

Major Otto Ernst Remer 20th July 1944



An eyewitness report of the Bomb Plot written in 1951 by Otto Ernst Remer and translated from the German by Bill Medland.

The story is taken from this 1951 German publication

My role on 20th July 1944 in Berlin

I took command of the Wachregiment Großdeutschland in May 1944. I was given command as a reward for my frontline service, having been wounded eight times (and once more before the end of the war), and I am a holder of the Knights Cross with Oakleaves. My duties included defending the Reich capital in case of an uprising, it must be remembered that there was at this time about one million foreign workers in Berlin.

During the morning of 20th July 1944, my Regiment was put on standby, as was other units of the Home Army, we had recieved the codeword "Walküre" which alarmed all units to the fact that there was a general uprising in Germany. I made my way to the Stadt Kommandant in Berlin, General-Leutnant von Hasse. "The Führer is dead! There is an

uprising and the Army is taking over control!" I was ordered to the government quarter of the city with the order "Close everything, every street, let no one through, general or minister!" I was given a General Staff Officer, Major Hayessen to assist me, as the officer I should have had started suffering from bad nerves.

I asked the Major many questions which he could not or would not answer. "Is the Führer dead? Has he had an accident? Where has the uprising started?" I saw nothing of an uprising during my drive through the capital. Why had control gone to the Army, and not the whole armed forces? Where was Hitler's replacement? Would he be replaced by the Reichsmarschall Hermann Göring? What were his orders? The answers I got did not give me a clear picture, and I started to distrust General von Hasse and Major Hayessen. When I entered the general's office there were several printed orders lying on the table, which the major picked up and placed in a folder before I had a chance to read them. I was ordered to join my Regiment. On the way I thought that the Führer must be dead and everyone was running around headless. A power struggle was taking place, and I remembered how the troops in 1918 in Berlin had been misused, and I decided that this would not happen this time.

Ordered to arrest Dr. Goebbels

I ordered a meeting of all my officers, I told them what I knew already, which was not much. I ordered them to swear obedience to me, to trust my judgement, and only follow orders given by myself. Then a report came in from Leutnant Dr. Hagen (of my staff), that Feldmarschall von Brauchitsch had been seen in full uniform in Berlin! What was he doing in uniform in this situation? He had been put on the reserve list and retired. Also one of my own officers was acting strangely and vanished, later to be found at his home, Oberstleutnant Wolters.

I telephoned around Berlin and tried to get a clear picture, but no one knew what had happened to the Führer for sure, or anything about an uprising. I sent for Leutnant Dr. Hagen, who worked in the Propaganda Ministry, and sent him to see the Reich Defence Minister, to try to find out the military and political situation in Berlin. The Reich Defence Minister was Dr. Goebbels.

About 1 1/2 hours after the codeword "Walküre" had gone out, I went again to see General von Hasse and reported my men ready and in position. The General pointed to a map (a block of offices to the north of Anhalter Bahnhof),and said that I should move my men to this area, secure the area and set up roadblocks. When I arrived there I realized that the district was the RSHA (Reich Security) buildings! I returned to the General and asked why I had not been informed that it was the RSHA buildings? Why no clear orders and so much mystery? The General flew into a rage and became nervous, shouting that I should just follow the orders given. At this time an officer entered the office and asked the General when Dr. Goebbels should be arrested? I informed the General that Dr. Goebbels was an honorary member of the "Großdeutschland" unit. But if I had a clear order I would follow it.

On leaving von Hasse's office I met my officer in the corridor, whom I had sent to talk with Dr. Goebbels. He said "New situation! it would seem to be a military takeover! Dr. Goebbels asks you to go to him, if you are not there in 20 minutes he will call out the Waffen-SS". I took Dr.Hagen into the office of von Hasse, and asked him to repeat what he had told me. I asked if I could go and sort out the situation, but General von Hasse would not allow it.

I felt that time was running out, if Dr. Goebbels called out the Waffen-SS, we could find them fighting the Army troops, and a civil-war could breakout. As the commander of the only real active unit in Berlin, I had to avoid that. At the same time I did not trust Dr.Goebbels

because I feared a political power struggle with my men in the middle, I still did not know the real situation.

The phonecall with the Führer

I went to arrest Goebbels, taking a Leutnant and a squad of men with me. I ordered the soldiers to wait outside, telling them to get me out if I was gone longer than 15 minutes. I went into the building alone, with my pistol drawn, removing the safety catch as I entered Dr. Goebbels office.

I told Goebbels that I had been sent by General von Hasse to arrest him, but first I wanted to know the situation as he saw it. I told him that I had to obey orders, even though the Führer was dead. Goebbels looked surprised and said "What! the Führer still lives! I just talked with him on the telephone, the bomb plot failed".

I asked Goebbels for his word of honour that he had told the truth. If Hitler was still alive I would follow him without question. I then asked Goebbels again for his word of honour, which he gave me. I then requested to be put through to the Führer. The connection took less than a minute, and Goebbels told Hitler what had happened and gave me the telephone and the Führer spoke to me.

"Do you hear me? you see, I am alive! the bomb plot failed. a small clique of honourless officers turned traitor and wanted to replace me. Now we are getting to grips with the saboteurs, we will make short work of this pest".

"You are ordered by me to bring peace and order to the capital. even if force is needed. You are responsible until the Reichsführer-SS Himmler arrives in Berlin".

I knew that I had to move quickly before there was bloodshed between various groups of German soldiers, all the more difficult due to my junior rank at the time. On the Fehrbelliner Platz a Panzer Brigade started arriving under radio command by General Guderian. A panzer rolled to wards our barracades. I told the tank commander that we were loyal troops on the side of Reichsminister Goebbels and a conflict was averted.

The same situation happened in front of the Bendler Block, the Headquarters of the Army. A Panzergrenadier Kompanie wanted to replace my troops, but a couple of officers were able to stop a fight breaking out. So far not a shot had been fired all day. A reserve brigade of "Großdeutschland" arrived from Cottbus and were placed under my control. I placed my own troops tightly around the Reichskanzlei.



Wound Badge awarded to soldiers wounded in the bomb plot, dated 20th July 1944 and A. Hitler signature (Medland Collection)

The situation is brought under control

Late afternoon General von Hasse ordered me to report to him, I countered this by telling him that he should report to me in my Headquarters, in Goebbels offices. I informed him about my personal contact with the Führer, and that I had been put in overall command of security in Berlin. Von Hasse reported to me, and I felt that he really did not know anything about the bomb plot attempt to kill Adolf Hitler, and was probably innocent of any wrong doing. Von Hasse was held in a room in Goebbels offices, in case of further questioning. I still did not know who the ringleaders were, or where they were hiding. In the evening reports were coming out of Bendler Block. Some of my officers who were controlling the entry to and from the building, had seen a lot of coming and going, with new passes being issued. I increased the guard to two companies. The same officer informed me that there was shooting coming from the Bendler Block courtyard! I was angry because until that moment there had been no shooting, now this!

I went as quickly as I could to the Bendler Block and was greeted by Generaloberst Fromm, the commander of the Home Reserve Army. He looked panic stricken and on the edge of his nerves. he said "At last! a responsible officer of the Großdeutschland, what do you know about the situation?" I told him all I knew including my telephone contact with the Führer, and that I had been put in control of security. He asked to be put in contact to Goebbels and I arranged it.



The Bendler Block courtyard, evening of 20th July 1944, after the SD and SS had secured the buildings.

What happened at the Bendler Block?

What happened in the Bendler Block during the day? Stauffenberg flew to Berlin after the attempted murder of Adolf Hitler, and went to the Bendler Block and together with Feldmarschall von Witzleben, Generaloberst Höppner, Generaloberst Beck and General Olbrich, formed a "military government" and started to issue orders. They started by informing everyone that Hitler was dead. Generaloberst Fromm who had been pro-conspiracy, changed his mind and refused to help, he was ordered to be locked in his office.

During the late afternoon it was discovered that Hitler was still alive, and a group of young daring staff officers arrested the conspirators and freed Generaloberst Fromm. Fromm wanting to cover up his own involvement in the conspiracy, ordered a quick show trial and execution of the ringleaders. Olbrich, Stauffenberg and a few others were shot in the

courtyard, Beck was allowed the chance to shoot himself in his office. Von Witzleben and Höppner were held prisoners. The shootings were stopped the moment I entered the building, I had no hand in the killings, although the newspapers said after the war that I was involved, but this was a pure lie.

After Fromm left the Bendler Block, secured the buildings and brought everything back to order. I was ordered to hand over prisoners and documents to the SD and SS. I then returned to my Headquarters at the Propaganda Ministry, at about midnight I met Reichsführer Himmler and informed him about my actions during the day. At daybreak on the 21st July 1944 I and my troops were stood down.

I was due to be awarded the diamonds to my Knights Cross for my part in putting down the traitors. But as I saw the whole episode as a stain on the German Officers Corps, I refused the award, Adolf Hitler accepted my view.

Four weeks after the Bomb plot to murder the Führer, I asked to return to the frontline. I was promoted several times reaching the rank of Generalmajor, this had nothing to do with 20th July 1944, but more to do with my success at the front leading a Brigade.

Otto Ernst Remer 1951

The conspirators in todays modern Germany are seen as heroes, almost every town has a street named after Stauffenberg. Indeed they are one of the corner stones of the German Federal Republic, and it is forbidden to say anything bad about them. Otto Remer on the other hand became an embarrassment to post-war Germany, even so, he recieved over ten thousand letters from former soldiers supporting his actions of 20th July 1944.

Is it correct to use deserters and conspirators, who wanted to murder the legal head of state in time of war, as post war national heroes? This debate will go on for generations to come.

Bill Medland 2004