Peace through Coup d’État: The Foreign Contacts of the German Resistance 1933–1944

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A HISTORY, both comprehensive and detailed, of the foreign contacts of the German Resistance does not yet exist. The subject is vast, and many sources are not yet accessible, notably those in the custody of intelligence agencies, and also those relating to contacts between the German Communist underground and foreign authorities or individuals. This paper will, firstly, consider some conditions and circumstances of foreign contacts sought and established by the German Resistance; secondly, survey some of those contacts; and, thirdly, attempt to draw some conclusions.

Peace” may be defined as a state of resolution of conflicts, and as a long-term modus vivendi between sovereign states. “Coup d’état” is

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a sudden, decisive, and in some way illegitimate, change within a government power structure. "Resistance" includes a wide range of non-compliance, springing from a broad spectrum of motivations. The term is used here as designating those forces within Germany during the Second World War which sought to change the German government through a coup d'état. The three terms are interrelated: peace, without a military victory or military surrender by Germany, depended on a successful coup d'état carried out by the Resistance in Germany.

Internal support for the overthrow of the National Socialist régime was elusive. At the same time, the willingness to lend such support on the part of those who controlled instruments of power, that is, mainly the senior Army commanders, was largely a function of foreign relations. The Chief of the General Staff of the Army during the years 1938–42, General Halder, was emphatic in his demands for popular support for a coup d'état. On the other hand, the "right moment" for a coup d'état in the opinion of "the generals" never seemed to be at hand—in the light of foreign-policy considerations.

There was in Germany no popular resistance or disaffection that a coup d'état conspiracy could rely on. The Socialists were disorganized, many of them were in concentration camps. The Communists had lost most of their active members to emigration and concentration camps, to the need to survive, to demoralization through the Hitler-Stalin Pact of 1939, to opportunism, or to political inactivity imposed by the requirements of the Soviet Russian intelligence war organization. Discussions between conservative and military conspirators on the one hand were carried on throughout the war years, and they led to conspiratorial cooperation, but they did not produce the elusive "mass basis" for a revolution. A last dramatic attempt at finding the "mass basis" was made on 22 June 1944, when two Socialists met with members of the underground Communist Central Committee in Berlin in a physician’s apartment. There was a Gestapo informer among the Communists, and the participants of the meeting were arrested. The rudimentary "popular front" was destroyed before it could be formed.

If popular mass action could not be organized by an opposition in the Nazi police state, elements of the Armed Forces had to be mobilized against the régime, specifically, appropriate members of the Army officer corps such as senior commanding generals: presumably the most conservative and nationalist forces in the population. Therefore, traditional patriotism and nationalism were obstacles.

Anti-Hitler conspirators seeking foreign contacts faced similar issues in their own endeavors. Love of their country caused a number of them to return to Germany from abroad, at various times before and during the war, in order to combat the régime from within and to contribute to the liberation of Germany by its own people rather than joining the enemies of the country, although they could have stayed abroad in relative safety; but they had to come to new terms with traditional nationalism before entering into relations with foreign governments in ways which were treason under existing laws. The contacts by members of the Armed Forces with enemy authorities could be seen as doubly treasonous with respect to the special quality of military loyalty and obedience.

In addition to patriotism, nationalism, and the system of military obedience, Allied war aims were a major obstacle to anti-government Resistance action in the interdependent framework of foreign contacts and coup d'état planning.

Nationalism made impossible the renunciation of the large revisions of the Treaty of Versailles obtained by Hitler’s régime—reincorporation of the Saar region, restoration of military sovereignty, union with Austria, incorporation of the ethnic-German Sudeten region. In addition, after the victories over Poland and France, the evacuation of some Polish and French territories would have presented difficulties.


6. German law and judicial practice had as a criterion for treason against the country an intention to harm the integrity of the nation and its military capabilities—this condition was not fulfilled here; cf. E. Kohlrausch, ed., Strafgesetzbuch für das Deutsche Reich mit Nebengesetzen (Berlin and Leipzig, 1930), §§ 87–91; Entscheidungen des Reichsgerichts in Strafsachen, 65 (Berlin and Leipzig, 1931): 422–33.

The powers allied against Germany and Italy after the defeat of France, on the other hand, intended to impose on Germany an unconditional surrender, Britain apparently from the very start of the war. Their public statements indicated that the terms would be more severe and that they would be enforced more rigorously than those imposed at the end of the First World War. Unconditional surrender in 1941 and 1942 would have implied the evacuation by Germany of vast occupied territories in the Soviet Union, in northern, eastern, and southeastern Europe, and in Africa, and the cession of German territory; in 1943 and in 1944 it would have meant most likely also the occupation of Germany by the Red Army, while the Western Allies had not yet established the Second Front and were making only slow progress in Italy. An occupation of Germany by the Red Army was unacceptable to German patriots, particularly in view of Russian actions in Poland, in the Baltic States, and in Finland after the outbreak of war in 1939, and in view of German actions in the Soviet Union since 22 June 1941. Moreover, a post-coup-d'état government could not have hoped to survive politically if it had renounced Hitler’s revisions of Versailles, and if it had allowed Germany to be occupied by the Red Army.

In September 1943 Fieldmarshal von Kluge demanded to know from Dr. Goerdeler, the former Mayor of Leipzig, Reich Prices Commissioner, and now the presumptive chancellor in a post-coup-d’état government, what the foreign-policy prospects were for ending the war in the west. Goerdeler believed that Britain would be willing to dissociate herself from the Soviet Union if it meant ending the war; that Britain would be concerned to keep Germany strong as a bulwark against Bolshevism; that the eastern German border of 1914 could be

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8. Gesellschaft und der Widerstand gegen Hitler (Munich, Zurich, 1985), 1037–38 postulated a similarity and partial identity of the Resistance’s aims with Hitler’s; but it was precisely the evil and limitlessness in Hitler’s aims that brought into being the Resistance against his rule.


restored (this included West Prussia and the Polish Corridor); that Austria and the Sudetenland would remain with Germany; that the status of Alsace-Lorraine could be negotiated with France; that reparations payments would not be imposed.\(^\text{11}\) Dr. Adam von Trott zu Solz in the Foreign Office in Berlin, during the war a tireless Resistance envoy abroad, believed similarly that it would be in the Western Powers’ interest to keep the Soviet Union out of Europe, and so did former Ambassador Ulrich von Hassell, also a leading figure in the conspiracy against Hitler. The points Goerdeler formulated for Kluge suggest what Goerdeler believed to be necessary conditions for winning over to the conspiracy senior military commanders such as Kluge; they were conditions for—or an obstacle to—a coup d’état.

Those military leaders who might have been persuaded to support a post-Hitler régime of the Resistance, however, were willing to act only after the removal of Hitler, to whom they had sworn personal allegiance. The conspirators believed that Hitler’s assassination alone would not enable them to gain power and that substantial elements of the Armed Forces were needed to eliminate and neutralize the structures and power bases of the Nazi state. Therefore the preconditions for a post-coup-d’état government and for a policy leading to an armistice could be created only by those who were not willing to act until the régime was removed. The status quo of internal power had to be changed before the revolution. As one of the conspirators wrote in his diary: “One wants to act when he gets the order and the other wants to give the order when action has been taken.”\(^\text{12}\)

British war aims found some expression in the communications between German conspirators and the British Government through


the Vatican in the last months of 1939 and in the first months of 1940. Although long associated with the policy of appeasement, Chamberlain’s government insisted now on “reparation of the wrongs done to Germany’s smaller neighbours,” and “security for the future”; “in this connexion the suggestion of a decentralized and federal Germany is of interest,” it added, and “Austria should be allowed to decide whether or not she wished to enter the Federation.”

The proposals from the German conspirators had specified: establishment of a democratic, conservative, and moderate government; Germany to become a federation; Prussia to form a west-German state with Westphalia; Austria in the federation; Poland and non-German Czechoslovakia independent.

Thus the issue of Poland’s boundaries was left as vague by the Resistance as it had been in the British-Polish Alliance of 25 August 1939. This was not merely a question of arrangements with Germany: the Soviet Union had occupied close to half of Poland under the non-aggression pact signed by foreign ministers von Ribbentrop and Molotov in Moscow on 23 August 1939. A secret German-Russian protocol had divided Poland, the Baltic States and Finland between the two powers; the Soviet Union had moved promptly to make the acquisitions agreed on “in case of a territorial-political reorganization” in these states, and had attacked Finland on 30 November 1939. It was difficult to see how any firm commitments concerning Poland could be made without envisaging coercion against the Soviet Union as well as against Germany. The British-Polish Pact of 25 August 1939 guaranteed British armed assistance for the maintenance of Poland’s independence but avoided direct reference to her territorial integrity, and a secret British-Polish protocol clarified the language of the Pact as referring only to Germany, not the Soviet Union, as a Power threatening Poland. The German conspirators in the Resistance

15. Documents on British Foreign Policy 1919–1939, 3d ser., vol. 4 (London, 1951), no. 582 (11 Mar. 1939); Hassell, 140, for 16 Mar. 1940 listed only decentralization and plebiscite in Austria.
were well aware of the grave legacy connected with the mass murders and other atrocities committed in Poland by the SS and other German armed forces. All of these considerations might well have an impact upon the settlement of Poland’s western boundaries.

In his reply in the House of Commons on 12 October 1939 to Hitler’s “proposals” of 6 October 1939, Prime Minister Chamberlain had declared it “impossible for Great Britain” to accept the occupation of Czechoslovakia on 15 March 1939 and the conquest of Poland since 1 September 1939, “without forfeiting her honour and abandoning her claim that international disputes should be settled by discussion and not by force.” But on 7 March 1942, Chamberlain’s successor, Prime Minister Churchill, wrote to his ally, President Roosevelt, that the Soviet Union ought not to be challenged in the possession of territorial gains made against Poland and the Baltic States in consequence of the non-aggression pact she had concluded with Germany. Churchill argued there was very little else the Western Allies could do “to help the only country that is heavily engaged with the German armies.” Thus the Polish situation, if nothing else, made impossible any clear, public Allied position on war aims and conditions of peace. Nevertheless they were being considered, negotiated, and agreed on during the war years, some of them early in the war.

In the British-Soviet Agreement of 12 July 1941 the two Powers undertook to assist each other in the war against “Hitlerite Germany,” and “that during this war they will neither negotiate nor conclude an armistice or treaty of peace except by mutual agreement.” This was confirmed by all the Allies against Germany after the United States had entered the war, in the Washington Pact of 1 January 1942, with

17. The door was left open for territorial revisions in favor of Germany, as Britain had not been inflexible in this matter, but there is no indication that British government authorities were aware, before the Red Army occupied eastern Poland, of the territorial arrangements in favor of the Soviet Union contained in the Secret Protocol of the Hitler-Stalin Pact. Cf. The Diaries of Sir Alexander Cadogan O.M. 1939–1945, ed. David Dilks (London, 1971), 200–201, 217–19; on 23 September 1939 Cadogan noted that he replied to Halifax's question about Britain's war aims that he saw “awful difficulties. We can no longer say 'evacuate Poland' without going to war with Russia, which we don't want to do!” On the Resistance's awareness of atrocities: Osborne to Halifax 7 Feb. 1940, Ludlow, 334; Hassell, 142.


21. Agreement... July 12, 1941 (n. 8); published in The Times (Late London Ed.) 14 July 1941, 4; Société des Nations, Recueil des Traités, vol. 204 (1941–43), no. 4808.
the stipulation of total victory before any armistice or peace. The Pact incorporated the “Atlantic Charter” which Churchill and Roosevelt had agreed upon on the Prince of Wales in Placentia Bay, Newfoundland, on 14 August 1941. The “Charter” was released to the press for publication. It stated under Point Eight: “Since no future peace can be maintained if land, sea or air armaments continue to be employed by nations which threaten, or may threaten, aggression outside of their frontiers, they believe, pending the establishment of a wider and permanent system of general security, that the disarmament of such nations is essential.” In a Cabinet meeting on 26 August 1941 Churchill said that regarding Germany Britain’s war aim was Germany’s total disarmament and a healthy German economy. This required the unconditional surrender of Germany; incorporation in the Washington Pact made it an official Allied war aim. The later announcement in Casablanca, in January 1943, merely confirmed it, although the publicity and explicitness produced an additional impact. The Soviet Union was exempt, of course, from the anathema against aggressor states.

Prosecution of the war until the total defeat and unconditional surrender of Germany was the only aim common to all the Allies. It was the condition sine qua non of the war coalition, as was the exclusion of separate armistice or peace agreements, in a coalition not based on mutual trust or community of interests beyond the defeat of a common foe.

By April and July 1942, respectively, there was agreement in the British Foreign Office that Czechoslovakia be restored, “more or less,” to her pre-Munich boundaries, and that this necessitated the “transfer,” i.e., expulsion, of approximately two million Sudeten Germans. In July 1942, the War Cabinet approved “the general principle of the transfer to Germany of German minorities in Central and South-East-

24. The Times (Late London Ed.) 15 Aug, 1941, 4.
ern Europe after the war where this seems necessary and desirable.” This referred also to the expulsion of the German populations from East Prussia, Upper Silesia, and by implication at least West Prussia. It was estimated that from 3 to 6.8 million Germans were to be expelled. When Eden had been in Moscow from 16–20 December 1941 Stalin had sketched the division of Germany and Europe. President Roosevelt, Prime Minister Churchill, and Marshal Stalin all favored partition of Germany, but there was no formal agreement.  

On 20 January 1941 Churchill had instructed Foreign Secretary Eden concerning any kind of peace feelers, as follows: “Your predecessor was entirely misled in December 1939. Our attitude towards all such inquiries or suggestions should be absolute silence. It may well be that a new peace offensive will open upon us as an alternative to threats of invasion and poison gas.” Churchill confirmed this position on 10 September 1941, after some officials had disregarded the earlier directive. Between 6 and 10 September 1941, Foreign Secretary Eden had reported to Prime Minister Churchill on the latest “peace feelers,” indicating at least the possibility that they might be taken seriously, as for example an approach by Dr. Goerdeler: “In July a message was sent by Herr Goerdeler (former Burgomaster of Leipzig) to our S.I.S. agent in Switzerland, suggesting negotiations in Switzer-


27. This and the following quotations from Public Record Office, London, FO 371/26542/ [C 610], FO 371/26543/C10855, PREMIER 4/100/8; the first two items were printed partially in Dokumente zur Deutschlandpolitik, 1st ser., 1, ed. Rainer A. Blasius (Frankfurt a.M., 1984): 269; see also Kettenacker, 59. Frank Roberts in the Foreign Office Central Department may have been representative when he remarked, in September 1940, upon the news that General Halder was dissatisfied with the Nazi régime and was looking for peace: “General Halder, the Chief of the General Staff, was reputed to be in favour of peace before the outbreak of war, but all the peace-feelers alleged to have been made on his behalf through Dr. Goerdeler and Dr. Wirth turned out to be worth very little. No doubt there are prominent military circles in Germany who would like a compromise peace, if they have failed to achieve absolute victory soon, but we have no indication (1) that they are able or prepared to get rid of Hitler etc. or (2) that they would be much better in the long run than the present gang who rule Germany.” Kettenacker, p. 57 n. 56, cites for this FO 371/24408/010416. The Free Reconstruction Movement may be the group that became known as the Kreisau Circle.

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land. Goerdeler claims to be in touch with a group of German Generals headed by Generals Halder and Blaskowitz. We have had messages from him before, and are not disposed to trust him.” Eden mentioned another proposal received through Stockholm from “a representative and influential opposition movement in Germany known as the Free Reconstruction Movement. This movement was said to accept all the eight points of the Atlantic Charter except point 8, which would be a basis for negotiation. It was suggested that negotiations should be opened in Sweden with an emissary of the British Government. The S.I.S. consider this to be a genuine approach.” Although Eden said he would advise nothing more than authorizing receipt of any further messages through neutral intermediaries, his comments seem to hint that he would have preferred to pursue the approach more actively. Churchill replied on 10 September 1941: “I am sure we should not depart from our policy of absolute silence. Nothing would be more disturbing to our friends in the United States or more dangerous with our new ally, Russia, than the suggestion that we were entertaining such ideas. I am absolutely opposed to the slightest contact. If you do not agree, the matter should be brought before the War Cabinet sitting alone.” Eden replied to Churchill’s strong language on 11 September 1941: “I do agree and am in fact relieved at your decision. The case in favour was, I thought, worth a mention.”

The Secret Protocol of the Moscow Conference, signed on 1 November 1943, stated an agreement concerning peace feelers, under Point 13 which had been drafted and proposed by Britain: “The Governments of the United Kingdom, the United States of America and the Soviet Union agree to inform each other immediately of any peace-feelers which they may receive from the Government of, or from any groups or individuals in, a country with which any of the three countries is at war. The three Governments further agree to consult together with a view to concerting their action [sic] in regard to such approaches.”

Soviet authorities were always concerned about any reports of “peace feelers” or contacts between their Allies and their enemies, not least because they knew their own spotted record in this respect. On 17 January 1944, Pravda carried on page 4 a story from Cairo dated 12 January 1944 according to which “two English leaders had had a

secret meeting with Ribbentrop in one of the coastal towns of the Pyrenean peninsula." This may have been a reference to a contact made by the German Resistance in Istanbul through Cairo and Biserta, somewhat distorted in the Cairo rumor mill.29

II

Even if it had not been difficult for the German Resistance to understand the position of Germany’s adversaries, their dilemma would have forced them to seek assurances and promises regarding Germany’s fate after the war, whether they were likely to obtain them or not. It appeared to them that they could not move sufficient forces against the régime unless they secured basic guarantees. These had to include the territorial and ethnic integrity of Germany in boundaries as they had existed in 1937 or 1938, and some commitment not to exploit a temporary internal instability due to a coup d’état for military gain. For many, however, this was not enough, and the increasingly unfavorable military situation did not change their views; the heavier the sacrifices of the German Armed Forces in the war, the less accept-

29. See below, pp. 14–36; Hassell, 346–47 made the connection with the Resistance contacts immediately, on German-Soviet peace feelers see FRUS 1943, 1 (Washington, 1962): 696–700, 708–9. The “substance” of a memorandum concerning Moltke’s approach from the Deputy Director of Intelligence Service in the U.S. Office of Strategic Services, Brigadier General John Magruder, of 17 May 1944 to the Executive Assistant to the Assistant Secretary of State had been transmitted on 14 May 1944 to the British and Soviet Embassies in Washington—apparently months after the approach had been made; FRUS 1944, 1: 510–13; Martin, “Verhandlungen,” 102–3. Martin, “Verhandlungen,” 101, appears to accept at face value a Soviet-Russian peace offer alleged by a German Foreign Office and Ostministerium operative, Peter Kleist, to have been transmitted by an obscure businessman named Edgar Claus, in December 1942, for not the benefit of the Resistance but the Hitler government. Cf. Peter Kleist, Zwischen Hitler und Stalin 1939–1945: Aufzeichnungen (Bonn, 1950), 244; Mastny, 1371–72. The basis was to be the frontiers of 1939 meaning presumably those reached by both powers after the German-Polish war, since Stalin could not be expected to relinquish his gains from his pact with Hitler. Martin, “Verhandlungen,” 103, records what he believes to have been another Russian peace offer, dated September 1943 and based on the frontiers of 1914. In view of its circumstances, and in view of what has emerged about Russian and British plans for territorial changes and population transfers at the end of the war, neither offer can have been seriously intended, if they were made at all. The strategic situation of 1943 could hardly have suggested to the Soviet Union a modification of her postwar plans. During the night of 30/31 October 1943 at the Moscow Conference, speaking with the American Ambassador, Stalin ridiculed rumors that Russia and Germany might agree on peace terms; FRUS 1943, 1: 687. If the "offers" were made, they may have to be seen as a means to apply pressure on the Western Allies to agree to Russian aims (as the Western Allies did, during the Moscow and Teheran conferences), and to establish the second front in northern France. The second "offer," if it was made, should be considered also in the context of the Italian change of sides.
able it seemed to some prospective supporters of a coup d'état to abandon certain gains made through German military operations.\textsuperscript{30}

There were two kinds of approaches by German Resistance conspirators to the Allied governments, if the criteria “political” and “moral” are applied. In the “political” ones considerations of international relations and balance dominated along with concepts of national interests as the foundations of peace and as safeguards against future revisionist threats. The more radically “moral” positions separated their tenets from the realities of power. They began by accepting that the war begun by Germany was unjust, that Germany had committed crimes of the greatest turpitude and enormity, and that Germany’s defeat was necessary for the restoration of peace and justice.

It is beyond the scope of this paper to offer a complete or nearly complete list of contacts. Without minimizing the moral and physical courage of some of those who made approaches, criteria of selection may be defined as the seriousness and depth of the moral response to an existential challenge, the substantiality of the background, and the potential political effect. The approaches to be considered were characterized by these qualities in varying degrees. Most contacts falling under the criteria listed will be treated. They permit insights and conclusions of general application.

The complicated interventions of Foreign Minister von Ribbentrop’s deputy, State Secretary von Weizsäcker will not be considered at length because their often ambiguous official-semiofficial and underground quality would require considerations for which space is not available here.\textsuperscript{31} The approaches by Dr. Hans Bernd Gisevius, an Abwehr (Intelligence Service) agent in Switzerland, will be given less attention than they deserve, for reasons of space: they parallel the actions of another Abwehr agent, Pastor D. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, in Switzerland and in Sweden.


As early as June 1937, during an official visit to Paris, the Chief of the General Staff of the Army, General Ludwig Beck, directed warnings to the French and British concerning Hitler’s intentions. These warnings were transmitted to Sir Robert Vansittart, Permanent Undersecretary of State in the Foreign Office in London, by the British Air Attaché, Group-Captain M. G. Christie. Beck said in Paris: “We military men, with the main exception of Marshal Blomberg, are opposed to any such adventure, but we can no longer guarantee against it. Since March 7, 1936 (the date of the re-occupation of the Rhineland by German forces), our influence with Hitler has become so much weaker. In the case of Spain, we, the General Staff, wanted to keep absolutely clear, but we only managed to prevent direct intervention by the Reich. Again as regards Austria, Himmler and Party [sic] drew up a plan last month (May 1937), with the consent of Hitler, but without the knowledge of the War Ministry, to march into Austria with S.S. Blackshirt troops, occupy the country (reckoning upon no resistance on the part of the Austrian Army), and compel a plebiscite on the issue of the Anschluss. Fortunately, Ambassador Papen and General Muff, our military attaché in Vienna, got wind of the plan and together with ourselves persuaded Hitler to withdraw his approval.” Concerning his visit to the French Army High Command, and alleged proposals reported in the press, Beck said: “I came as a gentleman to talk with gentlemen in order to try to improve our relations. The Press has reported that I have made certain proposals; that is absolutely untrue. I have made none, and I have no mandate for making any. Of course I could have touched upon a theoretical agreement for the limitation of armaments, but I did not do so, because I know that the Nazi Government would most certainly break any such agreement. Indeed from the start, neither General Goering for the Air Force, nor Admiral Raeder for the Navy would keep to it. As to the Army’s attitude, General von Fritsch and others of us could vouch for that, but to what purpose, when we know that Himmler and the Party leaders would get round it by persuading Hitler to form and equip several new divisions of S.S. troops. The Fuehrer would never include his S.S. troops in any limitation of armaments pact. . . . Hitler,’ he added, ‘is pathological and wholly incalculable.’”

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During the Sudeten Crisis of 1938, General Beck led efforts to induce the British government to take an uncompromising stand against Hitler’s threats and demands. He cooperated with the Chief of Military Intelligence (OKW/Amt Ausland/Abwehr), Admiral Canaris, and Canaris’s right hand, Lieutenant-Colonel Oster, and with the new Undersecretary of State in the Foreign Office, Freiherr von Weizsäcker. Several Resistance men approached the French government, others approached the British government. One emissary, Ewald von Kleist-Schmenzin, was told by Beck before he left on his mission to London in August 1938: “Bring me certain proof that Britain will fight if Czechoslovakia is attacked and I will make an end of this régime.” Beck had not a moment’s hesitation in continuing his efforts underground after his resignation as Chief of the General Staff on 18 August 1938, in protest against the Sudeten policy, having failed to win the support of his Commander-in-Chief, Colonel-General von Brauchitsch; he was confident that he could marshal the necessary military forces for a coup d’état locally, in conspiracy with the Commanding General Military District III (Berlin), General von Witzleben. Besides Kleist, the brothers Erich and Theodor Kortd, both ranking members of the Foreign Service, acted in collaboration with Beck and secretly warned the British government against Hitler’s war plans, urging that the Western Powers make clear their will to go to war against Germany if she attacked Czechoslovakia. Hans Herwarth von Bittenfeld, who served as Legation Secretary in the German Embassy in Moscow, was instructed by Dr. Eduard Brückmeier, a Foreign Office Legation Counsellor, to work along the same lines through his contacts with foreign diplomats in Moscow. Beck was behind this mission, too. He had given orders for the secret contacts while still in office, before 15 August 1938. Dr. Goerdeler had been

travelling in Europe and in North America on similar missions since 1937.\footnote{See Ritter, 157–71; for Apr. 1938 see Hoffmann, History, 57, and 59–96 for the following two paragraphs.}

The common purpose of these missions was to demonstrate to Hitler that he could not achieve any more territorial conquests without major war. If Hitler backed down and managed to save face, peace at least would be preserved. If he ordered an attack on Czechoslovakia in spite of obvious British, French, and possibly Russian readiness to go to war against Germany, it would be evident that he acted irresponsibly and jeopardized not merely his previous successes but the very existence of an independent Germany, while a settlement of this issue through negotiation was conceivable. Beck and many other older military and government officials believed that Germany would lose another world war, and that she would not emerge as relatively intact as in 1918/19.

Beck, his successor General Halder, and General von Witzleben made detailed preparations for the overthrow of the régime by seizing the capital, arresting Hitler and neutralizing the SS troops. The peace was saved, however, not by a coup d’état, but by a combination of mild British and French threats, lack of Italian support and face-saving Italian mediation, and British-French consent to the amputation of Czechoslovakia, who found herself deserted by her Allies. Since it was easy for Hitler and his propaganda machine to let the public think his earlier, greater demands had been bluffing in the international poker game, he could present the acquisition of the Sudetenland as another splendid success. Only a few months later, on 15 March 1939, Hitler broke his treaty commitments and had the rest of Czechoslovakia occupied.

Efforts of the anti-Hitler conspiracy continued during 1939 to try to induce the Western Powers to policies which could deter Hitler from the next war he was contemplating, against Poland. Although the Western Powers were unwilling after 15 March 1939 to tolerate any more of Hitler’s outrages, the crucial event in the road to war probably was the Western Powers’ failure to win a Russian alliance. They had paid Hitler for keeping the peace, and for a reduced integrity of Czechoslovakia, in vain. Now they could not offer Stalin what Hitler offered him: a part of Poland and the Baltic States north of
Lithuania. The position of Britain and France was clear though perhaps misinterpreted by Hitler and Ribbentrop. Thus the approaches and warnings from Resistance emissaries such as Fabian von Schlabrendorff, Helmuth James Graf von Moltke, Erich Kordt, Goerdeler, Adam von Trotz zu Solz, or from Weizsäcker, had no real objective.

After Poland had been defeated by Germany and divided between Germany and the Soviet Union, the issue of a general war was in the balance again since Britain and France had declared war on Germany but had not attacked, and Hitler had decided to attack France if the Western Powers did not accept peace on his terms. The general apprehensions concerning an attack in the west and widespread beliefs that it would result in a repetition of the First World War, with a worse ending, revived hopes for substantial support for a coup d’état. There seemed to be reasons to think that Colonel-General von Brauchitsch would tolerate, and that Halder would initiate, a military coup d’état if Hitler gave the order to attack in the west before the winter.

Soundings by the Resistance, carried on by Dr. Josef Müller, a lawyer doing war service in the Abwehr, through contacts in the Vatican and through the mediation of Pope Pius XII sought to establish conditions of peace. They met with considerable success. Perhaps the British side was moved by the realization of the seriousness of the 1918 effort which had been undermined by the sacrifice of the Sudetenland, and apparently they understood the Venlo Incident as what it was: SS intelligence-service officers had posed as Resistance emissaries and lured two British Secret Service officers, Major R. H. Stevens and Captain S. P. Best, into a trap near the Dutch-German border at Venlo and abducted them to Germany. It had been an SS raid that had nothing to do with the Resistance. Hans von Dohnanyi, Oster’s right hand in Canaris’s Abwehr, regarded the British response to the

38. Akten 7, nos. 228, 229.
40. Hoffmann, History, 128–37, and 158–63 for the following; see also Josef Müller, Bis zur letzten Konsequenz: Ein Leben für Frieden und Freiheit (Munich [1975]), 80–129.
Resistance soundings as a reliable basis for peace, and as adequate fulfilment of the condition for a coup d’état. But by March 1940 the German Resistance principals had lost whatever support from senior military commanders they had been able to count on. There was little in the “conditions” contained in Foreign Secretary Lord Halifax’s communications that could have given pause to “the generals,”—unless they took the term “security for the future” as expressing the intention to disarm Germany. But the German Armed Forces were in a position of strength. The commanding generals could not have believed seriously that they would have much difficulty with the SS or with any other Hitler loyalists. The possibility of the Western Powers invading German territory during an internal upheaval ought to have appeared more tolerable than the uncertainties of a German invasion of France. By all accounts available thus far, the “conditions” submitted to Halder and Brauchitsch were considerably more favorable than what would seem justified by the correspondence between the British Foreign Secretary and the British Minister to the Holy See. General Halder was shown a summary of the results of the Roman soundings on 4 April 1940; he read it and showed it to Brauchitsch on that evening. Neither Halder nor Brauchitsch were in a frame of mind suitable for serious consideration of the document. Brauchitsch declared it treasonable and proclaimed that the current war was no ordinary war but one between ideologies which had to be carried to its conclusion, so that the removal of Hitler would not achieve anything. Hitler had announced on 27 March 1940 the imminent invasion of Norway. Denmark would be invaded at the same time, on 9 April, only five days after Halder had received the report on the Roman soundings. After the war, Brauchitsch and Halder gave various explanations for their failure to overthrow Hitler; Brauchitsch’s baldfaced excuses were probably the more honest ones. The striking proximity of the dates, 4 and 9 April, offers a sufficient clue. The leadership of the Army was preoccupied with the forthcoming campaigns they had spent the last months preparing for. They were not in a frame of mind to consider defeat and disaster, especially since

42. Dohnanyi, “Aufzeichnungen.”
43. Halifax to Osborne 17 Feb. 1940, Ludlow, 337.
44. See the correspondence in Ludlow, 335-41; for developments on the German side see Hoffmann, History, 158-69; cf. Müller, Konsequenz, 130-37.
the preparations for the western campaigns had been improved greatly
since the fall of the previous year. It is also conceivable, however, that
the comments of the British Minister to the Holy See, Osborne, to
Pope Pius XII on 16 February 1940 became known to “the generals,”
or that they suspected that their substance was the position dominant
in Britain: Osborne had said to Pius XII that he “didn’t see how we
could make peace so long as the German military machine remained
intact.”

Whatever credit the Resistance might have enjoyed with the West-
ern Powers was reduced to insignificance. This was felt at home.
Dohnanyi never forgave “the generals”; Moltke never trusted them.

Although Dohnanyi continued consistently to work for the overthrow

46. Major (General Staff) Helmuth Groscurth, head of Abwehr Liaison Group in the General
Staff of the Army and a key figure in the conspiracy during its activities in 1939/40, noted in
his diary for 10 November 1939 that Halder had given Major-General Thomas (Chief,
Wehrmacht Economic and Armaments Office) the following reasons against overthrowing
Hitler: “1. It violates tradition. 2. There is no successor. 3. The young officer corps is not
reliable. 4. The mood in the interior is not ripe. 5. ‘It really cannot be tolerated that Germany
is permanently a “people of the helots” for England.’ 6. Concerning offensive: Ludendorff, too,
in 1918 had led the offensive against the advice of everyone, and the historical judgement
was not against him. He, Halder, therefore did not fear the later judgement of history either.”
Helmuth Groscurth, Tagebücher eines Abwehroffiziers 1938/1940, ed. Helmut Krausnick and Harold
C. Deutsch (Stuttgart, 1970), 236; Hassell, 105–6, recorded most of these same points as having
been made by Halder at the time. On 11 January 1940 Halder told Groscurth that the struggle
against England was necessary, it had been forced on Germany and it was inevitable; there were
a number of good prospects for success and then the Army would be strong enough to impose
its will internally; he saw no basis for a revolt, the troops still believed in the Führer; he criticized
the people who were thinking of a putsch but were at odds with each other and in any case
mostly reactionaries who wanted to turn back the wheel of history; England’s peaceful assurances
were all bluff, none of them serious; Groscurth, 241. Osborne to Halifax 19 February 1940;
Ludlow, 337. There was another contact through Dr. Joseph Wirth, a former chancellor of
Germany, in Bern: Ritter, 258–60. This is said to have yielded a promise from Prime Minister
Chamberlain that a coup d’état inside Germany would not be exploited for military action against
Germany but if it was desired by the German Resistance, a military diversion might be provided.
this contact on the basis of British sources, but without reference to Ritter’s version or to the
list of “conditions” reprinted by Ritter. A British Foreign Office “Summary of Principal Peace
Feelers, September 1939–March 1941,” printed in Kettenacker, 164–87, mentions only a later
Wirth contact (September 1940), although Ludlow in Kettenacker, 42, seems to consider the
Wirth intervention on a level comparable to that of the Pope. There seem to be still enough
unanswered questions to cause one to treat the Wirth contact with some caution; Wirth’s con-
nection with and backing by the conspiracy are unclear. Some other contacts are included in
lists of peace feelers prepared by the British Foreign Office’s Central Department: Kettenacker,
164–200; but the list is strangely incomplete.

47. Dohnanyi, “Aufzeichnungen”; Moltke, Balfour, Frisy, 220; Freya von Moltke, interview
with the author 16 January 1985.
and assassination of Hitler—he was a key figure in the nearly successful attempt of March 1943—\textsuperscript{48}\textemdash he had lost his faith in success insofar as it depended on cooperation with senior military commanders.\textsuperscript{49}

The continuous setting and postponement of dates for the attack in the west from October 1939 to March 1940\textsuperscript{50} may have frustrated a line of action taken by Colonel Oster. From mid-October 1939 repeatedly, Oster warned the Dutch Military Attaché in Berlin, Major G. J. Sas, that Hitler intended to attack France through Holland and Belgium, and from 7 November onwards he informed Sas of the planned attack dates every time they became known to him. Oster sent messages on 3 April 1940 to warn the Dutch, Danish, Norwegian, and British governments of the invasions of Denmark and Norway planned for 9 April. On 9 May he warned Sas of the beginning of the western offensive on the following day.\textsuperscript{51} Oster hoped the warnings would enable the Western Powers to administer to the German forces such stinging setbacks at the start that the offensive and the war would have to be stopped, saving possibly millions of lives and preventing great destruction.\textsuperscript{52} Oster, too, had lost confidence in the resolve of any senior commanding generals to rid Germany of the Nazi plague, as he called the régime.\textsuperscript{53} He saw in Germany's defeat the only alternative to greater carnage and destruction.\textsuperscript{54} It is worth noting that Oster's contacts and his reasoning were known to and approved by Colonel-General Beck.\textsuperscript{55}

It is clear that Oster's treason, committed in the interest of peace and life, belongs in the second of the two categories defined above. The warnings, however, had no practical effect. For his courage, Oster

\textsuperscript{48} Hoffmann, \textit{History}, 280–83.

\textsuperscript{49} Dohnanyi, "Aufzeichnungen."

\textsuperscript{50} Hans-Adolf Jacobson, \textit{Fall Gelb: Der Kampf um den deutschen Operationsplan zur Westoffensive 1940} (Wiesbaden, 1957), 49–51.


\textsuperscript{53} Graml, "Fall," 39.

\textsuperscript{54} Cf. Thun-Hohenstein, 153.

\textsuperscript{55} Sendtner, 511–15; Graml, "Fall," 37–39. Deutsch, 326, assumes without evidence that Beck was not told of Oster's contacts with Sas.
was subjected to abuse, even from the Dutch Commander-in-Chief of Land, Air, and Naval Forces, General H. G. Winkelman, who referred to Oster as a "miserable fellow."®

The conspirators continued to sound out Germany's war opponents concerning their intentions in case Hitler's régime were eliminated from within. Professor Albrecht Haushofer used Rudolf Hess's hopes to prevent the ultimate military conflagration between Germany and Britain as a cover for contacts on behalf of the Resistance, with Lord Lothian, the Duke of Hamilton, and Carl Jacob Burckhardt, the former League of Nations High Commissioner for the Free City of Danzig.57 Ulrich von Hassell contacted Burckhardt as well, and also, through an intermediary, American authorities.®

In the summer of 1941, two months after the attack on the Soviet Union, and after the proclamation of the "Atlantic Charter," apprehension grew among the Resistance concerning Allied war aims and about an acceptable peace for an anti-Hitler government in Germany.59 Point Eight of the Atlantic Charter was open to disturbing interpretations, and a "national Germany" had to insist on certain guarantees of sovereignty and integrity. Hassell thought, as did his friends, Oster, Dohnanyi, General Olbricht (head of an important Home Army Section) and Professor Popitz (Prussian Minister of Finance), that acceptable conditions could not be obtained when the chances of German military success were too obviously diminished.60 Views such as those expressed by Hassell, although realistic in terms of power politics, were separated by an unbridgeable gulf from those of the Allies. Mildly encouraging impressions reported to Hassell by Burckhardt in January 1942, after Burckhardt's return from a visit to England, could not change that.61 Louis Lochner, the head of the Associated Press bureau in Berlin, was asked by a group of conspirators to carry messages similar to the concerns expressed by Hassell to President Roosevelt, in the fall of 1941. But Lochner was interned when America entered

57. See sources in Hoffmann, History, 594—95 for 205—10; cf. Hassell, 207.
59. Hassell, 217, 221—22.
60. Ibid., 222, 241.
61. Ibid., 253.
the war, and when he reached home in June 1942 he was told that his information from Resistance circles in Germany was not wanted. 62 Dr. Goerdeler himself was engaged in the quest for Allied assurances, and he drafted a series of peace plans. 63 During the war, Goerdeler's main contact with the Allies lay through Jacob Wallenberg, the banker and merchant in Stockholm, who maintained many German contacts, while his brother Marcus kept up contacts in England. 64 Goerdeler went to visit Jacob Wallenberg in Stockholm for the first time in November 1939, 65 and then from time to time until 1943. In April 1942 Goerdeler asked Marcus Wallenberg to find out in London whether any assurances could be obtained for a government of the Resistance. Marcus Wallenberg declared this a hopeless errand. 66 In November 1942, Jacob Wallenberg was in Berlin. He was sympathetic to Goerdeler's concerns but also realistic. He told him that the best option for the Resistance was to overthrow Hitler first and then to negotiate with the Allies for reasonable conditions, and if necessary to continue the war until it could be ended with honor. 67 Goerdeler discussed it with his friends, then told Wallenberg they had agreed. 68 After the proclamation in Casablanca of the unconditional-surrender formula, and the fall of Stalingrad, Goerdeler told Jacob Wallenberg in February 1943 that "the generals" now shied away from a coup d'état. 69 Goerdeler described the chances of success for the attack against Hitler planned for March as uncertain due to Hitler's security precautions. 70

Goerdeler had good reasons to question Jacob Wallenberg's optimism concerning negotiations after Hitler's removal, although Wal-

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64. Jacob Wallenberg, interview 16 Sept. 1977.

65. Jacob Wallenberg, interview 16 Sept. 1977; in his statement for Allen Dulles (Dulles, 142), Wallenberg said "very early, probably in 1940."

66. Dulles, 143; Ritter, 333–34.


68. Dulles, 143–44.

69. Ritter, 334.

70. Dulles, 144.
lenberg’s contention that it was the only option could not be refuted. On his next visit to Stockholm, in May 1943, Goerdeler urged Jacob Wallenberg again to seek some clarification of peace terms in London. Wallenberg wanted some statement of intent from Goerdeler, who drafted some points overnight. He wrote that a new German government must represent all social strata and must introduce social reforms, based on democratic legitimation; the new government would negotiate boundary settlements, seek to restore Poland in her boundaries of 1938, negotiate the German-Polish border and encourage a union of Poland and Lithuania, restore Czechoslovakia (presumably within her post-Munich boundaries), negotiate about a fair boundary in the west which would guarantee peace; Germany would disarm as much as relations with Russia allowed but give up all naval armaments and internationalize her Air Force; all of this would have to be done through a German government; bleak indeed was the prospect for the future of Europe if German territories in East Prussia and Silesia were to be handed over to Poland, if the Allies wanted to control German educational institutions, and if they intended to administer affairs which must be administered by Germany herself, such as judicial proceedings against Hitler and his fellow criminals. The relative modesty of Goerdeler’s expectations is striking when compared to some other lists of demands; but it was probably too late to save German sovereignty and territorial integrity. It is clear that German demands for something resembling a status quo ante bellum were diametrically opposed to Allied plans, as they had evolved by then, for the treatment of postwar Germany. The implementation of these plans could be prevented only if Germany managed to hold her own militarily.

In August 1943 Jacob Wallenberg came to Berlin, at the urgent request of Goerdeler, and reported on his brother’s contacts with Churchill. The message was that whatever information the Wallenbergs could provide would be received. Goerdeler told Wallenberg that the coup d’état would be carried out in September, but nothing happened. When Goerdeler was in prison in November 1944, he saw a great deal more in the meagre message and claimed that he had re-

71. Dulles, 144; Ritter, 334–36.
73. Ritter, 336; Dulles, 144–45.
ceived an authentic answer from Churchill agreeing, on the whole, to his proposals. He must have hoped to show the authorities that a sovereign anti-Hitler government could still get better terms than a militarily defeated and occupied Germany. On 30 November 1943 in Berlin, when he had seen Jacob Wallenberg for the last time, Goerdeler had been much less optimistic, though still far from Wallenberg’s realism.

At a time when the German armies’ march on Moscow seemed triumphant, in September 1941, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the theologian and Confessing Church leader, attached to Canaris’s Abwehr to enable him to carry out Resistance missions under cover, went to Switzerland to look for any signs of a willingness to consider peace terms that would give a coup-d'état government in Germany a chance to survive. At a time when the German military position was strong, as it had been between October 1939 and April 1940, the Resistance center around Oster, Dohnanyi, and Canaris began new approaches, and they were willing to accept the military defeat of Germany. During his visit to Geneva, Bonhoeffer told Dr. Willem Visser ‘t Hooft, Secretary General of the World Council of Churches: “If you want to know, I pray for the defeat of my country, for I think that is the only possibility of paying for all the suffering that my country has caused in the world.”

Adam von Trott who worked in the Foreign Office in Berlin, Dr. Eugen Gerstenmaier who worked in the Foreign Affairs Office of the Evangelical Church, and Dr. Hans Schönfeld, Director of the Research Institute of the World Council of Churches in Geneva, drafted a memorandum in the months following the halting of the German offensive in Russia. It was transmitted in April 1942 to Sir Stafford

75. Ritter, 337.
77. Eberhard Bethge, Dietrich Bonhoeffer (London, 1970), 648; Bethge, Bonhoeffer (German ed.), 834; Willem Visser ‘t Hooft, Die Welt war meine Gemeinde (Munich, 1972), 185-86; cf. below at n. 86.
Cripps, Lord Privy Seal, and to Prime Minister Churchill who thought it encouraging. Its main points were: the Western World must be saved from bolshevization and totalitarian tendencies; as the first and most important step, the present German régime must be overthrown and this could be accomplished, as things stood, either through a Soviet victory or through an internal German coup d’état; the anti-Nazi forces on whose behalf the memorandum was submitted wanted to restore self-government and a federal system, based on socialist principles and integrated into a European federation, a free Polish and a free Czech state within the limits of their ethnographic frontiers, general disarmament, the reorganization of Europe free of concepts such as “status quo” and “status quo ante,” with the main emphasis on “social and political security,” and cooperation with all other nations “to overcome the misery existing in the countries now under Nazi rule.”

Since the alternative to a Soviet victory was said to be an internal German coup d’état, a German victory could not be the complement of the coup d’état. The renunciation of status-quo considerations could mean only something less than the status quo. The references to political security and cooperation to overcome the misery caused by war had to be seen as the acceptance of military defeat, and as a willingness to have put in question such matters as the union of Austria with Germany and the status of Alsace and Lorraine, while the reference to ethnographic frontiers for Poland and Germany could be seen to have implications for the disposition of Silesia and the Sudetenland (the Resistance, of course, in case of Germany’s military defeat, could make promises only concerning its position on Poland’s western borders, not on the eastern territory lost to the Soviet Union). This position hardly represented the contemporary views of Goerdeler, Hassell, Popitz, or, perhaps, Beck. It demonstrated a readiness, stated explicitly in the memorandum, “to accept our due share of responsibility and of guilt.” Thus Churchill could find it encouraging. But the answer from the British government was not encouraging to the Resistance group whose views the memorandum represented. The answer was given in a speech by Foreign Secretary Eden on 8 May

80. Ibid., 388.
1942 in Edinburgh, in which he said: "The longer the German people continue to support and to tolerate the régime which is leading them to destruction the heavier grows their own direct responsibility for the damage they are doing to the world. Therefore, if any section of the German people really wants to see a return to a German state which is based on respect for law and for the rights of the individual, they must understand that no one will believe them until they have taken active steps to rid themselves of their present régime."81 The approach made by Trott was such a step, but it did not meet Eden's standards. The British government looked for overt internal attacks on the German government as proof of the existence of a German Resistance. In the view of the German conspirators such attacks, if they were to be more than ineffective suicide missions for the sake of publicity, could be made only after certain assurances had been received that would enable a post-Hitler government to survive politically. This was not what the Allies were interested in. On the contrary, they wanted the total defeat of all Germans without distinction. The comment on Trott and on the question whether he ought to be warned of danger to his life made by G. W. Harrison, the Private Secretary to the Parliamentary Undersecretary of State, reveals this attitude: "In fact I do not think it is in our interest to do so since his value to us as a 'martyr' is likely to exceed his value to us in post-war Germany."82

Trott, of course, was filled with love of his country, and he thought more in terms of realistic power-relations during and after the war, foreseeing, unlike Bonhoeffer to whom this was of little interest, the vastly enhanced and expanded international position of the Soviet Union after the inevitable Allied victory over Germany. In the spring of 1944, Trott repeated to a friend that he had felt bound by patriotic duty to come back from England and America where he could have remained in exile, and that he did not regret it although he understood that it had led many or most of his friends in England to distrust him: 

"[...] I am firmly convinced that any German who wants to help in the reconstruction of a post-war Europe must have experienced—personally, intimately what has gone on here in our country. What made a man a Nazi, what makes men sit tight and do nothing, what it has

81. The Times (Late London ed.) 9 May 1942, 5; Kettenacker, 189.
82. Armin Boyens, Kirchenkampf und Ökumene 1939–1945 (Munich, [1973]), 213.
meant to be in opposition, to oppose, always to oppose. The bust-up hopes, the heroism, and there has been heroism, seemingly useless heroism and then the shame—the paralysing shame."

Trott believed in the intrinsic sanity of his people, as the concentration camps filled with Germans and non-Germans, and he believed in a balancing role they could play between East and West, in a postwar world he thought would be dominated by America and Russia: "I can’t believe that they want to create a vacuum here in the centre of Europe—a vacuum fills, and if this bombing goes on, it will fill from the East. Even Stalin has realized that when the Nazis are gone he will have to deal with the German people—even he is making overtures. But the Allies, unconditional surrender, unconditional surrender, like a broken gramophone record, we have to face it, I have to face it, that is the only echo which has come back from across our borders from the West. And yet I know there are people out there who must realize that the Nazis and all they stand for are as much our enemies as theirs." Trott did not understand the profound distrust of a German Great Power with or without Hitler, the seriousness of proclaimed Allied war aims which implied the amputation and division of Germany—or, alternatively, he was propelled by uncalculating, "unprofessional" qualities: hope, and patriotism.

While Trott believed in the international solidarity of Western civilization and decency, Bonhoeffer’s motivation, and his beliefs concerning conditions for a renewal were more fundamentally ethical, more rigorous, but no less utopian. In a lecture on “What is a Christian Ethic,” in January 1929, Bonhoeffer had said: “There can be ethics only in the framework of history, in the concrete situation, at the moment of the divine call. [. . .] Thus there cannot be ethics in a vacuum, as a principle; there cannot be good and evil as general ideas, but only as qualities of will making a decision. [. . .] The Christian acts in the power of a man who has become free. He is under no judgment but his own and that of God. [. . .] the Christian. [. . .] must learn the paradox that the world offers us a choice, not between good and evil, but between one evil and another. [. . .]” In July 1939 Bonhoeffer wrote to Reinhold Niebuhr to explain his return to Ger-

84. Bielenberg, 175, 142.
many from America where he had been offered various positions: "I must live through this difficult period of our national history with the Christian people of Germany. I will have no right to participate in the reconstruction of Christian life in Germany after the war if I do not share the trials of this time with my people. [...] Christians in Germany will face the terrible alternative of either willing the defeat of their nation in order that Christian civilization may survive, or willing the victory of their nation and thereby destroying our civilization. I know which of these alternatives I must choose. [...]"

The mission of Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Helmuth James Graf von Moltke in Oslo in April 1942 provides illumination for the radicalism of some of the leading conspirators, the inevitable ambiguities of their position, and the incompatibility of the Resistance’s and the Allies’ views. In a conflict between Minister-President Quisling and the Norwegian Church, the entire clergy had resigned by 5 April, and Quisling had had arrested the Bishop of Oslo, Eivind Berggrav, who was a leader of the Norwegian Resistance. A member of the German Resistance, Major Theodor Steltzer, Transport Officer in the Staff of the German occupation forces, immediately sent word to Moltke who notified Canaris, and Canaris and Oster decided to send two Abwehr agents to lodge a protest with the Nazi Governor of Norway, Reichskommissar Terboven. The two agents chosen for the mission were Bonhoeffer and Moltke. They argued the security of German occupation forces was endangered, and as a result, Bishop Berggrav was released and placed under house arrest in his own house.

Bonhoeffer and Moltke pursued an unofficial objective, besides the liberation of the Bishop: to expand and activate contacts with the Norwegian Resistance. Bonhoeffer had demanded, unsuccessfully, in 1933 that the German Evangelical Church oppose the régime uncompromisingly, and that the Church risk, though not seek, martyrdom. He had been motivated then, as he was later in his eventual entry into active political Resistance in 1938–39, by the persecution of the Jews.

Now he found in Norway the same challenge to the Church, and he

86. Bonhoeffer, GS, 1: 320; Bethge, Bonhoeffer (German ed.), 712–37.
87. Bethge, Bonhoeffer (German ed.), 844–48; Moltke, 182–84; Roon, 139, 325–27; Arvid Brodersen, Fra et nomadeliv: Erindringer (Oslo, 1982), 176–77; Arvid Brodersen, interview with the author 13 Jan. 1985.
was able to offer competent advice, urging strongly that the Norwegian Church struggle be pursued without compromise.89

Bonhoeffer, Moltke, and Steltzer met with the painter Henrik Sørensen and the sociologist Dr. Arvid Brodersen on 13 April, in the house of a German businessman, Max Krohn, who supported the Norwegian Resistance.90 The conspirators discussed whether an appeal could be made through Bishop Berggrav to the Norwegian King for an intervention with the Allies suggesting contacts with the German Resistance. The Norwegians thought “the time was not ripe,” but the German-Norwegian contact was to be developed further.91 Bonhoeffer said: “I pray for the defeat of my country in this war.”92 But he was not willing to offer military information. On such a basis the contact with the Allies could have been established.93 It was clear, incidentally, that Bonhoeffer and Moltke did not agree on the question of the assassination of Hitler. Bonhoeffer argued it as a necessity, and as theologicially and philosophically justified.94

Moltke used an official pretext—a visit to the German Legation in Stockholm, concerning ships ordered by Norwegian companies with Swedish shipbuilders—to write and send letters to his friends in England. In one addressed to Lionel Curtis on 18 April 1942, Moltke wrote about the struggle against the Nazis: “You know that I have

89. Bethge, Bonhoeffer (German ed.), 846.

90. Roon, p. 327, has Bishop Berggrav present; Brodersen, Fra, 177 and interview 13 Jan. 1985 does not confirm this; Bethge, Bonhoeffer (German ed.), 846, says Bonhoeffer and Moltke did not meet Bishop Berggrav then; Michael Balfour and Julian Frisby, Helmhut von Moltke (London and Basingstoke, [1972]), 183 and 374, n. 4, say that Roon’s inclusion of Bishop Berggrav “has been established to rest on a confusion with later visits,” but they give no source.

91. Roon, 327, only says “it was believed that the time was not ripe”; this must have been primarily the Norwegians’ position since the Germans were seeking the contact.


93. Brodersen, interview 13 Jan. 1985. When Brodersen was pressed by the military-intelligence wing of the Norwegian Home Front (Resistance) to tap Steltzer for military information, he called a gathering of the leaders of the Home Front and it was agreed not to press Steltzer for military information with regard to his honor “which we respected” and to his future in Germany; but Steltzer confirmed an estimate of German troop strength in Norway offered by Brodersen which he had arrived at through calculations involving German requisitions of toilet paper: Brodersen, interview 13 Jan. 1985. The Home Front military intelligence also learned a great deal through official contacts between the Norwegian and German administrative authorities, as when matters of rail transport had to be dealt with.

94. Roon, 327; Bethge, Bonhoeffer (German ed.), 847; see also Bonhoeffer’s consideration, in 1929, of the necessity of murder in some circumstances: “no acts are evil in themselves, even murder may be sanctioned”; “Grundfragen einer christlichen Ethik,” Dietrich Bonhoeffer, GS, 5 (Munich, 1972): 166.
fought the Nazis from the first day, but the amount of risk and readiness for sacrifice which is asked from us now, and that which may be asked from us tomorrow require more than right ethical principles, especially as we know that the success of our fight will probably mean a total collapse as a national unit. But we are ready to face this. [...] We hope that you will realise that we are ready to help you win war and peace." The same letter also contained a reference to what the Resistance needed so desperately and to the fact that, as with Bonhoeffer, it was not a question of treason pure and simple but one of the deepest concern for the present and future life of German and European society: "We can only expect to get our people to overthrow this reign 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. For us Europe after the war is less a problem of frontiers and soldiers, of top-heavy organisations or grand plans, but Europe after the war is a question of how the picture of man can be reestablished in the hearts of our fellow-citizens." 95

Bonhoeffer went to Switzerland next, did not find the people he was looking for, but learned that the Bishop of Chichester, George Bell, was visiting Sweden. He returned at once to Germany, proposed to go to Sweden, and within three days the plan was discussed, approved, and organized by Canaris, Oster, and Dohnanyi, after approval by Beck. 96 Bonhoeffer flew from Berlin to Stockholm on 30 May 1942. He did not know that Schönfeld of the World Council of Churches was arranging to meet the Bishop, too, nor what message Schönfeld was carrying.

Schönfeld in his meeting with the Bishop of Chichester on 31 May 1942 mentioned points advanced earlier by Trott, and, moreover, the possibility of a putsch by Himmler whereupon the Army would seize power. Then there was the question whether Britain and America would negotiate with a post-Hitler or post-Himmler government and whether their attitude would differ from that of 1918/19. 97 Schönfeld spoke for, or tried to speak for, a broad spectrum of the Resistance and he included the national view that the Resistance would have no

95. Balfour, Frisby, 184–85; Moltke, 183–86.
96. Bethge, Bonhoeffer (German ed.), 850–55.
choice but to support the Army in its struggle against Germany’s enemies if the Allies refused to consider terms of peace for a post-Hitler government of the Resistance.98

Bonhoeffer’s position and approach were fundamental, and without threats and demands. In his meeting with the Bishop of Chichester, also on 31 May 1942, he spoke for himself, for Oster, and for Dohranyi, and he carried a message from Moltke.99 As he had written to Niebuhr in July 1939, as he had said to Visser ‘t Hooft in September 1941, and to his Norwegian contacts in April 1942, he accepted the inevitability of Germany’s defeat and the necessity of restitution for destruction. There are no sources clearly separating Schönfeld’s views from those of Bonhoeffer;100 the Bishop incorporated the views of both emissaries in his memorandum to Foreign Secretary Eden and said in 1945 that Bonhoeffer had confirmed what Schönfeld had told him. Bonhoeffer certainly concurred with and added to Schönfeld’s description of the forces in Germany working towards a plot against the régime, and with the expressed hope that some encouragement and willingness to negotiate peace could be obtained from the Allied governments including the United States and the Soviet Union.101 But Bonhoeffer said that the Christian conscience was not at ease with Schönfeld’s ideas on the terms of a settlement, and that “There must be punishment by God. We should not be worthy of such a solution. We do not want to escape repentance. Our action must be understood as an act of repentance.” This evidently applied to the Resistance activities, including submission to Allied surrender terms. On the Bishop’s prompting, Schönfeld agreed that an occupation of Berlin by the Allied Armies “would be a great help for the purpose of exercising control” (over Germany and her military and other resources).102

In 1945, the Bishop distinguished in general terms between what he called two strands of opposition, one represented by Schönfeld (and which might be called the “national” opposition, associated with names such as Beck, Hassell, Trott, Steltzer, Gerstenmaier, Goerdeler,

101. See also Dohranyi, “Aufzeichnungen.”
102. Cicestr, 206; Bishop Bell’s memorandum, point B 4, in Bonhoeffer, GS, 1: 373.
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Hammerstein), and the other by Bonhoeffer: "The second strand is composed of those who were quite uncompromising in their repudiation of all that Hitler and the Nazis generally stood for, and opposed the régime from a definite Christian or liberal or democratic angle. They can rightly be called the upholders of the European tradition in Germany. In the highly complicated German situation both these strands were closely related. To each strand of the opposition the Army was indispensable for success. For there was no force available to destroy the régime except the Army." 103

Further, there could be no question of opportunism. All resistance movements in countries under Nazi control were beset by despair in 1940, and the German Resistance was no exception. When it was suggested, however, that now the overthrow of Hitler would be ill-advised because it would only make him a martyr, Bonhoeffer's rejoinder was decisive: "If we claim to be Christians, there is no room for expediency. Hitler is the Anti-Christ. Therefore we must go on with our work and eliminate him whether he be successful or not." 104 These views were devoid of the power-political and territorial nationalism for which the Resistance is often criticized and misunderstood. But they did not change the fact that Allied assurances were still needed conditions for a coup d'état and for a peace before the final defeat of Hitler's Germany. "Absolute silence," however, was the reaction of the British government, as it had been since 1940.

Trott, Gisevius, John, and others continued their efforts after Bonhoeffer, Dohnanyi, and Dr. Muller had been arrested and Oster had been placed under house arrest. 105 There was little variation in the messages that were carried abroad, apart from certain attempts to apply pressure on the Western Allies by raising the spectre of the bolshevization of Central Europe which would envelop also Eastern Europe, and by suggesting that there were those in the German Resistance who were inclined to deal with the Soviet Union. 106 Hassell's

103. Cicer, 207.

104. Cicer, 208. Bethge, Bonhoeffer (German ed.), 811–12 comments on certain simplifications in Bell's reproduction of Bonhoeffer's words and declares highly unlikely Bonhoeffer's use of the term Anti-Christ for Hitler, adding that Bonhoeffer had once told him: "No, he is not the Anti-Christ, for this Hitler is not great enough; the Anti-Christ uses him, but he [the Anti-Christ] is not as stupid as he [Hitler]."

105. Fieldmarshal Wilhelm Keitel to Oster 16 Dec. 1943; Bethge, Bonhoeffer (German ed.), 884.

assessments had been realistic, of course, that when German military fortunes waned, so did the reasons for any response from the Allied side to Resistance overtures. This was demonstrated by one of the most far-reaching overtures made: one carried abroad by Moltke.

Moltke sought to launch his approaches through Turkey in July and December 1943. His contacts for this were Dr. Paul Leverkuhn, a law partner of Moltke’s before the war and now the Abwehr Resident in Istanbul; Dr. Hans Wilbrandt, a banker who had lived there since 1934 and whom Moltke knew from before 1933 when he managed his parents’ Kreisau estate; and Professor Alexander Rüstow, a sociologist with connections to the American Office of Strategic Services (OSS) whom Wilbrandt had brought in. Moltke spoke on behalf of many conspirators, indeed, probably a broad spectrum of the Resistance. But it must be stressed that the proposed plan for action coincided with his own thinking. He spoke, as Schönfeld had done, more “politically” than might have been Bonhoeffer’s inclination. Moltke proposed some considerable modification of the unconditional-surrender formula, and a separate arrangement with the Western Allies. In return, the Resistance would overthrow Hitler. After his initial visit to Turkey from 5 to 10 July 1943, Moltke waited for word that a contact with American authorities had been set up, received it, and managed to have Admiral Canaris once more arrange for his trip. He was in Istanbul from 11 to 16 December 1943. Moltke’s principal points were: retraction of the unconditional-surrender formula (he abandoned this point when his friends in Istanbul told him there could not be any contacts on this basis); support for the overthrow of Hitler from within; cooperation from the Resistance to enable the Western Allies to occupy Germany.

107. Hassell, 222.
108. The exposé which resulted from Moltke’s visit in Istanbul in December 1943 is printed in Roon, 582–86; Balfour, Frisby, 273–77 print the English translation that was transmitted to America; see also Balfour, Frisby, 271–72; Moltke, 219, 262–64, 285; OSS report DOGWOOD 234 of 30 Dec. 1943 and related correspondence in the possession of Freya von Moltke; cf. Hoffmann, History, 735–37 nn. 66–68c, and Hoffmann, Widerstand, Staatsstreich, Attentat: Der Kampf der Opposition gegen Hitler, 4th rev. ed. (Munich, 1985), 278–79.
109. The exposé is confirmed to have contained the views of Moltke and his “Kreisau” friends by Moltke’s letter to Freya von Moltke of 7 Jan. 1944 and by what Steltzer and Gerstenmaier had told Dr. Ivar Anderson, the Editor of Svenska Dagbladet, on 6 Oct. 1943; Moltke, 285; Anderson diary 17 Sept., 6 Oct., and 30 Oct. 1943; the views are reflected as well in William J. Donovan’s memorandum of 29 July 1944 for President Roosevelt, FDR Library PSF OSS file.
There were also in the exposé resulting from Moltke's visit references to a wing in the Resistance tending "eastward," but the stress, indeed the insistence, was on the swift occupation of Germany by the armies of the Western Powers and on the maintenance of a front against the Red Army along a line from Tilsit to Lemberg. The unmistakable defeat of Germany and the occupation of her territory were considered necessary, but it had to be a Western occupation: then German cooperation might be justified as a courageous patriotic act similar to General von Yorck's agreement with a Russian general at Tauroggen in 1812 which was referred to in the exposé, 110 and thus win the necessary military cooperation and a basis for the political survival of a strong left wing in Germany, in order to have a hope of being tolerated by the working class with its Communist leanings; thus there had to be very obvious advantages to be derived from cooperation with the Western Allies and from the continued holding of an eastern front: it had to be clear that it was the only means to stem the menacing tide from the East. Equally the Resistance government would have to satisfy a strong faction in the military wing of the Resistance favoring an agreement with the Soviet Union.

The answer to the approach was the same as ever: silence. In a memorandum dated 29 July 1944 to President Roosevelt, the Director of the OSS, Colonel William J. Donovan, described the approach, in substantially the terms of the exposé, as having been made by Moltke, who was code-named "Hermann" in OSS correspondence. Donovan commented: "The approach in Istanbul was made at a time when it was clear that our relations with the Russians would not permit negotiation with such a contact, especially since the plan advanced involved an attempt to permit Anglo-Saxon occupation to the exclusion of Russia. [...] I directed our representative in Istanbul to enter into no negotiations with Hermann but to keep open the channel of contact. The American Military Attaché was apprised of this contact and of the outlines of the proposal. Although subsequent to the delivery of the group's proposal to our representative in Istanbul further overtures were made and a meeting was requested, this meeting could not take place due to the arrest of Hermann who, so far as we know, has remained in custody." 111 "Further overtures" included those received

111. Donovan to Roosevelt 29 July 1944, FDR Library FSF OSS file; Moltke was arrested on 19 Jan. 1944; Moltke, 285.
in Bern since January 1944 and particularly in April, on which Allen Dulles had reported in detail at the time, and which contained essentially the same offer of cooperation and a separate arrangement excluding the Soviet Union.\footnote{FRUS 1944, 1: 510–13. This report, dated 16 May 1944, states that the OSS representative in Bern [A. W. Dulles] had been "approached periodically by two emissaries of a German group proposing to attempt an overthrow of the Nazi Regime"; the two emissaries are identified as Gievius and Waejen. They are reported further as having carried to Dulles essentially the same offer as Moltke's Istanbul proposal: that military commanders in the west would "cease resistance and aid Allied landings, once the Nazis had been ousted. [. . .] The condition on which the group expressed willingness to act was that they would deal directly with the Western Allies alone after overthrowing the Nazi regime."}

Considerations within the Resistance of seeking assurances from the Soviet Union if the Western Allies remained unforthcoming did not proceed much beyond the realm of discussion. In the thinking of several Resistance leaders the option seemed to exist, as Trott's statements and Hassell's diary show.\footnote{See n. 109 above, and below at nn. 118 and 119; A. Dulles in FRUS 1944, 1: 510–13; Hassell, 338 (for December 1943); Hans Bernd Gievius, Bis zum bitteren Ende, one-vol. ed. (Zurich, 1954), 524; Herschel Johnson to Secretary of State Hull 26 June and 14 Sept. 1944, FRUS 1944, 1: 523–53; cf. also Klaus Hildebrand, "Die ostpolitischen Vorstellungen im deutschen Widerstand," Geschichte in Wissenschaft und Unterricht 29 (1978): 213–41. See also below, at n. 121.} Moltke and Gievius, however, revealed the Resistance's prevalent and intense concern to keep the Red Army out of Germany, and merely pointed out that there were also some pro-Russian sentiments in Germany.\footnote{Roon, 582–86.} The eastern "options," so far as can be seen, were never meant to be exploited. Trott got only as far as trying to speak with the Soviet Minister in Stockholm, Alexandra Kollontaj, by June 1944.\footnote{Roon, 317; Rothfels, "Trott," 309; Theodor Steltzer, Sechzig Jahre Zeitgenosse (Munich, 1966), 158; Johnson to Hull (n. 113 above).} Leber and Reichwein, the Socialists, met with functionaries of the German Communist underground in June 1944.\footnote{See above, p. 4.} Apart from these tentative feelers, the weight of the evidence is that the Resistance wanted to exclude the Soviet Union from negotiations rather than seek an arrangement including it, much less a separate agreement with it. The evidence for any eastern inclinations, tendencies, or incipient overtures is scant, whereas the evidence for westward overtures is massive, and extended chronologically from prewar days to the last days of the Resistance in July 1944. If Colonel Claus Graf von Stauffenberg agreed to have the German
Communists sounded out on their attitude towards a coup d’État initiated by Army elements, the purpose can have been only the stabilization of the coup d’état. The question was whether the Communists would tolerate the continuation of combat on the eastern front to keep the Red Army out of Germany. In the situation before the Allied breakthrough at Avranches, “unconditional surrender” would have meant surrender to and occupation by the Red Army as well as the armies of the Western Allies.

Fundamentally the same concern was expressed in a contact Trott had had with the Chief Editor of Svenska Dagbladet, Dr. Ivar Anderson, during a visit to Stockholm from 23 October to 3 November 1943. Trott described the German Resistance and the danger of Communist domination in Central Europe. Germany herself would be susceptible to Communism, Saxony in particular was fertile soil for it. But the Resistance group for which he spoke, said Trott, had good contacts with labor leaders, and there were good prospects for a Christian-social and Christian-democratic labor movement. If the Western Allies did not assist the German conspirators actively, however, by landing troops and occupying much of Germany, and by providing political ammunition in the form of an assurance to negotiate, then nothing but waiting remained, which was dangerous because it could mean that the Russians won the game. Trott himself did not believe in the possibility of a separate peace with Russia, but some in the Resistance, he said, were talking about capitulation to the Soviet Union based on the belief that Stalin would offer better conditions of peace than the Western Powers. Anderson did his best to put Trott in touch with representatives of the Western Allies. Through Anderson’s good offices Trott had conversations with the Swedish Foreign Minister, Christian Günther, and an official of the British Information Ministry, Sir Walter Monckton. But nothing came of them.

On 14 March 1944 Trott looked up Anderson again, while efforts to establish contacts for the Resistance were being intensified in Lisbon and in Bern, by Dr. Otto John, a syndic with Lutthansa, and Dr. Gisevius, respectively. Trott said that constant Allied air raids necessarily increased solidarity between Party and people. While Anderson

117. See sources cited in Hoffmann, Widerstand, 743–46, nn. 132–44.
thought that a change of régime in Germany was a precondition for modified Allied peace terms, Trott said the only way out seemed to be a separate peace with the Soviet Union. The destruction through air raids and the growing impoverization were preparing the ground for Bolshevism in any case, and Stalin might move into the vacuum created by a German collapse. Trott believed the most important factor now for the success of a coup-d’état government in Germany would be an immediate cessation of bombing, once the new government had been set up. Anderson promised to pass on Trott’s views to British authorities. In January and April 1944 President Roosevelt had been ready to issue an encouraging proclamation to the German people upon the Western Allies’ landing in France, possibly responding to German Resistance contacts which had reached him through OSS, and seeing that the unconditional-surrender proclamation of January 1943 might have strengthened German morale. But Churchill and Stalin vetoed Roosevelt’s intention. It might have been prejudicial to war aims, and it might have disposed the German population more favorably to the Americans, while all Europe was demanding revenge, as Churchill wrote. Stalin had made such an effort of his own when he had issued a proclamation on 12 July 1943 founding the “National Committee ‘Free Germany’”; to allay Western suspicions, Stalin had been obliged to disavow any intention of seeking a dominant influence in postwar Germany and had dismissed the “Committee” as a mere propaganda trick. The German Resistance had not considered the Russian overtures as an alternative to Western assurances. Again, the German Resistance, unlike all other anti-Nazi resistance movements, remained without any encouragement.

121. FRUS 1944, I: 493–94, 501–3, 513–14, 517–18. For the following, see The Times, 23 July 1943 (for Stalin’s proclamation of 12 July 1943); FRUS 1944, 4 (Washington, 1966): 805, 872, n. 62. On 14 August 1943, six days after a proclamation by Fieldmarshal Paulus, Molotov told the British Ambassador in Moscow that the “National Committee ‘Free Germany’” was being used “entirely for propaganda purposes”; on 13 January 1944 the American Ambassador in Moscow, Averell Harriman, reported to the Secretary of State: “At the Moscow Conference the Soviet Government stated that its support of Free German Committee in Russia had been from its inception a propaganda move designed to weaken German resistance and that the statements of Free German Committee were not expressions of policy of [the] Soviet Government.” Harriman pointed out at the end of this report “that [the] Soviet Government at the Moscow Conference expressly asked that its attitude toward the Free Germany [sic] Committee be kept secret.” Whether or not it will ever be possible to penetrate the levels of deceit and duplicity visible here, there can be no doubt that much cause existed for distrust between the Western Allied Powers and the Soviet Union.
In April 1944 Trott saw an assistant to the European Resident of OSS, Allen Dulles, and he put to him points similar to the ones he had made in Stockholm. In June Trott was in Stockholm again and made contact with a member of the British Legation who said that "cooperation" of the Resistance with the Allies to end the war more quickly would enable the Allies to spare many bombing targets in Germany. Trott answered that a modification of the unconditional-surrender formula was a condition for cooperation—recognizing that his British contact was looking only for treasonous collaboration. It was politically impossible, of course, for the Resistance to cooperate with the Allies if it meant the substitution of Allied arbitrariness for Nazi despotism, the denial of self-determination to the German people, the amputation and division of German territory, the enslavement of German workers and soldiers, and the prevention of German courts of law from prosecuting Nazi criminals. In a conversation with John Scott, correspondent in Stockholm for Time and Life, Trott said on 23 June that there was no hope for a successful coup d'état in Germany as long as the unconditional-surrender formula remained unchanged; it meant the continuation of the war and the occupation of a part of Germany, at least, by the Red Army; since the Russians evidently understood the feelings of the German people better than the Western Allies, most of the well-intentioned anti-Nazis would gravitate towards the East; he, Trott, certainly would. On 3 July 1944 Trott was back in Germany. On 26 August he was hanged for his part in the Resistance.

III

Without foreign support, the Resistance believed, a coup d'état could not find sufficient internal support. Conditions ranged from an Allied promise of non-interference during the coup d'état to a modification of the unconditional-surrender formula and guarantees for Germany's territorial integrity. While some senior military co-conspirators or prospective participants might have raised such conditions to ward

124. Rothfel's, "Trott," 309; Steltzer, 158; FRUS 1944, 1: 510–11; Lindgren, 282.
off challenges to act against the régime, key figures in the Resistance such as Beck, Bonhoeffer, Dohnanyi, Trott, Moltke, Gisevius, John, and Goerdeler were sincere in their belief that Allied assurances would make a coup d'état possible. They could not accept the Allies' lack of differentiation between the Nazi régime and the other Germany represented by the Resistance. On the Allied side, however, the view prevailed that Germany was dangerous no matter what German government was in power "so long as the German military machine remained intact," that Germany must be defeated totally, and that the coalition with Russia must not be endangered. The views held by the German Resistance and the war aims of the Allied governments remained diametrically opposed throughout the war. There never was a basis for any agreement between the German Resistance and Allied governments on armistice or peace terms before the overthrow of Hitler's régime.

The Resistance has been criticized for the variety and the variations of its contacts with Allied authorities. The implication is that Resistance contacts might have had better chances of producing useful results if they had been better coordinated and more unified. But it was not possible for the Resistance to content itself with one channel when others seemed to exist, and when positive responses had not been received. There was merit in the belief that a variety of approaches would demonstrate that the Resistance was more than an isolated clique but represented a significant part of society. This was not perplexing to the Allies who were well informed about the composition and intentions of the Resistance. Moltke's request to meet in Sweden with his friend Michael Balfour went up all the way to the Prime

125. Osborne to Halifax 19 Feb. 1940, Ludlow, 337; cf. G. W. Harrison, "German Dissident Groups," memorandum 8 June 1944, Kettenacker, 200-3; see above, pp. 16-18.

126. Martin, "Versagen," 105-3, besides criticizing the Resistance in this regard, maintains the Resistance should have pursued a separate peace with the Soviet Union because it was a more promising prospect. In view of Anglo-Russian agreements on annexations of German territory and expulsion of German populations (see at n. 26 above), the prospect can hardly be considered promising. Allied intentions were known to the Resistance better than merely vaguely. General Beck was entirely clear at all times what sort of peace awaited Germany after a lost war; see Beck's Memorandum for the Commander-in-Chief of the Army, Colonel-General von Brauchitsch, of 15 July 1938, in Klaus-Jürgen Müller, General Ludwig Beck: Studien und Dokumente zur politisch-militärischen Vorstellungswelt und Tätigkeit des Generalstabschefs des deutschen Heeres 1933-1938, Schriften des Bundesarchivs, vol. 30 (Boppard am Rhein, 1980), no. 48.
Minister. Allen Dulles kept his government informed in great detail. There is no evidence that fewer, or more coordinated approaches would have diminished the discrepancy between Allied war aims and Resistance views on armistice or peace terms. As Allen Dulles put it in a dispatch from Bern on 29 January 1944, commenting on Gisevius’s usefulness for purposes of American policy: “[…] like the majority of such Germans, he is acting for the future welfare of his own country, and hence his opinions may not always check with ours. I am satisfied by the evidence before me that he wants to wipe out every element of the current Nazi group.”

The approaches made by Bonhoeffer, Moltke, Müller, Gisevius, and John all came from the same Resistance center in Admiral Canaris’s OKW/Amt Ausland/Abwehr; the approaches by the Kordt brothers, Weizsäcker, Hassel, and Trott had their background in the Foreign Office. Haushofer was a special case but also linked to the Foreign Office. Kleist-Schmenzin had his roots in the General Staff and with the Abwehr. Goerdeler was well known long before the war, although his reputation abroad was mixed, and perhaps negative on balance. The Allies were capable of distinguishing between government agents, opaque figures like Schacht, and bona fide Resistance men.

A credibility gap was inevitable for people like Trott, Bonhoeffer, and Moltke, not to mention Gisevius or Goerdeler, who had positions or roots in the government establishment, and who advocated a spirit of understanding and cooperation in the midst of a deadly struggle between their own country and the one whose cooperation they were seeking. But they could not operate underground. If they were to have any kind of effectiveness, they needed positions in the régime from which and under cover of which they could pursue their coup d’état schemes. To Allied eyes they were tainted also by having remained in Germany even though they could have emigrated.

The Resistance’s demands for a clarification of Allied war aims was legitimate. The Allies had been unspecific in their pronouncements on the subject. German patriots could not be expected, after the experiences of 1918–24, to submit with unquestioning confidence to an Allied dictate. The most radical opponents of Hitler had gone a long

127. Balfour, Frisby, 186. The following quotation is from Dulles to Donovan 29 Jan. 1944.
IN 1891, OSS Archive, Central Intelligence Agency, Washington, D.C.
way in this direction; still this left them helpless in their attempts to win significant military backing for a coup d’État in the absence of Allied assurances. When the Resistance’s access to means of action depended on acceptable war aims, it was not reasonable to demand that it take visible action against the régime before assurances would be offered. It was reasonable to request specifics from those who were embarked on a crusade to set the world right. Allied insistence on unconditional surrender confirmed Hassell’s interpretation of Point Eight of the Atlantic Charter as aiming at the abrogation of German sovereignty.

If there was misunderstanding between the German Resistance and the Western Allies, this is not to say that without it Hitler’s régime would have been overthrown from within. It is unlikely that a formula could have been found to satisfy the perceived requirements of both sides.

If any of the coup-d’État attempts of 1943 and 1944 had succeeded internally, it would have led to collapse on all fronts, and to an unpredictable fate of Germany’s territory and population, in the absence of external support for a coup d’état. The ravages of the Red Army in 1944 and 1945 turned out fully as horrible as had been feared.

Approximately half a dozen attempts were made to assassinate Hitler and to overthrow the régime, with only minimal support from a few Home Army officers, and without Allied assurances. The most notable of the attempts and attacks before 20 July 1944 were those of 13 and 21 March 1943 under the central guidance of the Oster-Dohnanyi group in the Abwehr. After Dohnanyi’s and Oster’s arrest in April 1943, new attempts were launched, under central coordination by Stauffenberg, in September, November, and December 1943, and again in January, February, March, June, and July 1944.

One might speculate that those attacks were not mentioned to the Allied contacts because that would have undermined the efforts to secure assurances. The revelation of the assassination attacks, how-

128. Eden had done this in his Edinburgh speech on 8 May 1942; cf. at n. 81 above; Hassell, 218; n. 124 above.
130. See Hoffmann, History, chap. 36.
ever, their dates and circumstances, would have been extremely
dangerous, and probably unbelievable unless verifiable from indepen-
dent sources. The attempts made in desperation without Allied assur-
ances did suffer from crucial deficiencies: from lack of support by
senior commanders.

The Resistance's plans for Germany's renewal were unrealizable
under a foreign military occupation. The question must be raised,
therefore, why the Resistance attempted the coup d'état in the absence
of any significant internal and external support, why it acted facing a
political void, as Trott said during a Gestapo interrogation.132

In the end, the two categories of approaches, the "political" and the
"moral," the "conservative" and the "radical," became amalgamated
in one position: to document, at least, through self-sacrifice, without
any hope of material success, the existence of the Other Germany. It
must be understood that German Resistance fighters, unlike those in
countries occupied by German forces, did not become instant martyrs
and national heroes when they were caught and executed but were
branded as traitors to their country and suffered, with their families,
the attendant ostracism and material loss. Many of them expressed
this expectation before the coup d'état, and they acted in the face of it.133

Hans Bernd von Haeften, a Foreign Service official whose brother
had been shot together with Stauffenberg on 20 July 1944, told the
People's Court Judge, the notorious Freisler, that Hitler to him was
Evil Incarnate. Bonhoeffer, fundamental as ever, wrote from prison
at the end of 1943: "The last responsible question is not how I might
extricate myself heroically from my present situation, but how a future
generation is to go on living. Only from this historically responsible
question there can arise productive, if temporarily most humiliating
solutions."134 Trott wrote to his wife, immediately after being sen-
tenced on 15 August 1944, how ardently he loved his German father-
land, how he had resisted all the temptations and opportunities abroad,

132. Spiegelbild, 111.
133. Cf. Hans Bernd Gisevius, Bis zum bitteren Ende (Zurich, 1946) 2: 322; Annedore Leber,
Das Gewissen steht auf, 9th ed. (Berlin and Frankfurta.M., 1960), 126; Fabian von Schlabrendorff,
Revolt Against Hitler (London, 1948), 145; cf. Hoffmann, History, 373-76.
134. Haefen: Film of the trial, Bundesarchiv, Koblenz, film no. 3170-1; Bonhoeffer: Dietrich
Bonhoeffer, Widerstand und Ergebung: Briefe und Aufzeichnungen aus der Haft, new ed. (Munich,
1970), 16.
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and how he had returned again and again, to work for his homeland and to try to help save it. And as Tresckow put it: "The assassination must be attempted, at any cost. Even should that fail, the attempt to seize power in the capital must be undertaken. We must prove to the world and to future generations that the men of the German resistance movement dared to take the decisive step and to hazard their lives upon it. Compared with this object, nothing else matters."}

135. Leber, 222; Rothfels, "Trott," 300.
136. Schlabrendorff, 131.