

# The Rider and the Bomb: Olympic Champion Heinz Brandt and the 20 July Plot

By Volker Kluge

The aftermath of the attack: The *Lagebaracke* at Wolfsschanze (Wolf's Lair), Hitler's East Prussian field headquarters following Graf Stauffenberg's bomb plot. Hitler survived the attack with minor injuries and he was able to show the scene to Italian dictator Mussolini, who arrived at Wolfsschanze two and a half hours later.

Photo: BArch,  
146-1969-071A-03



75 years ago, on 20 July 1944, at 12:42 pm, Adolf Hitler barely escaped an assassination attempt in the so-called Führer's Headquarters, Wolfsschanze (Wolf's Lair), near Rastenburg.<sup>1</sup> The bomb, placed in a bag by Colonel Claus Schenk Graf von Stauffenberg at the edge of the map table during the mid-day briefing only slightly injured the dictator but killed four of the attendees. Among them was Colonel Heinz Brandt, Deputy Chief of Operations of the General Staff of the Army and Olympic show jumping champion in Berlin 1936.

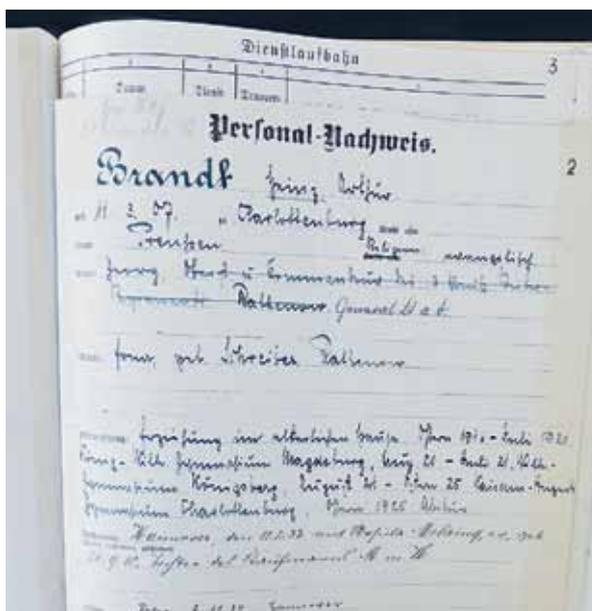
The 37-year-old Brandt stood in front of the bag, and Count Stauffenberg had positioned himself close to Hitler. Because Brandt was irritated by it, so it is said, he pushed it behind a heavy table base with his foot. He saved Hitler's life, but he himself was seriously injured and died two days later.

The plot, by a group of high-ranking military men whom Hitler saw as only "a small clique of ambitious, unscrupulous, and at the same time criminally stupid officers",<sup>2</sup> failed. As did Operation Valkyrie, and the attempt to seize power and negotiate a cease-fire with

the Allies. What followed was a wave of persecution and arrests. Around 180 to 200 people were executed in the most gruesome manner.<sup>3</sup>

People in post-war Germany initially found it hard to understand the "July Plot", as it came to be known. Was it traitors who had broken their allegiance to the Führer? Or resistance fighters who, led by their conscience, wanted to end the war with a morally justified assassination of the tyrant? Opinions were divided. It was only in the late-1960s that the pendulum of public perception swung in favour of those who recognised the men and women around Stauffenberg as patriots.

But the argument still rages. To date, publishers of the far-right persuasion are flooding the market with pseudo-scientific publications in which the Nazi regime is relativised and its crimes often even denied. Encouraged by the shift to the right in some countries, a new generation of historical revisionists is using the modern media to rewrite the past in ways that serve their purposes. What they call for is "a 180-degree change in remembrance policy".<sup>4</sup> The late British international



historian, Eric Hobsbawm, called such a phenomenon “the age of historical mythology.”<sup>5</sup>

One of the ineradicable legends is the story that Heinz Brandt, who died in the assassination attempt, belonged to the resistance. The fact that he ended up dead himself is explained by the notion that it was only the date of the attack that was unknown to him. But more on this later.

### Son of a Prussian Cavalry General

Heinz Arthur Brandt, who was born on 11 March 1907 in Charlottenburg near Berlin, was the son of Georg Brandt, a Prussian cavalry officer. During the First World War, his father, who grew up on a farm near Magdeburg, was attached to various, mostly cavalry, general staffs.

After the defeat and the demobilisation of the Imperial army, Brandt Sr. was taken into the newly formed Reichswehr of the Weimar Republic. According to the terms of the Treaty of Versailles, the latter could not comprise more than seven infantry and three cavalry divisions with a maximum of 100,000 soldiers and officers.<sup>6</sup> Among other roles, Brandt served as an inspector of the cavalry and regimental commander. Not yet 55 years old, he was discharged in 1931 as lieutenant general.

It was natural that his son would also opt for a career as a professional soldier. In 1925, he joined Cavalry Regiment 13, which was stationed in Hanover,<sup>7</sup> as a private. The next year he completed a training course at the Dresden Infantry School, followed by a second one in 1927, this time at the Hanover Cavalry School. The course ended in mid-August 1928.

At the same time, the German dressage riders won two gold medals at the Olympic Games in Amsterdam – in the individual competition by the Pomeranian landowner Carl-Friedrich von Langen and in a team

with von Langen and the cavalry officers Hermann Linkenbach and Eugen von Lotzbeck, who were riding instructors in Hanover.

Less successful were the German show jumpers, whose team did not achieve better than seventh place. The gelding named Falkner, ridden by Freiherr von Langen who had twice won the German Derby, was a particular disappointment, coming in 28<sup>th</sup> place.

### Caprilli’s riding technique and the Hanover Cavalry School

Show jumping was introduced relatively late in Germany. Dressage was a priority for the military, because it was the prerequisite for closed cavalry units. The early 20<sup>th</sup> century saw a rise in the importance of individual performances, which included show jumping, known as *Concours hippique* or “prize riding”. It was heavily influenced by the revolutionary riding technique of Italian cavalry captain Federico Caprilli, who taught at the Tor di Quinto cavalry school.<sup>8</sup>

The 1912 Olympics in Stockholm marked a turning point, in that the German show jumpers, in the person of Rabod von Kröcher on Dohna, won silver in the individual competition, and won bronze with the team, which also belonged to the House of Hohenzollern Prince Friedrich Karl. But four out of the five gold medals remained in Sweden.

Since the next Games were awarded by the IOC to Berlin, a “committee for fighting on horseback at the Olympic Games in Berlin 1916” was founded in early 1913 under the patronage of the Prussian crown prince, with the aim of achieving greater success.<sup>9</sup> From then on, this development was closely linked to the name of Gustav Rau, who was appointed secretary-general of the German Olympic Equestrian Committee.<sup>10</sup>

Personnel file of 1936 Olympic show-jumping team gold medallist Heinz Brandt, who joined the Reichswehr in 1925. Like the hussars of the Imperial army, equestrian soldiers in the Weimar Republic also wore a skull on their caps.

Photos: BAArch, Pers 6/n128; Volker Kluge



Georg Brandt was the father of the Olympic champion. A general in the cavalry, he killed himself on 21 April 1945 in Berlin shortly before Hitler’s regime collapsed.

Photo: BAArch, M 5g 109/285

Riding as politics: in December 1930, the successful Hanoverian officers were received by German President Hindenburg after a successful trip to the USA. From left to right: Lieutenant Freiherr von Nagel, Lieutenant Momm, Major Freiherr von Waldenfels, and Lieutenant Ernst Hasse.

Photo: BArch 102-10920



This developmental work was destroyed in the First World War. The number of horses that perished is estimated at about 14 to 20 million; 1.5 million on the German side alone. Nevertheless, there was an oversupply of horses in Germany after the war, due to the reduction of the cavalry to less than 6,000 men. The problem was to be solved by founding and promoting rural riding clubs – there were already about 2,200 of them in around 1928.

As far as German equestrian sport was concerned, its centre remained in Hanover, where the former Royal Prussian Military Riding Institute had been located since 1866. On 1 January 1921, it was converted into a cavalry school to train officers and cadets on horseback.<sup>11</sup> This is how a reservoir of riding sport enthusiasts came into being, made up of young nobleman and sons of the upper-middle class, who aspired to careers as officers.

With the founding of the German Olympic Committee for Equestrianism (DOKR) in 1926, Hanover also had a central office dedicated exclusively to preparing the best riders and horses for international tournaments. With its wealthy patrons, there was no lack of money. The committee was led by generals – in 1929 by Georg Brandt. After him came Reichswehr Minister Kurt von Schleicher, who in 1932 also became the last chancellor of the Weimar Republic.<sup>12</sup>

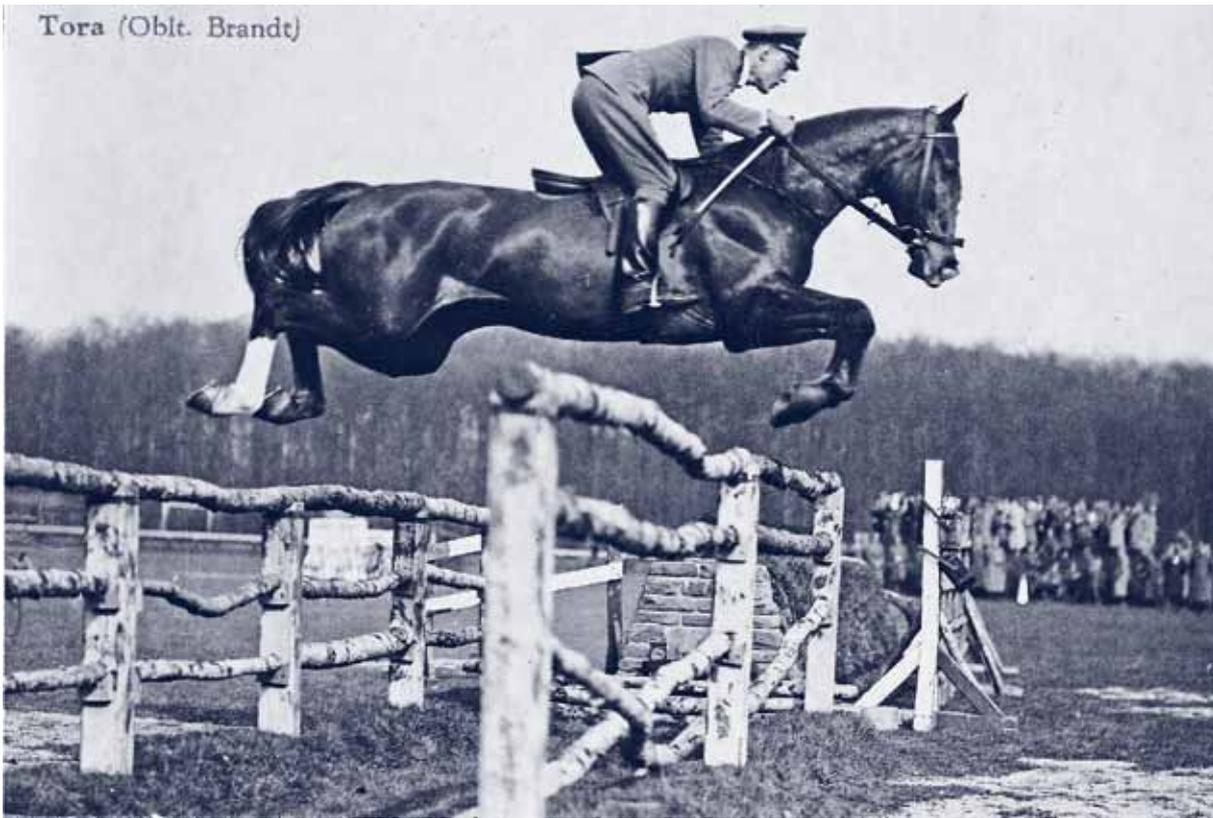
However, international isolation was a disadvantage for this development, initially due to a prohibition of participation issued by the High Rhine Commission of the Allies, and later by their own Reich Ministry of

Defence, which prohibited departures abroad as long as the Rhineland was occupied by the Allies.<sup>13</sup> Only Freiherr von Langen received permission in 1924 to study the Italian equestrian methodology as a civilian at Tor di Quinto and Pinerolo.

After the return of Germany to the Olympic family, the travel ban was relaxed. The breakthrough came in 1928 with a delegation of Hanoverian riding officers to the United States, where they won in front of 20,000 spectators at the Prix des Nations. Subsequently, they were received in the White House by US President Coolidge. Two years later, another team travelled to North America, and also won the Nations' Cup in Boston and New York. From then on, riding as a sport was vigorously promoted by the Reich government because of the impact of sporting success on foreign policy. In 1929, a show jumping stable was built at the cavalry school, and soon led to its first successes.

In 1931, it was still a big surprise when the Germans immediately won the Coppa d'oro, which Mussolini had founded in 1926, when they first took part in the Piazza di Siena in Rome. Up to then, the hosts had mainly competed with the French team. In 1932, the Germans won again, for the first time with Heinz Brandt, who rode Tora, a Holsteiner mare, which was bought by the DOKR in the summer of that year for what was then an enormous sum of 18,000 marks.<sup>14</sup>

According to regulations, the coveted Gold Cup would be given to the team that won it three times in a row, and in 1933 the hosts tried everything to prevent another



Heinz Brandt on Tora, the much admired "miracle mare" he had also trained.

Photo: Christian Kunz Collection

victory for the Germans. On the eve of the competition, the tournament ground was hermetically sealed off and the obstacles rebuilt, allowing no time for the foreign riders to get used to it. Nevertheless, the trophy was lost to the Germans, to the disappointment of Il Duce.<sup>15</sup>

Despite such successes, the DOKR decided against participating in the 1932 Los Angeles Olympics, which took place during the Great Depression. The costs seemed too high and transportation too difficult. In retrospect, this lack of participation was regarded as a mistake. Other European countries – Sweden, the Netherlands, and France – spared neither expense nor effort, for which they were rewarded with Olympic medals.

The German effort was that much greater for the next Games, which had been transferred to Berlin in 1931

and which came under the purview of the Nazi regime when they came into power two years later. The Prussian Prime Minister, Hermann Göring, personally took over leadership in the DOKR, as did Reichswehr Minister Werner von Blomberg, who acted as Reich Minister of War in 1935 with the reintroduction of military service.

The chairman of the riding umbrella organisation<sup>16</sup> was the head of sports for the Reich (Reichssportführer), Hans von Tschammer und Osten. His deputy was retired Lieutenant-General Georg Brandt. Germany was also able to have a say on international terms. From 1935, the President of the Fédération Équestre Internationale (FEI) was another retired Prussian general: Max von Holzing-Berstett. However, the spiritus rector continued to be DOKR Secretary-General Gustav Rau, who had been tasked with preparation of the Olympic competitions.

### A change of horse: Alchemist instead of miracle mare

Heinz Brandt was again ordered to Hanover in 1930, where he initially worked as a horse trainer. As of 1 May 1933, he had been assigned to the so-called special division – the show jumping stable, which was led from 1935 by Lieutenant-Colonel Wolfgang von Waldenfels.

It was there that Brandt met almost the entire German equestrian elite, who had set their hopes on Olympic medals, especially Marten von Barnekow, Harald Momm, and Ernst Hasse, who soon caught up with his younger brothers Kurt and Werner.<sup>17</sup>



In 1932 the German show jumpers won the Coppa d'oro for the second time at Piazza di Siena. Hermann von Nagel received the trophy from Mussolini. Far right: Heinz Brandt. Photo: Istituto Luce

Kurt Hasse, Marten von Barnekow, and Heinz Brandt (from left) formed the German show-jumping team at the 1936 Olympics in Berlin.

Far right: In the individual competition Brandt finished only 16<sup>th</sup> on Alchemist.

Photos: Christian Kunz Collection; Volker Kluge Archive



Starting in 1933, the riding officers were challenged by the new Nazi equestrian organisations. After the paramilitary SA<sup>18</sup> riders and the Equestrian SS, the National Socialist Equestrian Corps (NSRK) was also founded, which was to prepare young men for military service.<sup>19</sup>

However, this attempt to surpass the cavalry school was unsuccessful. Nowhere, probably even worldwide, was there a better education or more powerful horses than in Hanover.

But there were setbacks. At a pre-Olympic three-day event in 1934 in Döberitz, the Chief Cavalry Commander of the SA, Carl-Friedrich Freiherr von Langen, fell to his death. The SS lost in early 1935 at the Berlin indoor tournament to the Swedish-born Axel Holst, one of the best German show jumpers.

In the course of 1935, it became apparent that the Olympic equestrian team in all three disciplines would only consist of Wehrmacht officers. Brandt won the Individual Grand Prix in Nice, and with Kurt Hasse and Harald Momm won the team competition too. In the autumn, he finished the tournament in Warsaw with five first places.

However, it was unclear who should ride which horse at the Olympic Games. Brandt hoped for Tora, whom he had trained and whose jumping skills were said to be truly miraculous. It was no myth that she once broke loose at a tournament – startled by a sudden burst of music – and jumped across seven rows of spectators without hurting anyone.<sup>20</sup>

The victory of Kurt Hasse on Tora at the Berlin indoor tournament in late January 1936 indicated that the horse would probably be assigned to him. Understandably, Brandt was not enthusiastic about that.<sup>21</sup> But with

Alchemist he had a gelding that was only seven years old and considered to be a show-jumping phenomenon. He proved this to be true with a victory during Whitsun in 1936 at Warsaw. The third in the league was Marten von Barnekow who, with Nordland, had a ten-year-old mare whose jumping ability had caused a sensation in Aachen in 1935.

It was part of the tradition up to and including Moscow 1980 that the Games concluded with the Prix des Nations. What should have been a climax in 1936, however, developed into an organisational fiasco in Berlin. Horses and riders made unexpected mistakes on the difficult course of the Olympic Stadium, which was filled with 100,000 spectators. Several times whole obstacles were demolished, and reconstructing them took a lot of time. No horse was able to complete the course without a mistake.

Only Hasse on Tora and the Romanian First Lieutenant Henri Rang<sup>22</sup> on the gelding Delfi made it through with four faults. Despite dusk falling after four hours of competition, a jump-off had become necessary, in which both horses brought down the last fence. Thus, time had to be the deciding factor – Tora had completed the course 13 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>5</sub> seconds faster.

But even before the competition, the German team had secured the gold medal with 44 faults. It was not a brilliant victory. Since Alchemist and Nordland each had five fences down, Brandt and von Barnekow had to share 16<sup>th</sup> place with two other riders.<sup>23</sup>

Nevertheless, the tournament gave the Germans their hoped-for success. Their riders won all six gold medals, which is unique in Olympic history to this day. Furthermore, the breeders were satisfied. Of the 133 horses used, 24 came from German stables.<sup>24</sup>



Olympic award ceremony in the spotlight: the German riders won the 1936 Nation's Cup (team jumping) ahead of the Netherlands and Portugal.

Photo: Official Report Berlin 1936

### Fast advancement on the career ladder

The "love of peace" publicly proclaimed by Hitler in his speeches disappeared after the Olympics. He railed against Jews and bluntly began to threaten war. In a meeting with the supreme military commanders on 5 November 1937, he announced that he wanted to fix the "critical German need for space" in the foreseeable future, at the latest by 1943–45. It was only in the east that he saw a potential for *Lebensraum* (living space). His actual words were, "The only way toward a solution is by force."<sup>25</sup>

The military build-up was already in full swing at this time. This also affected the Hanover Cavalry School, which proved to be too small for the new requirements, which included cyclists, training of armoured infantrymen, motorised reconnaissance vehicles, and motorcycle riflemen. By 1939, it was gradually moved to Potsdam-Krampnitz under the name Armed Forces Riding and Driving School.

Brandt, promoted to Cavalry Captain<sup>26</sup> in March 1936, was ordered to the War Academy in Berlin immediately after the Olympics. After a year and a half of training, the "promising young officer"<sup>27</sup> was transferred to the General Staff of the 25<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division, stationed in the Swabian town of Ludwigsburg. He experienced the outbreak of war in the Saarpfalz, where his division was to secure the border with France. But Brandt was spared bloody battles for the time being. The 297<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division, where he served from February 1940 as the first general staff officer – referred to as "Ia" – was only used as a garrison troop upon entering France.<sup>28</sup>

In a command classified as secret, on 1 November 1940 Brandt was transferred to the Operations Department of the Armed Forces High Command (OKH) as an adminis-

trator. One can only guess what kind of use Brandt was put to there. His time involved planning for the wars against Yugoslavia and Greece, in North Africa, and particularly Operation Barbarossa – the "war of extermination" against the Soviet Union.

After a few weeks, he was described in an assessment by his superior, Colonel Adolf Heusinger, as "a modest, tactful personality. Fully proven before the enemy. A very efficient general staff officer with quick comprehension, clear thinking, and a practical disposition."<sup>29</sup> The chief of staff, Franz Halder, underlined the assessment with the remark, "Far above average."<sup>30</sup>

Brandt climbed up the career ladder like lightning. He was promoted to captain on 1 September 1939, the day of the attack on Poland. In 1941, he became a major, and in 1942 he received a "preferential promotion" to Lieutenant Colonel. He was presented with his colonel's epaulettes in 1943, on Hitler's birthday.

He owed most of this to Heusinger, now a general, who had great plans for him. When, in the spring of 1942, his former deputy Reinhard Gehlen<sup>31</sup> was transferred to military intelligence, he made Brandt his successor. He saw him as a prospective Army chief or chief of the Operations Division.

But the blitzkrieg strategy worked out by Heusinger and his division failed for the first time in December 1941, a few kilometres from Moscow. The Battle of Stalingrad in the winter of 1942–43, during which Hitler lost an entire army, ended in catastrophe and turned the tide of the war. A little later, the German troops in North Africa surrendered. As summer began in 1943, the German counter-offensive on the Soviet front at Kursk was lost, and the Allies landed in Sicily. From then on, the war returned to where it had come from.



Colonel Heinz Brandt as Deputy Chief of the Operations Department in the Army High Command. In 1944, his superior, General Heusinger, commended him in an assessment as having a “flawless National Socialist attitude.”

Photo: BArch, Pers 6/1128; M 5g 109/286

When propaganda leader Goebbels called for “total war” after Stalingrad, that was the signal to mobilise the last available reserves, which did not even make an exception for the general staff. Brandt was ordered into the 5<sup>th</sup> Light Infantry Division, which was tasked with stopping the onslaught of Soviet tanks south of Lake Ilmen in the Staraya Russa region.<sup>32</sup> However, before three of the 26 divisions were completely destroyed, they brought him back to the safety of high command. We can only imagine what experiences he may have had as a regimental commander decorated with the Iron Cross 1<sup>st</sup> class (EK I) and with the Infantry Assault Badge.<sup>33</sup>

### The only serious attack was made by a carpenter

Given the appalling crimes committed on Hitler’s orders, the small number of attempts to assassinate him is astonishing. On the one hand, this is explained by the elimination of any opposition, which was crushed by the Nazis in 1933 in a sudden and merciless manner. On the other hand, there was a population that was mostly following their Führer.

Of the 42 assassination attempts listed by the writer and journalist Will Berthold, only four date from 1933 to 1939.<sup>34</sup> For the most part, the potential assassins made only verbal threats. Or they were not able to get close enough to Hitler, so an attack seemed impossible.

Only after the beginning of the war, when security precautions had been tightened again, did some officers and generals pursue the idea of removing Hitler. For the most part, they did not agree with the war being led by the “Bohemian private”,<sup>35</sup> who had appointed himself Supreme Commander of the Wehrmacht in 1938. Their dissatisfaction grew, and all the more when the grandiosely-proclaimed “final victory” was delayed. The civil bourgeois resistance, on the other

hand, gathered in the “Kreisau Circle”, which included personalities from different schools of thought. They focused on the reorganisation of Germany after the Hitler dictatorship.<sup>36</sup>

Before the Stauffenberg conspiracy, the only attack that posed a real danger was instigated by a Swabian carpenter named Georg Elser. His plan was to kill Hitler on 8 November 1939 during the traditional speech in the Munich Bürgerbräukeller before the “Alte Kämpfer” (the old Nazi guard).<sup>37</sup> It was said to be a coincidence that Hitler left the meeting earlier than usual. Thirteen minutes later, Elser’s time bomb exploded. The attack took eight lives and injured 63.<sup>38</sup>

Brandt himself was unwittingly involved in an assassination attempt. Only after the war did it become known that Colonel Henning von Tresckow wanted to shoot Hitler during a front visit to Smolensk, Russia.<sup>39</sup> But when the Commander of Army Group Central, General Field Marshal Günther von Kluge, whom he had informed of it, forbade the plan, he acted on his own.

During a meal, Tresckow asked Brandt, who belonged to Hitler’s entourage, if he would take two bottles of cognac<sup>40</sup> for General Helmut Stieff at the OKH. Brandt agreed and Tresckow’s adjutant, Fabian von Schlabrendorff, handed him a parcel containing a bomb that would explode during the return flight. But the conspirators waited in vain for the report, because the device’s firing mechanism had failed to go off in the cargo hold.

Tresckow then decided to call Brandt and ask if the package was still in his possession. Since he had not handed it over yet, he sent Schlabrendorff the next day to Rastenburg, where he exchanged the package with the bomb for another package, which actually contained bottles of cognac.

### The failed Operation Valkyrie

For three-quarters of a century, legions of historians, writers, journalists, and film directors have covered the “July Plot”. There is hardly a detail that has not been described, discussed, or made into a film a thousand times over – the brick building, referred to as *Lagebaracke*, leaning against a concrete bunker; the strong, 12.5-metre-long oak table; the 24 participants in the meeting who leaned over the location maps; Stauffenberg’s assassination.

Many depictions are based on the memoirs of Adolf Heusinger, who had been appointed Chief of the Armed Forces General Staff only ten days earlier. In 1950, Heusinger published a book entitled *Command in Conflict*, in which he sought to rehabilitate himself and launch his post-war career.<sup>41</sup> When Stauffenberg entered the room, according to Heusinger, he had just explained to Hitler the situation east of Lviv. In the minutes of the meeting it states:

*Stauffenberg approached Colonel Brandt. Quietly to Brandt: I'll leave my case here for now. I have to make a quick call. He pushed the case under the table next to Brandt and went out.*<sup>42</sup>

Under this pretext Stauffenberg managed to leave the building at the last minute and pass through the gates of the three hermetically sealed security zones. Since he had heard the explosion while escaping, he was still convinced hours after his arrival in Berlin that he had killed Hitler. Heusinger wrote of his experience when the bomb went off:

*There was a huge detonation under the table. Strong flashes of flame projected from under the tabletop on all sides. The table itself was thrown upwards. The location maps were on fire. The meeting participants were lying on the floor or were thrown out through the window outside.*

*Keitel spoke: "Where is the Führer?"*<sup>43</sup>

Hitler got away with minor burns and bruises. He believed that he owed his salvation to divine providence. Reich Marshal Göring, who was not present in the Wolf's Lair, also evoked "almighty God", who had so "openly blessed" Hitler.<sup>44</sup> The Almighty had less regard for the people on the right side of the table, where the bag had been: Brandt lost a leg and suffered serious injuries, as did the Luftwaffe General Günther Korten and Hitler's chief aide at the Wehrmacht, Rudolf Schmundt. The stenographer Heinrich Berger, who had been thrown by the air pressure through the window, died the same day.

Brandt and Korten were transferred to the reserve hospital in Rastenburg, where they both succumbed to their injuries on 22 July 1944.<sup>45</sup> Hitler posthumously

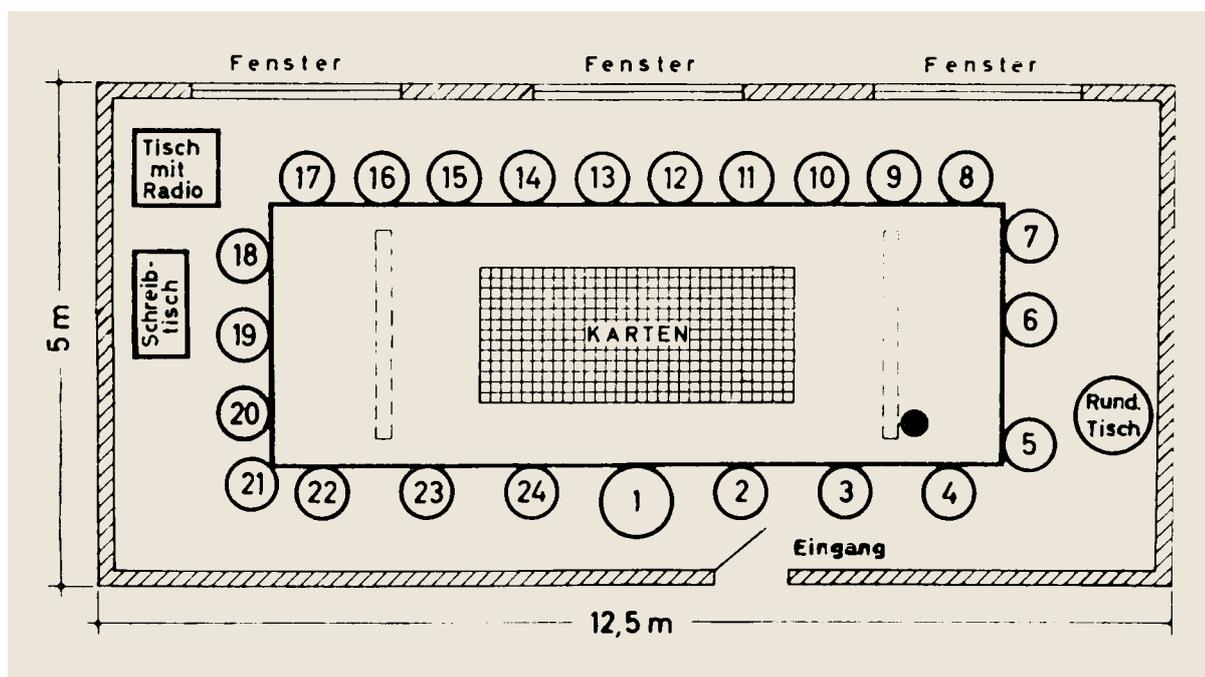
promoted Korten to colonel general and Brandt to major general. Schmundt, who had also been chief of the army personnel office, was appointed general of the infantry.<sup>46</sup> All participants in the briefing, including those killed and himself, were awarded the "20<sup>th</sup> July" wound badge, ranked according to the degree of injury as gold, silver, or black.

While Korten was ceremoniously buried in the courtyard of the Tannenberg Memorial on 1 August 1944,<sup>47</sup> Brandt, who had been commended by Chief of Staff Heinz Guderian in an obituary as "one of the best soldiers in the army",<sup>48</sup> had been buried the day before at Engesohder Cemetery in Hanover. Allegedly, he was refused a state funeral on Hitler's orders because on his deathbed he had "incriminated himself in his feverish delirium."<sup>49</sup>

It is true that one day after the death of Brandt, Hitler cancelled the state funeral originally arranged for him. It is also true that Hitler ordered, two months after Brandt's funeral, for his father to be sent a letter acquitting his son of suspected involvement in the attack. Hitler only wanted to refrain from subsequent honours, which had long since taken place. Is it a coincidence that this entry had been concealed?

Heusinger, who also saw himself in the role of a resistance fighter because of his short-term arrest, contributed significantly to this attribution:<sup>50</sup> "There were too many who were aware that he must have known something."<sup>51</sup> But this did not fit the last assessment he had issued of Brandt, which certified him as having a "flawless National Socialist attitude."<sup>52</sup> Nor does a letter from the widow to the army personnel office, in which she asked for a certificate of death for her husband a few weeks later, suggest any sanctioning.<sup>53</sup>

**Briefing at the Führer's Headquarters on 20 July 1944, at 12:30 pm. To the right of Hitler (1) were Heusinger (2), Korten (3), and Brandt (4). Apart from Korten and Brandt, who were standing directly in front of the bomb marked by the black spot on the right table leg, Schmundt (6) and stenographer Berger (9) were also killed. To the left of Hitler were Keitel (24) and Jodl (23), both executed as a major war criminals in 1946.**



22.7.44

In Lazarett in Rastenburg sterben an den Folgen ihrer schweren Verletzung:

Gen.d.Flieger K o r t e n und  
Oberst i.G. B r a n d t.

Der Führer ordnet für beide ein Staatsbegräbnis an.

23.7.44

Generalleutnant Heusinger wird im Lazarett verhaftet, da der dringende Verdacht besteht, von den Vorbereitungen gewusst zu haben.

Aus denselben Gründen wird das Staatsbegräbnis für Oberst i.G. Brandt, den der Führer nach dem Tode zum General-Major befördert hat, abgesagt.

Oberst Brandt hat in seinen Fieberdelirien sich selbst belastet.

27.9.44

Gen.Lt. Burgdorf richtet ein Schreiben an Gen.d.Kav. Brandt, in welchem er ihm mitteilt, daß sein Sohn in keinem wesentlichen Zusammenhang mit dem 20.7. steht. Der Brief ist so abgefaßt, daß der Vater keine Folgerungen ziehen kann in Bezug auf eine nachträgliche Ehrung durch den Führer oder Verleihung des Verwundetenabzeichens des 20.7.

After the deaths of Korten and Brandt, Hitler ordered a state funeral for both. In Brandt's case this was rescinded the following day. The reason given was that "Colonel Brandt incriminated himself in his feverish delirium." Two months after the funeral in Hanover, Hitler informed Brandt's father "that his son had no significant connection with the 20.7."

Photo: Activity report of the Chief of the Personnel Office of the Armed Forces, p. 172, 174, 269.

Without verification, the claim that Brandt was a resistance fighter has been taken up by well-known historians, such as Gitta Sereny. In her biography of Albert Speer, she writes that Brandt was first ceremonially buried, but then exhumed on Hitler's orders, and that his ashes were scattered at an unknown location.<sup>54</sup>

Is it any wonder that other authors might quote this mysterious anecdote? And yet, it would be easy to verify the truth via the administration of the cemetery in Hanover – where it states that the Olympic champion is still resting where he was buried 75 years ago.<sup>55</sup> ■

1 Hitler's Wolfsschanze (Wolf's Lair) military headquarters was located near Rastenburg, East Prussia, in present-day Kętrzyn, Poland. Located in the then-district of Königsberg, it was re-named after the historian Wojciech Kętrzyński (originally Adalbert von Winkler) in

1946. During the Second World War, there were several such Führer-headquarters, the most important being: Felsenest (Eifel), Wolfsschlucht (Brüly-de-Pesche, Belgium), Tannenberg (Black Forest), Werwolf (Vinnitsa, Ukraine), Berghof (Obersalzberg near Berchtesgaden, Bavaria), and Wolfsschanze (Rastenburg). The latter, known under the code name Chemische Werke Askania, was located in a forest near the village of Görlitz. Hitler spent around 800 days there, in the period between 24 June 1941 and 30 November 1944.

- 2 *Völkischer Beobachter*, 22 July 1944, p. 1.
- 3 Peter Hoffmann, *Widerstand gegen Hitler und das Attentat vom 20. Juli 1944* (Konstanz: Universitätsverlag Konstanz, 1994), p. 147.
- 4 According to Björn Höcke, a politician for the party Alternative for Germany (AfD), on 17 January 2017 at an event in Dresden.
- 5 See Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Extremes 1914–1991* (London: Abacus, 1995).
- 6 Treaty of Versailles, 28 June 1919, Part V., Articles 159 to 213. The total contingent of a cavalry division was limited to 275 officers and a troop of 5,250 soldiers.
- 7 Federal Archives (BArch), Pers/6/1128, M5g 109/286. Brandt's personal files are in the military archives in Freiburg im Breisgau. In response to a request on 7 October 2019, the Berlin Federal Archives stated that no further records could be identified regarding him.
- 8 Federico Caprilli (1868–1907) developed a riding technique that made it easier for the horse to jump. His field training on the steep slopes of Tor di Quinto was especially well known.
- 9 German Olympic Committee for Equestrianism, *Wir reiten für Deutschland. 100 Jahre Pferdesport im Deutschen Olympiade-Komitee für Reiterei* (Warendorf: FN-Verlag, 2013), pp. 8–9.
- 10 Gustav Rau (1880–1954), sports journalist and editor-in-chief of the equestrian sports journal *Sankt Georg*, particularly made a name for himself in developing rural riding clubs. He was a board member of the Reich Association for Breeding and Testing of the German Warmblood, and was Commissioner for Horse Breeding in occupied Poland during the Second World War.
- 11 The independent Kingdom of Hanover since 1814, which was associated in personal union with the United Kingdom, fought in the war of 1866 on the side of Austria against Prussia. After the surrender and annexation by Prussia, the Military Riding Institute von Schwedt an der Oder was relocated to Hanover.
- 12 Kurt von Schleicher remained as Reich Chancellor only 57 days in office until he was abruptly dismissed by Reich President Hindenburg and replaced by Hitler. During the so-called Night of the Long Knives, he was treacherously shot on 30 June 1934, together with his wife, by the Secret State Police (Gestapo).
- 13 BArch, R 43/1–1983.
- 14 The team also included Richard Sahla, Hermann von Nagel, and Gustav Adolf von Nostitz-Wallwitz. Sahla, who rode the grey horse Wotan, was the only one involved in all three victories.
- 15 *Sport in der Wehrmacht, Zeitschrift für Sport und Wissen im Heer und Marine*, vol. 10, May 1933. The trophy is stored in a bank safe in Warendorf, where the DOKR has been located since 1950.
- 16 The management of all public tournament events in Germany was supervised by the central authority for the tests of Warmblood and Coldblood horses (OBWK), which were used in November 1933. All equestrian clubs had to be recognised by it.
- 17 The father of the three Hasse brothers, Ernst Hasse (1886–1945), was discharged in 1927 by the Reichswehr as Lieutenant General. In 1937, he was mobilised as an Infantry General. Shortly before the end of the war on 11 April 1945, he committed suicide in Potsdam. While his sons Ernst and Kurt became successful show jumpers, the third son, Werner, made a name for himself as a jockey and secretary of the racing clubs in Aargau, Switzerland and Hamburg.
- 18 SA = Sturmabteilung (Nazi Storm Detachment).
- 19 Nele Maya Fahnenbruck, "NSRK, SA-Reiterei, Reiter-SS – Organisation und Struktur des Pferdesports im Nationalsozialismus", in: *Sport Zeiten*, vol. 12, no. 1/2012, pp. 7–37.
- 20 Gustav Rau, *Die Reitkunst der Welt an den Olympischen Spielen 1936* (Berlin: Verlag Sankt Georg, 1938), p. 55. Born in 1924, Tora the horse received gracious treatment in Dillenburg and later Warendorf, where she was euthanized and buried in 1953.
- 21 Dietbert Arnold, *Pferdewirtschaft*, vol. 7 (Warendorf: FN-Verlag, 2013), p. 89.
- 22 Henri Rang (1902–1946) gained the first individual Olympic medal for Romania. The later major won more than 90 competitions with the horse Delfi from 1932 to 1938, including in 1937 in London at the tournament on the occasion of the coronation of King George VI, in

- which he was able to jump with Delfi over a height of 2.14 m. Rang suffered a motorcycle accident on Christmas of 1946.
- 23 X. *Olympiade Berlin 1936, Amtlicher Bericht*, vol. 2 (Berlin: Wilhelm Limpert, 1938), pp. 917–919.
  - 24 Ibid., p. 880. The best represented horse breeding countries were Ireland/England 26, Germany 24, France 22, and Hungary 11.
  - 25 BArch, RW 8/18, Hitler's Wehrmacht Adjutant, Colonel Hoßbach, had recorded the contents of the meeting. Although the "Hoßbach Report" disappeared in the summer of 1945 at the US headquarters, a copy was submitted by the prosecution at the Nuremberg trials for the main war criminals. It was confirmed by the handwritten original, which was found in 1989 in British archives.
  - 26 Historical service rank designation for cavalry officers in Germany, Austria-Hungary, Scandinavia, and the Baltic States.
  - 27 BArch, Pers/6/1128, Judgement of the Chief of the General Staff of the V<sup>th</sup> Army Corps, 24 November 1938.
  - 28 Ibid., 109/286.
  - 29 Ibid., Pers/6/1128, Judgement, 19 February 1941.
  - 30 Ibid., Judgement, 1 May 1942.
  - 31 Rolf-Dieter Müller, *Reinhard Gehlen. Geheimdienstchef im Hintergrund der Bonner Republik* (Berlin: Ch. Links Verlag, 2017), pp. 233, 236. Reinhard Gehlen (1902–1979), who knew Brandt from his time as a rider (1926–27) at the Hanover cavalry school, took over the division of Foreign Army East (FHO) in May 1942, which was to explore the enemy situation on the eastern front. He gave his microfilm-copied insights to the US Army after the war ended. After a short detention, he developed the Gehlen Organisation, headed by the CIA, with former employees in West Germany. It was dissolved in 1956 and taken over under the name Federal Intelligence Service (BND) by the Federal Republic of Germany. Gehlen headed foreign espionage until 1968.
  - 32 BArch, Pers/6/1128. During his military service, Brandt, who was appointed to Rifle Regiment 56, remained at his place in the Operations Division of the OKW. A telex requested that the then-commanding officer be left in office for a few days so that Brandt could familiarise himself with the work, because he "had not led any troops for a long time."
  - 33 Ibid. According to Soldbuch, Brandt was awarded the EK I on 27 December 1943 and the Infantry Assault Badge on 12 January 1944. Previously, in 1940 he received, among others, the EK II and in 1941 the War Merit Cross with swords of the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> class.
  - 34 Will Berthold, *Die 42 Attentate auf Adolf Hitler* (Munich: Blanvalet Verlag, 1981).
  - 35 The derogatory term "Bohemian private" is attributed to Reich President Hindenburg, who in 1931 had first met Hitler – then merely a private in the First World War – for an interview. He mistakenly switched Hitler's birthplace of Braunau from Austria to Bohemia. The writer Konrad Heiden took up this formulation in his biography of Hitler, *Das Leben eines Diktators. Das Zeitalter der Verantwortungslosigkeit* (Zurich, Europa Verlag, 1936), p. 288.
  - 36 This group, which included about 20 people, was composed of nobles, former socialist officials, and Christian representatives. The Gestapo named it after the Kreisau estate of Helmuth James Graf von Moltke (now Krzyżowa, Poland), because the meetings took place there.
  - 37 On 9 November, the Nazi regime traditionally celebrated the anniversary of the defeated Hitler-Ludendorff Putsch of 1923.
  - 38 On 29–30 September 1938, Germany, Great Britain, France, and Italy signed the Munich Agreement, which allowed the areas of Czechoslovakia inhabited by Sudeten Germans to be ceded to Germany. Elser was convinced that Hitler was heading for a war that he wanted to prevent with the assassination attempt. It was not until the 1980s that Elser, who was arrested while fleeing to Switzerland and executed one month before the end of the war, received public recognition.
  - 39 Fabian von Schlabrendorff, *Offiziere gegen Hitler* (Zurich: Europa Verlag, 1946), pp. 73ff. The staff officer, von Schlabrendorff (1907–1980), was arrested after 20 July 1944, but his conviction planned for 3 February 1945 was prevented by a bomber attack on Berlin, during which the chairman of the People's Court, Roland Freisler, was killed.
  - 40 Other sources refer to two bottles of the French liqueur Cointreau.
  - 41 Heusinger (1897–1982) was imprisoned from 1945 to 1948. He appeared several times at the Nuremberg trials as a witness. After his release, he worked under the code name Adolf Horn for the Gehlen Organisation. In 1950, he became a military adviser to the West



He died "For their Führer and the Reich": obituary by the family in *Hannoversche Zeitung*, 1944.

- German Federal Government. In 1957, he was appointed Inspector General of the Bundeswehr. From 1961 to 1964 he was Chairman of the NATO Military Committee in Washington, DC.
- 42 Adolf Heusinger, *Befehl im Widerstreit, Schicksalsstunden der deutschen Armee 1923–1945* (Tübingen: Rainer Wunderlich Verlag Hermann Leins, 1957), p. 353. However, one wonders how Heusinger, who had currently been explaining Hitler's situation on the fronts, could at the same time gather enough attention to observe Stauffenberg's bag.
  - 43 Ibid., p. 355. Field Marshal Wilhelm Keitel (1882–1946) was chief of the High Command of the Wehrmacht (OKW) since 1938.
  - 44 *Völkischer Beobachter*, 21 July 1944, p. 1. The headline read: "Providence confirms Adolf Hitler's mission."
  - 45 BArch, Pers/6/1128, MStG 109/286. The date of death is given in Brandt's documents as well as in the family's obituary as 22 July 1944. However, a variety of secondary sources gives it as 21 July.
  - 46 Schmundt died on 1 October 1944.
  - 47 The Tannenberg Memorial erected in East Prussia from 1925 to 1927 was a monument to the battles of the Teutonic Order of 1410 (according to Polish understanding of the Battle of Grunwald) and to the German army led by Hindenburg in August 1914 against Russia. After the death of Hindenburg, who was buried there, the monument was renamed "Reichsehrenmal".
  - 48 *Völkischer Beobachter*, 26 July 1944, p. 1.
  - 49 Dermot Bradley & Richard Schulze-Kossens, *Tätigkeitsbericht des Chefs des Heerespersonalamtes, General der Infanterie Rudolf Schmundt, fortgeführt von General Wilhelm Burgdorf* (Osnabrück: Biblio Verlag, 1984), p. 174.
  - 50 Heusinger (1897–1982) was arrested on 23 July 1944, after General Stieff had stated in his interrogation that he informed him in the summer of 1943 of a conversation with Tresckow, in which the elimination of Hitler was discussed. Shortly before his execution, Stieff recanted this statement, after which Heusinger was released in late September. Hitler received him and thanked him for the "memorandum" he had made in his imprisonment. The contents of the document cannot be verified, since the only copy was destroyed at the end of the war.
  - 51 Simon Benne, "Der Fuß an der Aktentasche", in: *Hannoversche Allgemeine Zeitung*, 21 July 2014. A source for the Heusinger quote was not given by the author.
  - 52 BArch, Pers/6/1128, Judgement of Brandt, 1 April 1944.
  - 53 Ibid., Letter from Ursula Brandt to the Army Personnel Office, 18 November 1944. For the widow, both in 1944 and after the war, there was an important difference in how her husband was classified. According to the Federal Compensation Act, § 1, passed in 1956, retroactively as of 1 October 1953, only victims and persecuted persons of the Nazi regime received compensation, except for foreigners, communists, so-called asocials, homosexuals, and Sinti and Roma.
  - 54 Gitta Sereny, *Albert Speer. Sein Ringen mit der Wahrheit* (Munich: Goldmann Verlag, 2005), p. 532.
  - 55 According to information from 30 September 2019 by the administration of Engesohder City Cemetery, Hanover, regarding family grave Mehring/Brandt, no. 16F/144–146. Ursula Brandt (1910–2009), née Mehring, is buried there, along with their son Peter Brandt (1934–2001).