourgeois liberalism of Goerdeler . . . ." Ritter, Carl Goerdeler, pp. 366-367. Kramarz goes so far as to claim "If not in a proper sense a 'member of the Kreisau Circle,' he belonged, nonetheless, to its intellectual domain." Kramarz, Stauffenberg, p. 139. Christian Müller, Stauffenberg's most recent biographer,
Kreisau friends, Stauffenberg feared that Goerdeler would be unable to evoke the necessary mass support of the German people, and, in a conversation with Jakob Kaiser, Stauffenberg remarked in obvious reference to Goerdeler: "Herr Kaiser, it must not come to a restoration." Stauffenberg felt that the new chancellor should be a representative of the working class, and Julius Leber was, therefore, his choice.

The ultimate success of the resistance forces had always been dependent upon the military, and since 1938 the efforts of its major participants had been directed toward inducing military commanders to take decisive action against the regime. The driving force behind these endeavors had been Goerdeler, and his resentment of Stauffenberg's rising influence in political affairs was not without some

believes that Kramarz goes too far in this regard. Müller, Oberst i.G. Stauffenberg, Eine Biographie, Düsseldorf, 1970, pp. 367 and 575. His opinion coincides to a considerable degree with Hans Mommsen, who feels that while Stauffenberg shared Kreisau's political views in many ways, he was pursuing his own somewhat unclear political ideas. Hans Mommsen, "Gesellschaftsbild und Verfassungspläne," Der deutsche Widerstand gegen Hitler, p. 157


justification. Yet, the political fortunes of the resistance rested upon the presupposition of a successful Staatsstreich, and in Stauffenberg an officer had at last been found who was determined to act. Already by mid-February Stauffenberg had been behind at least three attempts on Hitler's life, all of which had come to naught for a variety of reasons.\textsuperscript{18} Because of his readiness to undertake bold action, Stauffenberg had replaced Goerdeler as the real driving force of the resistance by early 1944, and between January and July 20 his political influence with the civilian groups mushroomed.\textsuperscript{19} But whereas Goerdeler found himself being edged gradually away from the center of the resistance, the Kreisau Circle was being drawn into the very eye of the storm.

The Kreisauers were never merely passive observers or lofty idealists disdaining action while planning for a post-Nazi era, as they are so often portrayed. J. Wheeler-Bennett's characterization of the Kreisauers as the "conscientious objectors of the resistance"\textsuperscript{20} and its implication of an exclusive preference for passive resistance is erroneous in light

\textsuperscript{18}Peter Hoffmann, \textit{Widerstand, Staatsstreich}, pp. 378-388.

\textsuperscript{19}Christian Müller, \textit{Oberst i.G. Stauffenberg}, pp. 408 and 420. Müller emphasizes, however, that Stauffenberg had by no means assumed a position of political dominance within the resistance.

\textsuperscript{20}J. W. Wheeler-Bennett, \textit{Nemesis}, p. 545.
of the circle's activities both before and after Moltke's arrest. Although the Kreisauers were divided on the issue of the Attentat, the years 1941-43 were witness to numerous attempts on their part to persuade influential military figures to overthrow the regime. Moltke and Yorck were particularly active in this regard, despite their disavowal of political murder. 21 Trott's discussions with British and American diplomatic contacts in Sweden and Switzerland, which will be dealt with below, were also intended to contribute to the bringing about of a coup d'état. 22 While religious and ethical considerations led Moltke, Yorck, Steltzer, and Haef-ten to question an assassination of Hitler, fear of a new "stab in the back" legend also created misgivings in the circle. 23 Moreover, the continued procrastination by the generals eventually drove Moltke to the conclusion that no action could be expected from them at all, and his disgust with their

21 Countess von Moltke and Countess Yorck von Wartenburg, unpublished composition, 1945, "Since 1942 attempts were repeatedly made to establish contacts, usually through personalities like Friedrich von der Schulenburg and Ulrich Wilhelm von Schwerin, with officers who were ready to execute a Staatsstreich." For details of their efforts in this regard see van Roon, Neuordnung, pp. 278-286.

22 Peter Hoffmann, Widerstand, Staatsstreich, p. 428. Moltke's trips to Turkey and Sweden should also be viewed in this light. See van Roon, Neuordnung, pp. 312-322.

23 van Roon, Neuordnung, p. 285.
indecisioin mounted with each passing month. These doubts concerning the Attentat did not, however, lead the Kreisauers to espouse a political philosophy of nonviolence à la Ghandi or to reject assassination under any and all circumstances. Even Moltke, whose praise of purely spiritual-intellectual resistance in his last letters from prison has given a superficial credence to this interpretation, did not dismiss the Attentat as "not allowed." Moltke, however, was arrested just as Stauffenberg was emerging as the driving force of the conspiracy, and the question of what role he might have played in the tension-filled months before July 20 is, of course, a matter for speculation.

26 In his last letters from prison, in January 1945, Moltke wrote:

It is established that we did not wish to use force; it is further established that we did not take a single step towards setting up any organization, nor question anyone as to his readiness to take over any particular post. . . . We merely thought . . . we are to be hanged for thinking together. . . . I am all in favor of our dying on this issue.

But the activities of his Kreisau friends in Berlin, even those who held grave reservations about the *Attentat*, give overwhelming evidence of their integration into Stauffenberg's plans and their acceptance, if not unreserved support, of the *Attentat*.  

Yorck, who was in increasingly close contact with his cousin in early 1944, became one of Stauffenberg's closest friends and most trusted political advisors in matters of administrative, social, and cultural reform.  

Stauffenberg agreed with Yorck and the Kreisauers on the crucial role of Christianity in a revived German society, and their discussions of internal reform continued into June.  

Along with Fritzi Schulenburg and Ulrich Schwerin von Schwanenfeld, Yorck concentrated on plans to assure communication and cooperation between the military and the civilian political appointees on X-Day. Yorck and Schulenburg helped select

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27 Basing his conclusions on van Roon, Müller claims that the Kreisau Circle "as such" played a small role in Stauffenberg's activities because Moltke's arrest meant the end of the circle's work and because of the circle's "basic conviction" that action should be taken only after Hitler's collapse. Like van Roon, Müller's treatment of the Kreisau Circle suffers from the common error of over-emphasizing the role of Moltke and equating his personal convictions for those of the entire circle. Müller, *Oberst i.G. Stauffenberg*, pp. 366-369.


29 *Spiegelbild einer Verschwörung*, p. 167.
persons to fill administrative posts in the new government, further demonstrating the Kreisau influence on the very important selection of personnel for X-Day.

Trott also was included in that small group of friends to whom Stauffenberg turned for advice and consultation in political affairs. His trips to Sweden and Switzerland, where he had cultivated contacts with Allied diplomatic circles, made him an invaluable source of information and he became Stauffenberg's most trusted advisor in foreign affairs. During 1944 Trott made another visit to Switzerland and two to Sweden, where his discussions with British and American diplomats revolved around the question which had dominated his contacts with them since 1942—what policy would the Allies adopt in regard to a new German government following the overthrow of the Nazi regime? Since the Allied adoption of the doctrine of "unconditional surrender" at the Casablanca Conference, Trott had used the opportunity of these discussions in a futile effort to convince the Allies of the near-paralyzing effect of this policy on the German resistance. While underscoring the willingness of resistance elements to act against Hitler, he repeatedly stressed that they,

30 Ibid., p. 110. See also Yorck's testimony before the People's Court in E. Büdde and P. Lütschess, Die Wahrheit über den 20. Juli, p. 86.
31 Eberhard Zeller, Geist der Freiheit, pp. 293 and 151.
are naturally unwilling to shoulder the burden and blame of Hitler's defeat unless they can hope to offer the people some improvement or advantage in their situation compared to what would follow Hitler's own defeat. Accepting unconditional surrender now, they would feel unable later on to counteract the mass slogan of having "stabbed in the back" our fighting forces—a slogan which is bound to recur even more violently and immediately than it did after 1918.32

It was difficult enough to persuade wavering generals to take action against their commander-in-chief, but without being able to assure them that a new anti-Nazi government would receive any better treatment from the Allies, it was nearly impossible.

In spite of his failure to gain concessions on this issue during meetings with British diplomats in Stockholm in November 1943, Trott was able to return to Sweden again in March of the following year. On this occasion Trott did not deal with the "unconditional surrender" policy but, through Swedish intermediaries, attempted to gain British agreement to a bombing halt on Berlin in the event of a successful coup d'état. Trott felt that this step would have been without military significance because of its geographic restriction and could have been presented as a humanitarian rather than

political gesture. Were the British to continue these raids on an anti-Hitler government in its initial period of consolidation, it would be taken by the German people as a clear indication that the English were fighting not only to remove Hitler but to destroy Germany as such. Ivar Anderson, one of Trott's Swedish contacts, transmitted Trott's comments to the British Legation as planned, but the reaction there was completely negative. The Allies were unwilling to make any gestures of support for a political movement in Germany which was not ready to accept the Allied formula of total German military defeat.

In April 1944, Trott renewed his efforts in Switzerland, where he was in indirect contact with Allen Dulles, the leading figure of the American OSS in Bern. During a previous visit, in January 1943, Trott had complained to Dulles, via Moltke's friend Gero von S. Gaevernitz, that, in contrast to the Russians, the Western Allies seemed unwilling to take a positive attitude toward the German resistance and had spoken, therefore, of a "strong temptation to turn East." During his


April visit he resumed his argument against Western intransigence concerning the "unconditional surrender" issue and renewed his warning with even greater emphasis that "in spite of military victory the democracies may lose the peace, and the present dictatorship in Central Europe [may] be exchanged for a new one." He drew Dulles' attention to the dangers of a Bolshevized Germany and urged the Allies to give some indication of support to the Western oriented groups. Once again, however, he returned to Berlin without even the hint of a positive response. 36

Near the end of May or early June, however, Trott received word from Inga Kempe, one of his contacts in Sweden, that the British wished to resume discussion of certain important affairs with him. Because an indiscretion in the Swedish press concerning his last visit had endangered his own standing, Trott felt compelled to send his friend and Foreign Office colleague Alexander Werth in his stead. The talks, conducted under difficult circumstances, produced no positive results since the British demanded that the German negotiator

36Allen Welsh Dulles, Germany's Underground, New York, 1947, pp. 137-138. The establishment of the National Committee for a Free Germany in the Soviet Union and statements in the Soviet press and radio broadcasts seemed to some to indicate that the Soviet Union might be more willing to deal with the German resistance than the West. For details see Bodo Scheurig, Freies Deutschland: Das Nationalkomitee und der Bund Deutscher Offiziere in der Sowjetunion 1943-1945, Munich, 1961.
be Trott and no one else. Trott, therefore, arranged yet another pretext for a journey to Sweden and arrived in Stockholm on June 19. Before his departure Stauffenberg had asked him to ascertain what reaction could be expected from the British and American governments to a German peace initiative. "I must know," he emphasized to Trott, "how England and the U. S. A. will behave if Germany should be obliged to a prompt opening of negotiations." Once again, however, the talks reached an impasse due to the "unconditional surrender" issue. At the request of the British Legation, Trott composed a memorandum describing the composition of the resistance, without giving specific names, and the chances of removing the Nazi regime. Cooperation with the Western Allies was desired but could be realized only if the "unconditional surrender" formula were either dropped or at least clarified.

As long as it seems necessary for the Western powers to confine their war policy exclusively to the military aspect of unconditional surrender this group feels that the only alternative to further immense sacrifices of life and to the risk of a completely unmanageable chaos in Europe depends primarily on their already advanced preparations to establish an effective and reliable political system, before or at least during the break down of Hitler's military and political machine. They know this cannot be achieved by a military dictatorship. . . . It is impossible to give a concrete estimate of the chances of success since this depends on many different and precarious circumstances

37 Christopher Sykes, Troubled Loyalty, pp. 423-424.
38 Spiegelbild einer Verschwörung, p. 174.
which it is difficult or impossible to understand from abroad. It is recognized, however, that the opposition must first act and establish itself and then cope with the practical political possibilities on all sides, provided that some qualification of the term "unconditional surrender" is forthcoming.\footnote{39}

During this final visit in Sweden Trott also attempted to arrange a meeting with the Soviet Ambassadress Madame Alexandra Kollontay. While this meeting did not take place, Trott did have intensive discussions with Sverker Aström, attaché at the Swedish Embassy in Moscow. The theme of their conversations undoubtedly centered on the probable position of the Soviet regime toward a new German government, a topic which Trott had discussed with Ivar Anderson in April.\footnote{40}

Still, when Trott returned to Berlin on July 3, it was again without any definite commitment of support from the Allies.

Thus a downcast Trott had to report the negative results to his Kreisauer friends, and to Stauffenberg.\footnote{41} Yet despite Trott's pessimistic reports of Western inflexibility, Stauffenberg seemed to cling to the conviction that a settlement with the English and Americans could be attained through negotiations "von Militär zu Militär."\footnote{42} Based on his experiences with American and British diplomats, Trott persisted in


\footnote{40}Ibid., p. 282.

\footnote{41}Interview with Dr. Eugen Gerstenmaier, Oberwinter, June 3, 1970, and Spiegelbild einer Verschwörung, p. 493.

\footnote{42}Joachim Kramarz, Stauffenberg, p. 180. Also see Müller, Oberst i.G. Stauffenberg, pp. 453-454.
his opinion that no separate peace could be expected and that the terms of surrender would be harsh indeed. Negotiations should, therefore, be conducted with both the Anglo-Saxons and the Soviets. Both Yorck and Leber, who had few illusions concerning Germany's impending fate, supported Trott's assessment of the situation.\footnote{Spiegelbild einer Verschwörung, p. 493, and Ein Mann Geht Seinen Weg, p. 285.} This view of Germany's position and Trott's concept of Germany's future role in Europe were expressed in a memorandum, "Germany between East and West," which he composed during the early summer of 1944. He hoped to see Germany, once purged of Hitler's regime, assume a middle role between East and West consistent with her geographical position in the center of the continent. This memorandum, which he felt to be his best and which was discussed in resistance circles, unfortunately was lost during the collapse of the Third Reich.\footnote{Christopher Sykes, Troubled Loyalty, pp. 424-425. Because of fear of discovery by the Gestapo only several copies were made. After July 20 the Gestapo seems to have actually been in possession of a copy, but it could not be found after the war.}

While Trott was absorbed in questions of foreign policy, his close friend Hans van Haeften also accepted a more active role. Although Haeften continued to be plagued by a delicate physical condition and deep religious misgivings against political murder, he accepted the responsibility for the
reorganization of the Foreign Office and was to secure its control on X-Day. This meant selecting reliable officials to function in the Foreign Office during the transitional phase. He was also to assume the position of a state secretary in the new government. Through his brother Werner, with whom he shared an apartment, he was well informed of Stauffenberg's activities. In January, before Moltke's arrest, Haeften had described his position by paraphrasing a quote from Bismarck in a letter to his wife Barbara:

> We ourselves can do nothing. We can only remain silent and wait until we hear the tread of God resounding through History. Then, however, we must spring forward and seek to grasp an edge of his coat.

Now, with his active participation in the preparations for the coup d'état after January 1944, Haeften demonstrated that he was no longer waiting.

Eugen Gerstenmaier had not been subject to the doubts that troubled Hans von Haeften. He had long advocated taking any measures necessary to remove Hitler and his regime and, in 1943, had assured Fritzi Schulenburg that he could be

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46 Ibid.

47 Letter from Hans von Haeften to his wife, January 5, 1944.
counted on if needed on X-Day. During the circle's long and difficult debates concerning the *Attentat*, he had persistently sought to convince his friends of its necessity. Although not slated for an official position in the new government, he gave his full support to Stauffenberg's efforts, as his actions on July 20 were to testify.

Paulus van Husen, a close friend of Yorck, remained an active member of the circle after January 19 and therefore was also involved in the plans that culminated in the events of July 20. Through his position as an officer in the offices of the *Wehrmachtführungsstab*, he stood at an important focal point of the Wehrmacht's vast communications network. It was through Husen, therefore, that the Berlin Kreisauers were able to maintain contact with the circle's members in Bavaria. The command headquarters of the Defense District-Munich was located in the large monastery in Pullach, by coincidence, the monastery in which Fathers Rösch and König worked and resided. Father König was in charge of the administration of the large central building, and because of his administrative duties within the monastery, the military had placed a telephone on the Wehrmacht line at his disposal. In Berlin Husen needed only to pick up the Wehrmacht telephone and request *Wehrkreiskommando-Munich*. In an official tone he

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would then demand, "Dr. König zum Apparat!," and within moments Father König was on the line. In this manner it was possible to pass along limited information to the Jesuits, though obviously in highly guarded terms.

As the year progressed, the messages from Berlin grew less and less frequent. This, however, is hardly surprising considering the established operating procedure of the circle. Only those members able to contribute directly to the project currently under way were informed, and the Jesuits in the Pullach monastery were in no position to participate in either the preparations for or the execution of the expected coup d'etat. König did, however, undertake one last journey to Berlin in June and was present in the Hortensienstrasse for the discussion of the question of entering talks with the German Communists. It is quite probable that he was summoned to Berlin by Yorck, via the Wehrmacht line, to represent Jesuit opinion on that important issue.

Father Delp was not in the Pullach monastery, and his contacts with Berlin were even fewer than those of Father Rösch and König. He was aware that action was afoot in Berlin

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49 Interview with Dr. Paulus van Husen, Münster, April 16, 1970.

50 Yorck, for example, informed Husen of the meeting and summoned Lukaschek from Breslau for the meeting. Hans Lukaschek, "Widerstandsbewegung im Dritten Reich," Erziehung und Beruf, v. 9, 1959, pp. 94-96.
but lacked any definite knowledge of developments there. Although the question of how his attention was drawn to Claus Stauffenberg remains unanswered. Delp did arrive at Stauffenberg's home in Bamberg late one evening in early June. Stauffenberg was visiting his family, and a discussion of the planned obligations of Jesuits released from active military service was given as the ostensible purpose of Delp's visit. During their conversation Delp expressed "the wish . . . of many for immediate action" against the regime, and although he was impressed with the Colonel's personality, Stauffenberg appears to have been vague and noncommittal in his comments. Upon his return to Berlin, Stauffenberg complained bitterly about this highly incautious visit, and Yorck in turn relayed this message to Pullach. When, on July 21, Delp learned of the unsuccessful Putsch attempt, he seemed disappointed and irritated that he had not been informed. 51

While the role of the Bavarian Jesuits diminished in the early months of 1944, Julius Leber, who had followed the Kreisau programmatic work with reserved skepticism, was drawn ever closer to the circle. Though he had always been in close contact with Reichwein and Haubach, he became more intimately

acquainted with Yorck and Trott during this period. In April, as Hans Lukaschek visited Yorck at his estate in Silesia, Yorck reported that "in our circle Leber is stepping very much into the foreground." Moreover, along with Yorck and Trott, Leber became one of Stauffenberg's closest civilian collaborators and, eventually, Stauffenberg's choice for chancellor or the new government. Nor was Beck adverse to Leber's assumption of that post. Leber, however, refused to be considered for the position, primarily because he felt that the cabinet would represent only an interim government. Its principal task would be to end the war, and due to the experiences of 1918, he believed that the Socialists should not be burdened with the main responsibility of Germany's surrender. He was, however, willing to accept the position of Minister of Interior in the new government and gave his support to his fellow Socialist colleague Wilhelm Leuschner for Vice Chancellor. He was convinced that Goerdeler's cabinet would be short-lived, and that a second wave would carry to power a Leuschner cabinet with heavy Socialist representation.

Leber's disaffection with Goerdeler's political concepts and Stauffenberg's preference for his younger Kreisau

52 Hans Lukaschek, "Was war und wollte der Kreisauer Kreis?", unpublished speech.

53 J. Leber, Ein Mann Geht Seinen Weg, pp. 290-291. These opinions were shared by Peter Yorck, Spiegelbild einer Verschwörung, pp. 257 and 234.
friends soon threw the differences within the resistance into bold relief. In discussions in both mid-May and mid-June disagreements between Leber and Goerdeler reached confrontation proportions. The meetings were held in the apartment of Joseph Wirmer and were attended by Leuschner, Jakob Kaiser, Schulenburg, Goerdeler, Leber, and, perhaps, Bernhard Letterhaus. Goerdeler's plans for the internal reorganization of the Reich and his views on foreign policy were subjected to sharp criticism by Leber, who accused Goerdeler of being an illusionist in regard to Germany's external situation and of being bound to outmoded social-economic concepts. Trott had warned against optimism in evaluating Germany's international options, and, clearly revealing this influence, Leber argued that a total occupation of Germany could not be avoided regardless of a successful Putsch. Goerdeler, however, persisted in his belief that through a prompt change of regimes and the continuation of military resistance, a total occupation of the Reich could be prevented. Using the total military collapse of Germany as his point of departure, Leber also presented his plans for internal political reform, which were subsequently characterized in the Gestapo reports as a "radical socialist program." Leber's highly critical attitude at these meetings provoked

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54 Ibid., p. 285.
Goerdeler to suspect that Stauffenberg was behind him, and only after painstaking efforts at mediation by Wirmer, Schwerin, and Kaiser, was the widening rift between the two factions bridged. Still, relations between Goerdeler and his younger rivals remained strained into July.  

Leber's socialist friends Theo Haubach and Adolf Reichwein also played significant roles in the last phase of the circle's work. Both were among those Kreisauers who participated regularly in the meetings in the Hortensienstrasse 50 after the arrest of Moltke. Along with Gerstenmaier, Haubach continued to take an interest in the refining and editing of the Kreisau documents in an effort to keep them relevant to the current situation, although as the summer progressed work on the documents dwindled.  

Through Leber and Yorck Haubach was aware of Stauffenberg's plans and after July 5 his contacts with Stauffenberg intensified. Haubach was to assume the direction of the Information Agency in the new government.  

55 Spiegelbild einer Verschwörung, pp. 179, 211-212.  
56 Interview with Dr. Eugen Gerstenmaier, Oberwinter, June 3, 1970.  
57 Letter from Dr. Heinrich Gleissner, June 11, 1970.  
58 Eberhard Zeller, Geist der Freiheit, p. 103; Peter Hoffmann, Widerstand, Staatsstreich, p. 436.
In a letter written during Easter, 1944, Reichwein revealed his awareness of the need to act.

Sometimes I envy those who retreat to their books and leave the daily struggle for the future to others. But their resignation only strengthens my conviction that a new era can only be achieved if one fights at each step along the way. The fewer the fighters, the more the responsibility lies on the few. I have discovered in my life what this lack of fighting spirit means in terms of omissions and neglect: a horrible field of unsuccessful attempts lies behind us. As for me, I don't want to share the guilt for these omissions. 59

Reichwein was not scheduled to play an active role on X-Day, but this did not prevent him from contributing to the political preparations for the Staatsstreich. Throughout 1944 he had pressed relentlessly for the establishment of contacts with the underground Communist party and, in late June, his efforts proved successful.

On June 21 Yörck, Husen, Lukaschek, Father König, Leber, Reichwin, and Haubach gathered in Husen's apartment and then later in the nearby Hortensienstrasse 50 for a final discussion of Leber's intention of entering talks with the Central Committee (ZK) of the underground Communist party. This issue had been debated with increasing frequency since January, with Leber and Reichwein consistently emphasizing the desirability of Communist representation within a broadly-based Volksfront. Leber and especially Reichwein were

59 James L. Henderson, Adolf Reichwein, p. 159.
convinced that the viability of a new German government in the crucial period following its assumption of power depended upon the solidarity of the political forces of the resistance. Only a broad people's movement, Leber argued, would be strong enough to challenge the Nazis, and without the cooperation of the Communists, such a unified, popular front would be impossible. Moreover, both Leber and Reichwein hoped that Communist participation would create an effective counterweight to the conservative influences within the conspiracy. Aside from Goerdeler, who rejected Communist collaboration on ideological grounds, Leuschner and Jakob Kaiser also opposed efforts to establish more intimate contacts with the "ZK." However, the anxiety which Leber's plans evoked in these socialist leaders as well as in most members of the Kreisau Circle stemmed more from their well-founded fear of Gestapo infiltration of Communist circles than from ideological considerations. Nevertheless, while aware of the possible dangers, Leber and Reichwein persisted.


62 Gerhard Ritter, Carl Goerdeler, p. 249.

Through friends in Jena, Reichwein had established contact with the Communist organization led by Theodor Neubauer and Magnus Poser, and since early 1944 occasional preliminary discussion had taken place in the home of Frau Reichwein's brother in Berlin-Wannsee. Reichwein also sought to establish contacts with members of the Berlin Central Committee, and in this he was aided by Fritz Berndt, Ferdinand Thomas, and Judith Auer, all of whom were active in Communist circles. Still, his proposals met determined opposition within the circle, and even Haubach adamantly objected to such a move. Leuschner and Kaiser also attempted to dissuade Leber from entering negotiations with the Communists, but after two fruitless conversations in Kaiser's apartment earlier in the summer, Leber remained committed to Reichwein's plan. By late June, after much debate, the stage for a meeting between Leber, Reichwein, and members of the Berlin Central Committee seemed set. But the question of whether they would meet their Communist counterparts as individuals or with the support of the circle remained to be settled. Thus, at the meeting on June 21, after discussing cultural-political questions, Leber announced that he had been


approached by two reliable Communists who requested a meeting. The familiar protestations concerning security were voiced, but Leber responded by stating that he had known these men in the concentration camp and that they could be trusted. His assurances finally assuaged the misgivings of those present and at the close of the meeting Leber and Reichwein had received the support of the circle. Whether Stauffenberg agreed with this move, however, remains unclear.

According to the arrangements made with Ferdinand Thomas, Leber and Reichwein were to meet with two members of the Central Committee at the home of Dr. Rudolf Schmid on the following evening. When Thomas arrived, however, he was accompanied by three men: Anton Saefkow and Franz Jakob were indeed Communist functionaries, but the third man, Hermann Rambow, turned out to be a Gestapo agent. With Leber seizing the initiative in the discussion, the talks ranged over the most important social problems to be faced by a new German government and, to Leber's genuine surprise, the Communists

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68 Peter Hoffmann, Widerstand, Staatsstreich, p. 429. Hoffmann claims that Stauffenberg approved of the meeting, while Müller is somewhat skeptical. Müller, Oberst i.G. Stauffenberg, pp. 419-420. Although Stauffenberg did not participate in the meeting of the Kreisau Circle on June 21, it seems likely that he was at least informed of Leber's intentions.
displayed an unusual amenability to his ideas. They, in turn, advocated the establishment of a free democracy, retention of private property except for large concerns and also proved open-minded on church questions. Finally Leber was asked what he could do to bring about a Putsch, but he eschewed a definite answer. Still, the meeting had been conducted in a cooperative, positive atmosphere, and it was agreed to meet again on July 4. 69

Leber, however, was suspicious. The alacrity with which the Communists had responded to the proposals of their former Social Democratic adversaries and the mildness of their own position, though obviously tactical, had aroused in him a definite sense of uneasiness. Furthermore, despite the prearranged procedure for the conduct of the meeting, whereby no names would be used, he had been greeted at the outset by one of the Communists with a cry of recognition: "Ach, du Leber." Leber, therefore, decided not to attend the July 4 meeting. 70

69 Ibid., p. 430. Hoffmann maintains that Bernard Bästlein took part in the meeting instead of Franz Jacob. East German literature on the question, however, is unanimous in naming Jacob as Saefkow's partner in the discussion. Finker, Stauffenberg, p. 176, and Deutsche Widerstandskämpfer 1933-1945, Berlin, 1970.

70 Annedore Leber, "Dr. Leber und Stauffenberg," Telegraph; also see Finker, Stauffenberg, p. 219.
Reichwein, however, who had originally established the contacts, was intent on continuing the talks. Despite the obvious risks involved, the rudimentary foundations for further discussions had been laid with surprising harmony, and he was hesitant to let the talks lapse.\textsuperscript{71} Thus, on the evening of July 3, Reichwein visited Peter Yorck in the Hortensienstrasse for a final discussion before the meeting with the Communists.\textsuperscript{72} Once again, before an important step was to be taken, Yorck was consulted. Not only Reichwein but also his wife Rosemarie were growing uneasy about the meeting. On the morning of July 4, as she left the apartment, her husband was obviously concerned, and she hoped to talk with him about the impending meeting later in the day. But when she returned in the early afternoon, he was gone.\textsuperscript{73}

That same afternoon, Gottfried von Nostitz, having just arrived in Berlin from his post in the German Consulate in Geneva, was invited to dine with his friends Adam von Trott and Hans von Haeften at the latter's apartment. On his last visit to Switzerland Trott had indicated to Nostitz that a Putsch was in the making and had spoken enthusiastically

\textsuperscript{71}Gerhard Nitsche, Die Saefkow-Jacob-Bästlein Gruppe, Berlin, 1957, p. 89. See also Antifaschistische Lehrer im Widerstandskampf, Berlin, 1967, p. 90.

\textsuperscript{72}Interview with Frau Reichwein, Berlin, July 15, 1970.

\textsuperscript{73}Ibid.
about a Colonel Stauffenberg. Trott had assured him that at
the appropriate time some pretext would be arranged to have
him summoned to Berlin. In the late afternoon of July 4
Trott, Haeften, and Nostitz drove to Haeften's apartment
where they were joined by Peter Yorck. During dinner and
afterwards as they sat around the table, the imminence of
X-Day was discussed. Yorck seemed particularly well-informed
and led the conversation. Nostitz, who had long known Yorck
and was familiar with his previous reservations concerning
the Attentat, was astounded by the transformation in Yorck's
attitude. He seemed to have an air of a "mission" ("Sendung")
about him. Haeften, too, had undergone a change, but still
seemed to harbor doubts about the undertaking. Nowhere were
the moral issues surrounding the Attentat more acutely evident
than in the personal struggle of Hans von Haeften, the man
whom Clarita von Trott had so appropriately designated as the
"heart" of the circle in her code.

Late in the evening the conversation of the three men
was interrupted by a ring at the door. A man was ushered
into an adjoining room and Trott was summoned from the table.
After about twenty minutes he returned to the dining room,
pale and obviously shaken. Reichwein, he said, had not
returned from the meeting with the Communists. There was
reason to believe that he had been arrested. An animated
discussion followed in which Haeften, who only hours before.
had expressed misgivings about the operation, was moved to utter: "If nothing is done from our side now, they will pick us off one by one and our work will have been in vain." The Kreisauer who had most tenaciously challenged the Attentat, whose moral scruples against political murder had been the source of such tormenting mental anguish, had at last been swayed into acceptance of action.

A tense conversation followed in which the possible reactions of the Allies, especially England, were reviewed. Nostitz, because of his position in Geneva, reported that although the outlook was not bright, he believed the British would draw the proper conclusions from the deed. It was growing late. Yorck left for the Hortensienstrasse, and Nostitz and Haeften accompanied Trott to his apartment. Trott then decided that he should see Stauffenberg immediately. He took with him an important foreign policy memorandum, probably "Germany between East and West," which he had only recently completed. Haeften and Nostitz awaited his return outside on the terrace, where the warmth of the languid summer night provided a stark contrast to the mounting tension they felt. Their vigil was a long one, for Trott did not return until very late. He had seen Stauffenberg. Expecting the Gestapo at any moment, Trott hid his memorandum and the three men tried to sleep.74

74 Interview with Botschafter Gottfried von Nostitz, Munich, June 4, 1970.
Early the next morning Rosemarie Reichwein arrived at the Hortensienstrasse 50. Peter Yorck tried to comfort her and decided to phone Leber at his coal yard. The terse reply from the other end of the line confirmed his worst fear. Leber, too, had been arrested. 75

News of the arrests traveled fast. Haubach phoned Stauffenberg that morning to inform him of Leber's arrest. 76 Haubach, quite probably, had been the intruder at Haeften's apartment on the previous night, and once again he was the bearer of bad tidings. Reichwein had been seized at the S-Bahn station on the Heeresstrasse along with Anton Saefkow and Franz Jakob, while Leber was arrested the following morning in his office. 77 The situation was desperate. Not only was Leber considered indispensable in Stauffenberg's political calculations, but the possibility loomed large that under Gestapo tortures information might be extorted from the pair which would endanger the entire conspiracy. The situation demanded immediate action.

That evening Trott, Haeften, and Nostitz drove in Trott's small car to Potsdam, where Schwerin had invited several guests ostensibly to celebrate the birthday of an

75 Interview with Frau Reichwein, Berlin, July 15, 1970.
76 Eberhard Zeller, Geist der Freiheit, p. 366.
77 Antifaschistische Lehrer, p. 90.
associate. Several cars, among them a number of the familiar grey automobiles of the military, were parked in front of Schwerin's house, and inside the newcomers were greeted by Berthold Stauffenberg, Yorck, Fritzi Schulenburg, Schwerin, and others. Despite the travity of the situation, the atmosphere in the house was remarkably relaxed. Having finally decided on immediate action, they seemed to have been released from the terrible burden that months, even years, of waiting had placed on them, and their mood, Nostitz observed, was calm, relieved, almost cheerful. The waiting was at last over. 78 The next day Claus Stauffenberg flew to Berchtesgaden for a conference with Hitler. With him he carried the explosives.

On July 1 Stauffenberg had been promoted to the post of Chief of Staff to the Commander of the Reserve Army, a position which provided him access to the military conferences in Hitler's headquarters. From his actions at the conference at the Obersalzberg on July 6, it is not clear whether Stauffenberg intended to activate the bomb himself or to entrust it to General Stieff, a fellow conspirator who would have the opportunity to do so at a uniform display to be attended by Hitler on the following day. But neither Himmler nor Goering were present at the conference, and Stauffenberg originally hoped

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78 Interview with Botschafter Gottfried von Nostitz, Munich, June 4, 1970.
to eliminate them along with their Führer with a single blow. Whether he left the bomb with Stieff or returned with it to Berlin is uncertain, but July 7 passed without the alarm from the Führerhauptquartier. The waiting was not over, for this was the first of three frustrated attempts made by Stauffenberg before July 20.79

On July 10 Hans Lukaschek arrived in Berlin from Breslau and visited his close friend Paulus van Husen that evening for dinner. There he met Peter Yorck, who announced upon entering that Count Stauffenberg could be expected later. Around nine o’clock he arrived. With the severe wounds he had suffered in Africa, Stauffenberg made an extraordinary impression on Lukaschek. His manner was deadly serious, his youthful countenance submerged in the gravity of the moment. Asked about the military situation, he answered that the Russians were on the verge of a breakthrough on the Vistula which could not be stopped. Defeat seemed certain. "What now?," asked Lukaschek. Rising to leave, Stauffenberg replied, "Assassination is all that remains for me . . . out of Christian responsibility."80

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80 Hans Lukaschek, "Was war und wollte der Kreisauer Kreis?,” unpublished speech.
On the following day Stauffenberg again traveled to Berchtesgaden. But again the Attentat was postponed. Himmler had failed to appear at the conference, and, since Field Marshals Rommel and Kluge had demanded the simultaneous removal of the Reichsführer SS and Göring as a prerequisite to their vital participation in the plot, Stauffenberg did not detonate the bomb.

With each passing day the situation in Berlin grew more tense. Each delay, each postponement, might be critical. Each knock at the door might mean the Gestapo; each phone call might bring the news of a friend's arrest. On July 13 Haefften, whose brother Werner informed daily of Stauffenberg's activities, wrote to his wife in Mecklenburg and, in their own code, told of the events of the past pressure-filled days. Werner, he wrote, was looking for a house in Potsdam. Twice in the last few days he had tried to find one, but had been unsuccessful. He would, however, try again in the next couple of days.

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82 Peter Hoffmann, Widerstand, Staatsstreich, pp. 451-452.

83 Letter from Hans von Haefften to his wife, July 13, 1944.
It was from Werner von Haeften that Yorck received word that Stauffenberg would attend another conference at the Führerhauptquartier on July 15. On that date Yorck reported to Schwerin's office in the Prinz Heinrich Strasse, where he was joined by Schulenburg and, perhaps, others. Schulenburg brought with him the list of civilian leaders to be contacted after the successful Putsch. But once again they waited for the alarm that did not come.

Hitler's headquarters had been shifted to the secluded Wolfschanze in East Prussia. Again Stauffenberg was prepared to execute the assassination, this time regardless of the absence of Himmler and Göring. But once again his efforts were frustrated. Because of a change in the conference schedule he was unable to transfer the bomb into his briefcase, and another opportunity was thus lost.

In the meantime Theo Haubach had left Berlin. The arrest of his friends Reichwein and Leber worried him greatly, and in several conversations with Heinrich Gleissner he expressed fears of far-reaching consequences. Since July 5 he had been in closer contact with Stauffenberg and was convinced that the time for action had arrived. Still, both

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86. Letter from Dr. Heinrich Gleissner, June 11, 1970.
Haubach and his friend and employer Viktor Bausch felt that he should disappear from Berlin for several days, and arrangements were made for him to visit his friend Emil Henk in the Allgäu Alps. On July 16 Leuschné, one of the very few in Berlin who knew Haubach's address in Bavaria, wrote to inform him that another attempt could be expected within the week.

Theodor Steltzer, though stationed in Norway, also entered the drama that was building in Berlin in the early days of July. Several days before July 20 he dispatched Moltke's younger brother, assigned to his command in Norway, to Berlin to be briefed on the situation by Peter Yorck. He returned with the report that a coup d'état was expected in the next few days. Steltzer, who remained constant in his opposition to a violent overthrow of the government, nonetheless composed a policy statement to be smuggled to the Western Allies. In this memorandum, entitled "the German Opposition to National Socialism," he outlined the Kreisau program, including its concept of foreign policy. The intended recipients of the memorandum were Moltke's friends Lionel

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88 Wilhelm Leithäuser, Wilhelm Leuschner, p. 256.
89 Theodor Steltzer, Sechzig Jahre Zeitgenosse, p. 159.
90 Theodor Steltzer, Von Deutscher Politik, pp. 81-96.
Curtis and Michael Balfour of the Round Table Circle in London. On July 16 Steltzer handed his composition to a Norwegian contact who transmitted it to its destination in England. Though alienated from the active center of the circle by geography and opposed to its participation in the plot, Steltzer's individual action in Norway was a logical extension of the circle's efforts in Berlin.

July 16 was a Sunday, but in Berlin it was no day of rest. In the afternoon Stauffenberg conferred with Beck, upon whom the waiting and repeated postponements were taking their inevitable toll, and that evening the Stauffenberg apartment in Wannsee was the scene of another conference. The meeting, which convened around 7:00 p.m., was attended by Claus and Berthold Stauffenberg, Fritzi Schulenburg, Yorck, Trott, Schwerin, Colonels Mertz von Quirnheim, Georg Hansen, and Caesar von Hofacker, the latter three being military conspirators who were to figure in the implementation of Operation Walküre. Hofacker, who was on the staff of General von Stulpnagel, the military governor of France, reported on the military situation in the West, relating the gloomy forecasts of Rommel and Kluge that the front would be broken irreparably within six weeks. A discussion of foreign policy followed which seems to have been led by Trott and during

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91 Ger van Roon, Neuordnung, pp. 328-329.
which three possible courses of action were considered. According to the so-called "Westl"ösung," German troops would cease all hostile action in the West and withdraw to the German frontier, thereby creating circumstances favorable to a separate peace with the Western Allies. In light of Hofacker's report, Stauffenberg seems to have been interested in this option. Another possible move envisioned a seizure of the Wehrmacht communications apparatus for at least twenty-four hours and the immediate ordering of all troops to fall back to the German frontiers, thus confronting the Führer-hauptquartier with a fait accompli. Finally, the "Central Solution" was discussed, according to which an Attentat would be followed by simultaneous negotiations with both the Western Allies and the Soviet Union. Trott, supported by Yorck, 92 especially advocated this course of action. From his contacts with Allied diplomats he realized that a separate peace with the West would never be accepted in London or Washington and that peace overtures would fall on deaf ears in those capitols if not accompanied by simultaneous offers to the Allies' partner in the East. Trott suffered no illusions as to the possible terms Germany would be handed, and like Leber, considered a total military occupation of Germany unavoidable. After considerable debate this "Central

92 Spiegelbild einer Verschwörung, p. 497.
So lution" seems to have been agreed upon as the proper course of action, and Trott was to be included in the German delegation chosen to negotiate with the West. 93

Later that same night Yorck and Husen met in the Hortensienstrasse 50 for the last time. Both men were extremely nervous and their conversation was interrupted time and again to peer through the curtains onto the street. They found it incredible that the Gestapo had not yet uncovered the conspiracy. The topic of their final meeting was X-Day. Toward the end of June Stauffenberg had asked his cousin to accept a position within the new government, but Yorck had demurred. 94 The arrest of Leber and the imminence of X-Day, however, had made certain changes in personnel necessary. Stauffenberg had, therefore, renewed his offer and asked Yorck to accept the position of State Secretary in the Reich Chancellry. This time Yorck agreed. Husen, too, was now to assume the post of Staatssekretär in the Department of the Interior. Although Husen objected, Yorck overcame his reluctance with an appeal to the urgency of the situation. A car, Yorck explained, would be sent to Husen's office on X-Day, which could be expected within the coming

93 Ibid., pp. 101, 175.

94 Ibid., p. 110. Also see Yorck's testimony before the Peoples' Court in Büdde and Lütschess, Die Wahrheit über den 20. Juli, pp. 85-86.
week, and he would join the other political appointees in Count Schwerin's office in the Prinz Heinrich Strasse. The car, however, never came.  

On July 18 Stauffenberg and Goerdeler held their final conversation. Goerdeler still hoped that the Westlösung could be implemented, but Stauffenberg dismissed his offer to visit Kluge again as impossible. There was no time. Goerdeler, who had been enraged upon learning of Stauffenberg's independent appointment of Yorck, thus received another rebuff. Repeatedly he complained to Jakob Kaiser, "They are trying to exclude me. They don't inform me anymore." His diminishing influence on events and policies within the resistance were clearly visible.

That same afternoon Stauffenberg seems to have become fairly certain that he would be summoned to another conference in the Wolfschanze on July 20. The inner circle of conspirators was once again informed, Yorck receiving the word from Schwerin. Since Yorck planned to be in Weimar on the following day, Schwerin agreed to telegraph him there if

96 Peter Hoffman, Widerstand, Staatsstreich, p. 461.
97 H. B. Gisevius, Bis zum Bitteren Ende, p. 351.
the Attentat was again postponed. Otherwise Yorck would return to Berlin early on July 20.\textsuperscript{99}

Trott, who had again discussed foreign policy with Berthold Stauffenberg on the previous day,\textsuperscript{100} was also among those informed of the new date on July 18. After briefing Wilhelm Melchers, a trusted official in the Foreign Office, on the extent of the conspiracy, Trott told him that nothing would happen on the next day, but that he should be ready on July 20.\textsuperscript{101}

On July 18 Stauffenberg's thoughts were still with Julius Leber, the man he hoped to see as Chancellor of a new government. His absence from the political scene had been keenly felt by Stauffenberg, and it was Leber's arrest that precipitated action. In a conversation with Trott sometime after Leber's arrest, Stauffenberg exclaimed with fervor:

"We need Leber. I'll get him out. I'll get him out." On July 18 a brief message from Stauffenberg reached Frau Leber:

"We are aware of our duty."\textsuperscript{102}

On the morning of July 19 Peter and Marion Yorck boarded the train for Weimar. There was to be a wedding in


\textsuperscript{100}Spiegelbild einer Verschwörung, p. 57.

\textsuperscript{101}Frau Dr. Clarita von Trott zu Solz, Materialsammlung, unpublished.

\textsuperscript{102}J. Leber, Ein Mann Geht Seinen Weg, pp. 292-293.
the family on the following day, and the traditional Polterabend festivities were scheduled for the evening of the 19th. The Yorcks had found an empty compartment for the journey, and, seated alone as the train sped away from bomb-torn Berlin, Peter Yorck explained that he must return early the next morning. Tomorrow, the 20th of July, he said, is X-Day. 103

As the train carrying Peter and Marion Yorck was approaching Weimar, the phone at the Mecklenburg home of Hans von Haeften had begun to ring. Haeften came as often as possible to Mecklenburg, where his family had sought refuge from the deadly reign of bombs which fell relentlessly on Berlin. He had come on June 24 for the baptism of his youngest daughter and had returned for a short stay with his family. The phone call on July 19, however, was from Berlin. It was his brother Werner. The conversation, such as it was, was brief, and calmly replacing the receiver, he turned to his wife Barbara and in a mild yet firm voice said simply, "Now the film must roll." Early the next morning he too left for Berlin. 104

For Adam von Trotz, at work in Berlin, July 19 passed uneventfully. Preparations for the takeover of the Foreign


Office continued, and Trott, in Haeften's absence, summoned a number of reliable officials to the Wilhelmstrasse for the next day. At some point in the day he found time to compose a poignant letter to his wife Clarita, which she kept after destroying the compromising portions (given here in parentheses):

(The reason I have written to you so little in the last days is not that I have too little but too much to tell you. During the next weeks and perhaps for longer, you may not hear from me at all.) But what remains is deep confidence in our life together, which we live at two poles, far from each other, but as part of a unity and under the same sign. I think very often and with great longing of you and the sweet children, and also of the valleys and hills, their peace, and our walks together on the high ground. Never despair (in all the troubles that must certainly come). They give us opportunity to recognize in fullness the gravity, the breadth and the strength of life and the Creator of life, in a way that has been denied to many generations.

In the evening, the Attentat only hours away, Claus von Stauffenberg stopped at Trott's apartment in Dahlem for a final conversation. During this meeting Stauffenberg apparently voiced renewed hope in the possibility of entering negotiations with the Western Allies on a commander-to-commander basis after the elimination of Hitler. Trott was very skeptical, but Stauffenberg replied that Beck did not share Trott's opinion. Trott had the impression that Beck had very

105 Frau Dr. Clarita von Trott zu Solz, Materialsammlung, unpublished.

106 Christopher Sykes, Troubled Loyalty, p. 432.
recently discovered new possibilities for negotiations with the American High Command. While Stauffenberg was not willing to accept completely Trott's sober appraisal of Germany's options, he recognized that Germany's military position was impossible and that a military occupation of the Reich was unavoidable. Thus, despite certain illusions, Stauffenberg stood closer to Trott, Leber, than to Goerdeler. At any rate, everything depended upon the removal of the Hitler regime, and this he was determined to accomplish. Trott and Stauffenberg concluded their conversation, and Stauffenberg left for his apartment in Wannsee. On his way he stopped for several moments at an empty church.

At about the same time Eugen Gerstenmaier and his wife were boarding a train in Stuttgart bound for Berlin. Several weeks had passed since he had left the capitol on the pretense of conducting a youth retreat in the mountains in Austria. His rather sudden departure from Berlin had been induced by the arrest of his close friend and colleague Wilhelm Bachmann, secretary of the Evangelical Welfare Association for internees and prisoners of war in Germany. In searching his desk, the Gestapo had discovered several papers composed by Gerstenmaier and intended for Dietrich Bonhoeffer, already arrested.

107 Christian Müller, Oberst i.G. Stauffenberg, pp. 453-454.

Expecting his own arrest at any moment, Gerstenmaier quickly arranged to spend several weeks in the Carinthian Alps. There in a remote mountain village he had received postcards from Peter Yorck which, in coded form, hinted at events in Berlin. "The wedding," their code for X-Day, had been repeatedly postponed. Finally Yorck's messages indicated that the "wedding" would almost certainly take place around July 20, a convenient code, indeed, considering the wedding in Weimar. So, after halting briefly in Stuttgart on July 19, the Gerstenmaiers moved on toward Berlin and the Hortensienstrasse 50. They arrived at Yorck's house around 3:00 a.m. on the 20th, where, concealed between the pages of a cookbook, a short ciphered note from Peter Yorck informed them of the arrest of Leber and Reichwein.¹⁰⁹

In Weimar the Polterabend festivities had come to an end. For Peter and Marion Yorck, who throughout the evening were aware that it might be their last together, the evening's gay exterior was spread thinly over the tension they must have

¹⁰⁹ Compiled from interview with Dr. Eugen Gerstenmaier, Oberwinter, June 3, 1970; E. Gerstenmaier, "The Church Conspiratorial," in Eric Boehm, ed., We Survived, pp. 183-184; and Fabian von Schlabrendorff, Eugen Gerstenmaier im Dritten Reich, pp. 30-33.
known. At 2:00 a.m. Peter Yorck bade farewell to his wife and boarded the train for Berlin. They never saw one another again. 110

In the early morning hours of July 20 Claus von Stauffenberg and Werner von Haeften climbed aboard a military aircraft bound for East Prussia and the Wolfschanze. X-Day, the day for which the Kreisauers had worked and planned, had come.

CHAPTER V

THE 20TH OF JULY AND AFTERWARDS

At about 12:50 p.m. on July 20 the bomb, concealed in Stauffenberg's briefcase, exploded, shattering the small wooden building where Adolf Hitler was conducting his morning military conference. Stauffenberg and Haeften miraculously managed to escape from the Wolfschanze and returned to Berlin. The flight from East Prussia, however, lasted over two hours, and the message of a fellow conspirator that Hitler had been killed did not reach the War Ministry in the Benderstrasse, the headquarters of the coup. The orders for the implementation of Operation Walküre had, therefore, not been issued. It was late afternoon before Stauffenberg reached the Benderstrasse, and valuable time had been lost. Immediately orders for Walküre were radioed to military commanders throughout the Reich, and until shortly after 10 p.m. the Benderstrasse was the scene of feverish activity. Failure to seize control of the Berlin radio station, however, proved fatal. Soon orders from the Führerhauptquartier reached the military commanders rescinding all orders from the Benderstrasse. Despite continued implementation of the coup in Paris, Vienna, and Prague, the conspiracy in Berlin had collapsed by 11:00 p.m. Beck was allowed to commit suicide; Stauffenberg, Haeften,
Olbricht, and Mertz von Quirnheim were led into the Bendler-block courtyard and, in the glare of lights from several military trucks, were summarily executed. Standing against the sandbagged wall of the building Stauffenberg shouted, "Long live holy Germany!" Then a volley of shots echoed throughout the courtyard.¹

Peter Yorck and Eugen Gerstenmaier were arrested with Schulenburg, Schwerin, Berthold von Stauffenberg, and others. Yorck had arrived at the War Ministry in the early afternoon, and with him he brought a list of instructions to be dispatched to the new administrative officials throughout Germany.² Around 5:00 p.m. he phoned the Hortensienstrasse and summoned Gerstenmaier to the War Ministry. Only moments before Yorck's call a special radio broadcast announced the failure of the assassination attempt. Nevertheless, Gerstenmaier, a pistol in one pocket and his Bible in the other, left the Hortensienstrasse. At the War Ministry he was briefed by Yorck and Schulenburg. The assassination had apparently miscarried, but the coup was still being carried out. Later provisional authority over the Reich Ministry of the Church and Education was conferred upon Gerstenmaier by Colonel General Hoepner, but it was increasingly evident that

¹Peter Hoffmann, Widerstand, Staatsstreich, pp. 466-603.
²Spiegelbild einer Verschwörung, p. 110.
the plot had failed. As the shots from the Bendlerblock courtyard rang out just after midnight, Yorck and Gerstenmaier waited with the other prisoners in Stauffenberg's office for their own execution. Instead, they were transported to the Gestapo prison in the Prinz Albrechtstrasse.3

Adam von Trott and Hans von Haeften spent the 20th of July at their posts in the Wilhelmstrasse anxiously awaiting orders to proceed with the takeover of the Foreign Office. Haeften had a written authorization to assume control of the Wilhelmstrasse and was prepared to arrest certain officials. Trott, Haeften, Wilhelm Melchers, and Alexander Werth met in Trott's office and waited for the telephone call from the War Ministry. But the phone call did not come. Attempts to reach Haeften's brother proved futile. Finally, at around 7:00 p.m. Haeften again tried to telephone his brother. When he returned from his office, as Melchers later recalled, "he was deathly pale. In his eyes was the dawning realisation of what danger we were in. Why did his brother not answer?"

When the troops who had sealed off the street below in keeping with Operation Walküre withdrew, it was clear that the plot had failed. The meeting in Trott's office broke up, but Trott, still hoping to hear from Stauffenberg, remained behind.

He waited until eleven o'clock. In the middle of the night he met Haeften in the darkness of the Grünewald to coordinate their stories in case of arrest. The next day Haeften left for Mecklenburg to bid farewell to his family. On July 23 he was arrested. Trott, who refused to leave Berlin, was arrested two days later.4

Within days the major figures of the circle were arrested, and on August 7-8 Peter Yorck was the first Kreisauer to stand before the Volksgerichtshof. The verdict of the "court" was, of course, a foregone conclusion, and Yorck made no attempt to evade responsibility. His conduct was characteristic of all the Kreisauers who faced the infamous judge Roland Freisler, and despite insults and abuse pouring from the bench, Yorck gave an eloquent and unequivocal statement of his position:

The decisive factor which brings together all these questions is the totalitarian claim of the state on the individual which forces him to renounce his moral and religious obligations to God.5

Before his execution on the same day Yorck whispered to Harald Poelchau, who was the prison chaplain and whose resistance

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4 Melchers' account is found in Christopher Sykes, Troubled Loyalty, pp. 434-437.

role had not been uncovered, that nothing was yet known of the Kreisau work.\textsuperscript{6}

Despite brutal torture and threats to family and friends, the Gestapo never discovered the true extent of the circle's activities. The Kreisau documents, for example, were not found. Lack of evidence, however, did not restrain Nazi "justice." Trott and Haeften were tried and executed in August; Reichwein in October; Leber, Moltke, and Haubach in January; and Father Delp in February.\textsuperscript{7} The courage of these men did not desert them in the face of death. "For so just and good a thing," Leber said, "the giving of one's own life is the proper price."\textsuperscript{8} Gerstenmaier, Steltzer, and Husen escaped with prison sentences, while Lukaschek, who was tried after Freisler's death in an air raid, was acquitted.\textsuperscript{9}

In the weeks and months that led to the 20th of July the loose structure of the Kreisau Circle had been maintained and the meetings in Berlin had continued, despite the loss of Helmuth von Moltke. Peter Yorck, assuming the role of

\textsuperscript{6}Interview with Dr. Harald Poelchau, Berlin, April 6, 1970.

\textsuperscript{7}Ger van Roon, \textit{Neuordnung}, pp. 291-293.

\textsuperscript{8}Annedore Leber and Freya Countess von Moltke, \textit{Für und Wider}, p. 236.

\textsuperscript{9}Ger van Roon, \textit{Neuordnung}, p. 293.
Geschäftsführer, had not only continued to provide the circle's members with a common center and meeting place but also, under the influence of Stauffenberg, had given the circle a new direction. During this period, as the circle became gradually integrated into the active plans for X-Day, Julius Leber's relationship with the circle grew more intimate. It was, after all, with Adolf Reichwein and the support of the Kreisau Circle that Leber entered the negotiations with the Communists. Although Stauffenberg by no means dominated the political aspects of the conspiracy, his inclination toward the politics of Leber and his Kreisau friends contributed significantly to the emergence of Leber as the resistance's most dynamic political figure in the last months before July 20.

The political tensions within the resistance had not eased by July 20, and the Kreisau Circle was only one of several groups that figured prominently in the political composition of the resistance. The assertion that Stauffenberg hoped to install a "Kreisau government" with Leber as chancellor and Trott as foreign minister\(^\text{10}\) is, therefore, mere speculation. Certainly the group around Goerdeler and the Leuschner-Kaiser group had both played important roles in the developments leading to the coup, and their influence

\(^{10}\)Gert Buchheit, Ludwig Beck. Ein preussischer General, Munich, 1964, p. 207.
in the formation of a post-Nazi Germany would have been
great. While they, like Leber and the Kreisauers, were
dependent upon Stauffenberg for the execution of the Staats-
streich, they had not surrendered political control of the
resistance to the young colonel. Still, primarily due to
the rise of Stauffenberg and his close relationships with
Yorck, Trott, and Leber, the Kreisau Circle was drawn into
the active conspiracy. The circle did not play a crucial
role in the events of July 20. Its primary duties in the
operation were political-administrative and were to have
followed the successful coup. However, the actions of Yorck,
Gerstenmaier, Trott, and Haeften clearly indicate the extent
of the circle's involvement in Stauffenberg's plans. More-
over, the circle's participation in the political preparations
for X-Day had been considerable. Since the completion of the
Kreisau program in May of 1943, the circle had moved slowly
from the fringes of the resistance toward its active center.
Rather than dissolving in January 1944, the Kreisau Circle
became an integral part of the conspiracy which culminated in
the Bendlerstrasse on that sultry Thursday in July of 1944.
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VITA

Thomas Clifford Childers, Jr., was born in Cleveland, Tennessee, on December 10, 1946. He attended grammar school and high school in Cleveland before entering The University of Tennessee in 1965 where he graduated with a Bachelor of Arts degree in political science in 1969. During 1969-1970 he studied as a Fulbright Scholar at the Johannes Gutenberg Universität in Mainz, West Germany. He received the Master of Arts degree in history from The University of Tennessee in August 1971.

Mr. Childers is married to the former Elizabeth Caroline Mayfield of Cleveland, Tennessee.