

ENGLISH LEARNING FOR CURIOUS MINDS



Episode #580
Operation Valkyrie & The Plot To Kill Hitler
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Transcript	3
Key vocabulary	25
Language spotlight	33
Quiz	36
Listening Comprehension Multiple Choice Questions	36
True or False	38
Fill in the Blank	38
Vocabulary Practice	39
Answers	42

Transcript

[00:00:05] Hello, hello, hello, and welcome to English Learning for Curious Minds, by Leonardo English, the show where you can listen to fascinating stories and learn weird and wonderful things about the world at the same time as improving your English.

[00:00:20] I'm Alastair Budge, and today we are going to be talking about Operation Valkyrie and the [plot](#)¹ to [assassinate](#)² Hitler.

[00:00:29] It's a story of bombs, [plots](#)³, secret [briefcases](#)⁴, underground [bunkers](#)⁵, and one of history's greatest "what ifs".

[00:00:38] OK then, let's not waste a minute and get right into it.

¹ a secret plan

² kill for political reasons

³ secret plans made by a group of people

⁴ flat, rectangular bags used for carrying papers or documents

⁵ strong underground rooms built to protect people from bombs

Operation Valkyrie & The Plot To Kill Hitler

[00:00:44] In the early afternoon of July 20th, 1944, twenty or so senior Nazi officials were gathered around a long [oak⁶](#) table in the Wolf's [Lair⁷](#), Hitler's military headquarters on the Eastern Front, in modern-day Poland.

[00:01:05] The situation for the Nazi war machine was getting worse by the day. The Allies had landed in Normandy six weeks earlier, Russia was advancing on the Eastern Front, the Allies had captured Rome, and the United States was advancing towards Japan.

[00:01:25] If the war was still [winnable⁸](#) for Nazi Germany, well, it would take something very special.

[00:01:33] A meeting had been called, and senior Nazi leaders had been instructed to [fly in⁹](#) for it.

[00:01:41] One such officer was Claus von Stauffenberg, a 36-year-old Lieutenant Colonel who had been awarded the Iron Cross for his bravery in the Battle of France.

[00:01:53] Von Stauffenberg knew all too well the cost of war; he had been fighting in North Africa, where he had lost an eye, his entire right hand, and two fingers on his left.

⁶ a type of strong, heavy wood from an oak tree

⁷ a secret or hidden place where he worked or lived

⁸ possible to win

⁹ travel to the place by aeroplane

English Learning for Curious Minds | Episode #580

Operation Valkyrie & The Plot To Kill Hitler

[00:02:08] It had taken him three months to recover, but he was still without one eye and seven fingers, so he was transferred to office duty, far from the [front line](#)¹⁰.

[00:02:19] He had met Hitler on several occasions, and Hitler had always been polite and [courteous](#)¹¹ to him; after all, the [sacrifices](#)¹² this man had made for the Nazi cause were [plain](#)¹³ to see.

[00:02:34] So when von Stauffenberg arrived a couple of minutes late for the meeting, instead of receiving a [dressing down](#)¹⁴ and being shouted at by the Führer, there was a quiet [nod](#)¹⁵ of acceptance.

[00:02:48] Indeed, von Stauffenberg had only arrived at the Wolf's Lair that morning.

[00:02:55] He would have been on time for the meeting, but it was such a hot day and he was [drenched](#)¹⁶ in [sweat](#)¹⁷. He had to go and change his shirt, and he needed his

¹⁰ the area where soldiers were fighting

¹¹ polite and respectful

¹² things he gave up or lost for the cause

¹³ easy or clear

¹⁴ being shouted at or told off for doing something wrong

¹⁵ a small movement of the head to show agreement or understanding

¹⁶ completely wet

¹⁷ the liquid that comes from the skin when you are hot

Operation Valkyrie & The Plot To Kill Hitler

assistant to help him. After all, belts, [buckles](#)¹⁸, and buttons, they aren't so simple if you are only operating with three fingers.

[00:03:17] The meeting was to be held in a different room from usual; normally, these types of meetings were held deep underground, in [reinforced](#)¹⁹ [concrete](#)²⁰ [bunkers](#).

But it was so hot that nobody would have lasted very long down there, without any [ventilation](#)²¹. So the meeting was taking place above ground, with the windows open for fresh air.

[00:03:43] Von Stauffenberg had been [ushered into](#)²² a room next to the conference room to allow him to get changed in private. Together with his assistant, the pair [proceeded to](#)²³ open up the [briefcase](#)²⁴.

¹⁸ metal fasteners used to close belts or straps

¹⁹ made stronger by adding extra support

²⁰ a hard building material made from cement, sand, and stones

²¹ fresh air moving through

²² led or guided into the place

²³ began or went ahead to

²⁴ a flat bag for carrying papers or documents

[00:03:58] They took out the [spare](#)²⁵ shirt, but they were more interested in what the shirt was [wrapped](#)²⁶ around: two sticks of plastic explosives, two bombs. The men began to [prime](#)²⁷ the device, setting a timer for 10 minutes.

[00:04:17] They completed the first, but before the men had the chance to [prime](#) the second bomb, there was a knock on the door: “What are you up to in there? Quick, the meeting is about to begin.”

[00:04:31] There were [assurances](#)²⁸ that they’d be out in a minute; von Stauffenberg was just having a bit of trouble with his belt. And sure enough, shortly after, the door opened. Von Stauffenberg was there in a new shirt, [briefcase](#) in hand.

[00:04:47] He was [ushered into](#) the conference room, where the meeting was already [in full flow](#)²⁹. Hitler was standing in the middle, [leaning](#)³⁰ over a map placed on the table.

²⁵ extra, unnecessary

²⁶ folded or placed

²⁷ get it ready to explode

²⁸ promises that it would happen

²⁹ happening actively or at its busiest moment

³⁰ bending his body or moving it towards it

Operation Valkyrie & The Plot To Kill Hitler

[00:04:59] Von Stauffenberg approached the table and [slid](#)³¹ the [briefcase](#) underneath, next to where Hitler was standing. A couple of minutes later, an attendant came in and knocked von Stauffenberg on the shoulder: Sir, there's a telephone call for you.

[00:05:17] Von Stauffenberg made his excuses and left the room.

[00:05:21] At 12.42, just a few minutes after von Stauffenberg's departure, there was a massive explosion right in the heart of the Wolf's [Lair](#). It looked like it might even have come from the conference room itself.

[00:05:39] By this point, von Stauffenberg was [making a beeline for](#)³² the [perimeter](#)³³, heading for the exit as quickly as possible.

[00:05:49] It's not known exactly what he told the guards to be allowed through the numerous checkpoints that surrounded the Wolf's [Lair](#), but by 1 pm, less than 20 minutes after the [blast](#)³⁴, von Stauffenberg and his assistant were on an aeroplane back to Berlin.

[00:06:07] The hard part was done. Adolf Hitler was dead, and a bunch of his senior leadership too.

³¹ moved smoothly over the surface

³² going straight and quickly towards it

³³ the edge or boundary of the area

³⁴ strong explosion

Operation Valkyrie & The Plot To Kill Hitler

[00:06:15] The next part was, comparatively, easy: [mobilise](#)³⁵ the emergency “continuity of government” plan, [appoint](#)³⁶ an [interim](#)³⁷ successor, and most probably seek peace with the Allies.

[00:06:30] The only problem was...Hitler wasn't dead.

[00:06:35] [Unbeknownst](#)³⁸ to von Stauffenberg, his carefully positioned [briefcase](#) had been slightly pushed to one side, [tucked](#)³⁹ behind the leg of the heavy [oak](#) conference table.

[00:06:49] Most probably, this was done by an officer called Heinz Brandt, who just pushed the briefcase with his feet, not out of any great [patriotic](#)⁴⁰ duty, but because it was in the way of where he wanted to put his legs.

[00:07:05] It might well have been the act that saved Hitler's life, but it cost Brandt his: he died the following day, one of the four people in the conference room to die from the [blast](#).

³⁵ organise or prepare

³⁶ choose someone for the position

³⁷ temporary, for a short time until someone permanent was chosen

³⁸ without him knowing

³⁹ pushed or put into

⁴⁰ showing love for his country

Operation Valkyrie & The Plot To Kill Hitler

[00:07:19] Another nine were seriously injured, and the remaining eleven escaped with minor injuries.

[00:07:27] And this included the target of the entire operation: Adolf Hitler.

[00:07:33] His trousers were torn to [shreds](#)⁴¹, his arm was damaged, and his [eardrum](#)⁴² [burst](#)⁴³. But he survived.

[00:07:43] In the immediate [aftermath](#)⁴⁴ of the event, he could be seen [wandering](#)⁴⁵ around the [rubble](#)⁴⁶, inspecting the chaos.

[00:07:51] Officers tried to understand what had happened. Had a Soviet bomber flown overhead and dropped a bomb with such [precision](#)⁴⁷ that it landed in the exact conference room where the Führer had been meeting?

[00:08:05] No, no planes had been seen, and there were no other explosions.

⁴¹ small torn pieces

⁴² the thin part inside the ear that helped him hear sounds

⁴³ broke open suddenly

⁴⁴ the time after the event

⁴⁵ walking around without a clear purpose or direction

⁴⁶ broken pieces of stone or brick

⁴⁷ exactness or accuracy

Operation Valkyrie & The Plot To Kill Hitler

[00:08:11] The focus quickly switched to a threat from within, and suspicion fell on the man who had entered with a briefcase, then quickly left without one: Lieutenant Colonel von Stauffenberg.

[00:08:27] By this point, von Stauffenberg was in the air, on the way back to Berlin.

[00:08:33] By the time he landed, he expected Operation Valkyrie to be well underway.

[00:08:39] Now, Operation Valkyrie was the codename for the operation that would be [triggered](#)⁴⁸ if there was a full breakdown of civic order in Nazi Germany, or if there was some kind of uprising from the foreign workers in German factories.

[00:08:57] It was essentially a plan that would see the territorial reserve army [seize](#)⁴⁹ control of the streets and key state functions.

[00:09:07] Importantly, Operation Valkyrie wasn't a secret plot. It had been drawn up as a genuine emergency plan to [crush](#)⁵⁰ unrest or uprisings, and Hitler himself even [signed off](#)⁵¹ on it.

⁴⁸ caused to start or happen

⁴⁹ take hold of

⁵⁰ completely stop or destroy

⁵¹ officially approved or agreed to it

[00:09:23] But [unbeknownst](#) to Hitler, Operation Valkyrie was being used to [take him down](#)⁵².

[00:09:30] It was a clever idea in theory. Kill Hitler, declare that he had been assassinated by [rogue](#)⁵³, rebel forces within the Nazi party, [namely](#)⁵⁴ the SS.

[00:09:42] Arrest these supposedly [rogue](#) forces, declare [martial law](#)⁵⁵, and declare a Field Marshall called Erwin von Witzleben as Commander in Chief.

[00:09:53] It was a clever idea because it would [pin](#)⁵⁶ all [blame](#)⁵⁷ on the SS and “[treacherous](#)⁵⁸ forces within the Nazi party”, allowing for a relatively smooth transition to a Hitler-free Germany without all of the mess that might come from a more [overt](#)⁵⁹ [coup](#)⁶⁰ or assassination attempt.

⁵² remove or defeat him

⁵³ acting alone and not following the rules

⁵⁴ that is to say; to be specific

⁵⁵ military rule

⁵⁶ attach or fix

⁵⁷ responsibility or accountability

⁵⁸ not loyal, likely to betray

⁵⁹ open and easy to see, not secret

⁶⁰ a sudden and illegal change of government

[00:10:13] And, after all, this was far from the only attempt on Hitler's life.

[00:10:19] There are 42 documented assassination attempts, with presumably many more than this that were never discovered.

[00:10:27] From poisoned letters to bombs to [snipers](#)⁶¹, starting in 1932, all manner of methods and locations were tried.

[00:10:38] Miraculously, Hitler survived all of them.

[00:10:42] But it was this attempt, the attempt of the 20th of July, 1944, which was the widest reaching, the best planned, and perhaps came closest to succeeding.

[00:10:56] Now, it's unclear exactly how many people were involved in the plot, and what knowledge different people had of its inner workings.

[00:11:07] What is clear is that there had been various groups within the Nazi upper leadership that had been planning to [overthrow](#)⁶² or kill Hitler since before the start of the war.

[00:11:20] And as for their intentions, well, they were varied.

⁶¹ people who shot from a hidden place

⁶² remove him from power by force

[00:11:25] Those directly involved in the July 20th plot included nationalists, democrats, [aristocrats](#)⁶³ and communists. This wasn't one [homogenous](#)⁶⁴ group with a clear, unified aim for post-Hitler Germany, nor is it fair to characterise them as some great upstanding group of moral citizens who were disgusted by the behaviour of the Nazis.

[00:11:51] For some, this might well have been the case.

[00:11:54] In von Stauffenberg's case, several historians have suggested that he had a strong moral objection to the treatment of Jews.

[00:12:04] For many other military officers, though, the motivation was more [pragmatic](#)⁶⁵. The disasters at Stalingrad in 1943, the Allied [landings](#)⁶⁶ in Normandy in June 1944, and the [rapid](#)⁶⁷ Soviet advance on the Eastern Front convinced them the war was lost under Hitler's leadership.

⁶³ people from rich or noble families

⁶⁴ all of the same kind or type

⁶⁵ practical or realistic

⁶⁶ times when soldiers arrived by sea or air to attack

⁶⁷ very fast

Operation Valkyrie & The Plot To Kill Hitler

[00:12:26] It was a [motley crew](#)⁶⁸, but what did unite them was a firm belief that Adolf Hitler needed to be removed from power, and killing him and [pinning](#)⁶⁹ the [blame](#) on “[rebel](#)⁷⁰ factions” was the best way of doing it.

[00:12:42] So, when von Stauffenberg [touched down](#)⁷¹ in Berlin and made his way to the army headquarters, he was expecting to hear that Operation Valkyrie was [in full swing](#)⁷²: Hitler was dead, the [reserve army](#)⁷³ units had taken control of the [key](#)⁷⁴ state institutions, and the groups most loyal to Hitler, in particular the SS, had been [neutralised](#)⁷⁵.

[00:13:07] But he soon realised that things weren't going as smoothly as he had hoped and that, in fact, there was a potentially devastating problem.

⁶⁸ a group of people who were very different from each other

⁶⁹ attaching or fixing

⁷⁰ opposing or resisting

⁷¹ landed

⁷² at the height of activity

⁷³ extra soldiers who were kept back until needed

⁷⁴ very important

⁷⁵ made harmless or stopped from acting

Operation Valkyrie & The Plot To Kill Hitler

[00:13:20] There had been a phone call from the Wolf's [Lair](#) to the [plotters](#)⁷⁶ at central command confirming that there had been a massive explosion in the conference room, but the message that came through was that Hitler had survived.

[00:13:36] And if Hitler wasn't dead, then the whole thing came [crashing down](#)⁷⁷.

[00:13:42] For Operation Valkyrie to work, the reserve army units had to [buy](#)⁷⁸ the lie that Hitler had been killed by disloyal forces within the Nazi party, and that was the reason the [crackdown](#)⁷⁹ was necessary.

[00:13:59] At first, von Stauffenberg insisted, "I saw the explosion. Nobody could have survived it. Hitler is dead."

[00:14:07] So the [plotters](#) had these two [contradicting](#)⁸⁰ reports: von Stauffenberg saying Hitler is dead, and the other saying he isn't.

[00:14:19] Finally, at 4 pm that afternoon, the order was given to put Operation Valkyrie into action.

⁷⁶ people who had secretly planned it

⁷⁷ suddenly failing or ending

⁷⁸ believe or accept as true

⁷⁹ severe measures

⁸⁰ saying the opposite thing

Operation Valkyrie & The Plot To Kill Hitler

[00:14:27] Radio messages were sent to major military centres, and across Berlin, and in military districts throughout Germany, reserve army units were [mobilised](#)⁸¹.

[00:14:39] They began [arresting](#)⁸² local SS officers, [seizing](#)⁸³ [key](#) government buildings, and preparing [proclamations](#)⁸⁴ to the German people.

[00:14:48] For a few [tense](#)⁸⁵ hours that afternoon, it looked as though the [coup](#) might actually succeed.

[00:14:56] And let's remember, these reserve troops don't know that they are part of a [coup](#); they are simply following their orders, which are to put into place this [contingency](#)⁸⁶ plan, which involves [rooting out](#)⁸⁷ treacherous elements within the Nazi party.

⁸¹ prepared and moved for action

⁸² catching and taking them into custody

⁸³ taking control of quickly

⁸⁴ official public announcements

⁸⁵ causing nervousness and worry

⁸⁶ a plan for an unexpected situation

⁸⁷ finding and removing

Operation Valkyrie & The Plot To Kill Hitler

[00:15:13] They even manage to [detain](#)⁸⁸ Joseph Goebbels, the Nazi propaganda chief, in his Berlin office.

[00:15:20] Goebbels has realised it's a coup, and knows the one thing he can do to stop it: make sure the [reservists](#)⁸⁹ know that Hitler isn't dead.

[00:15:32] So when he is [detained](#)⁹⁰ by Major Otto Ernst Remer, a commanding officer of the reserve troops, Goebbels puts Hitler on the line.

[00:15:43] Major Remer now realises that he has been [duped](#)⁹¹, and he listens for his orders.

[00:15:50] [Crush](#) the plot, he is told, and take them alive.

[00:15:56] It's around 7 o'clock in the evening at this point, and the [conspirators](#)⁹² are in [disarray](#)⁹³.

⁸⁸ keep him under control or stop him from leaving

⁸⁹ members of the reserve army

⁹⁰ kept under control

⁹¹ tricked or fooled

⁹² people who had secretly planned the operation

⁹³ a state of confusion and disorder

Operation Valkyrie & The Plot To Kill Hitler

[00:16:04] General Friedrich Fromm, the commander in chief of the reserve army, had been aware of the [plot](#) and had done nothing to stop it, essentially making him a [conspirator](#)⁹⁴ and [aide](#)⁹⁵ to the [coup](#).

[00:16:18] But when it became clear that the bomb hadn't done its job, he quickly started to [cover his tracks](#)⁹⁶, switching sides.

[00:16:28] He even tries to have von Stauffenberg arrested.

[00:16:31] [Chaos](#)⁹⁷ breaks out. There was a firefight at the Bendlerblock, the Berlin headquarters where several of the [conspirators](#) were based, and von Stauffenberg was shot in the arm.

[00:16:43] By 11 pm that evening, the [tide had well and truly turned](#)⁹⁸.

[00:16:50] The Bendlerblock was surrounded, and the reserve army managed to overpower the [plotters](#).

⁹⁴ a person who had joined the secret plan

⁹⁵ a helper or assistant

⁹⁶ hide what he had done

⁹⁷ complete confusion and lack of order

⁹⁸ the situation had completely changed

Operation Valkyrie & The Plot To Kill Hitler

[00:16:57] General Fromm pushed for an [impromptu](#)⁹⁹ court to be set up to [try](#)¹⁰⁰ the [conspirators](#), and he then [court-martialled](#)¹⁰¹ four of the [conspirators](#), including von Stauffenberg, who were taken into the [courtyard](#)¹⁰² and shot.

[00:17:12] Presumably, Fromm rushed this through, despite Hitler's [express](#)¹⁰³ order for the [conspirators](#) not to be executed, so that they couldn't reveal his involvement in the [plot](#).

[00:17:24] Or, as Goebbels neatly put it, "You have been in a [damn](#)¹⁰⁴ hurry to get your [witnesses below ground](#)¹⁰⁵."

[00:17:33] The entire [coup](#), or attempted [coup](#), lasted less than 12 hours.

[00:17:40] And the [aftermath](#) was brutal.

⁹⁹ done without preparation or planning

¹⁰⁰ judge in a court

¹⁰¹ judged in a military court

¹⁰² an open space surrounded by walls or buildings

¹⁰³ clear and direct

¹⁰⁴ a mild swear word used to show anger or surprise

¹⁰⁵ have the witnesses killed

Operation Valkyrie & The Plot To Kill Hitler

[00:17:43] Over the following weeks, the Gestapo uncovered thousands of people connected, or suspected of being connected, to the conspiracy.

[00:17:52] [Show trials](#)¹⁰⁶ were held in the People's Court, presided over by the [raging](#)¹⁰⁷, screaming judge Roland Freisler.

[00:18:01] Many were [humiliated](#)¹⁰⁸ before being sentenced to death by hanging, [strangled](#)¹⁰⁹ slowly with piano wire.

[00:18:10] In total, some 7,000 people were arrested and almost 5,000 were executed, including the side-switching General Fromm, who was kept in prison for a year, only to be executed shortly before Germany's surrender in 1945.

[00:18:28] And to this day, the [plot](#) has remained one of history's great "what ifs".

[00:18:34] After all, it's almost more surprising that the [blast](#) didn't kill Hitler.

[00:18:40] If von Stauffenberg had been able to [prime](#) both bombs instead of only one, it would almost certainly have killed him.

¹⁰⁶ unfair public trials used to shame people before punishing them

¹⁰⁷ very angry

¹⁰⁸ made to feel very ashamed or foolish

¹⁰⁹ killed by squeezing the neck

Operation Valkyrie & The Plot To Kill Hitler

[00:19:11] If the meeting had been held in a [concrete bunker](#)¹¹⁰ deep underground, like usual, instead of the [venue](#)¹¹¹ being changed for a [breezier](#)¹¹², wooden room above ground, it would almost certainly have killed him, as the [blast](#) force would have been [contained](#)¹¹³.

[00:19:17] If Hitler hadn't been [leaning](#) over the table, it would almost certainly have killed him.

[00:19:17] And if Heinz Brandt hadn't pushed the [briefcase](#) to one side, it would almost certainly have killed him.

[00:19:18] And if Hitler had been killed in the [blast](#), it seems highly probable that Operation Valkyrie would have proceeded as it was [intended](#)¹¹⁴.

[00:19:28] The reserve army would have arrested the supposedly "[disloyal](#)¹¹⁵" elements within the Nazi party. Field Marshal Erwin von Witzleben would have become

¹¹⁰ a strong underground shelter

¹¹¹ a place where the event happened

¹¹² with more air moving, cooler

¹¹³ kept inside, not spread out

¹¹⁴ planned or meant to happen

¹¹⁵ not faithful, ready to betray

Operation Valkyrie & The Plot To Kill Hitler

Commander-in-Chief; Germany may well have sought peace, and World War II might have ended in the summer of 1944.

[00:19:48] As you've heard, things didn't work out that way, and the consequences were devastating.

[00:19:55] Between that hot July afternoon in 1944 and the end of the war the following May, another six to eight million people would lose their lives.

[00:20:07] If Hitler had died in the Wolf's [Lair](#) that day, many of them might have been [spared](#)¹¹⁶.

[00:20:13] Instead, the war raged on, and the failed coup of July 20th went down as one of history's most [haunting](#)¹¹⁷ 'what ifs'.

[00:20:23] OK, then, that is it for today's episode on Operation Valkyrie and the plot to kill Hitler.

[00:20:30] You've been listening to English Learning for Curious Minds by Leonardo English.

[00:20:35] I'm Alastair Budge, you stay safe, and I'll catch you in the next episode.

[END OF EPISODE]

¹¹⁶ not killed or hurt

¹¹⁷ sad and staying in people's thoughts for a long time

Key vocabulary

Word	Definition
Plot	a secret plan
Assassinate	kill for political reasons
Plots	secret plans made by a group of people
Briefcases	flat, rectangular bags used for carrying papers or documents
Bunkers	strong underground rooms built to protect people from bombs
Oak	a type of strong, heavy wood from an oak tree
Lair	a secret or hidden place where he worked or lived
Winnable	possible to win
Fly in	travel to the place by aeroplane
Front line	the area where soldiers were fighting
Courteous	polite and respectful
Sacrifices	things he gave up or lost for the cause
Plain	easy or clear

Operation Valkyrie & The Plot To Kill Hitler

Dressing down	being shouted at or told off for doing something wrong
Nod	a small movement of the head to show agreement or understanding
Drenched	completely wet
Sweat	the liquid that comes from the skin when you are hot
Buckles	metal fasteners used to close belts or straps
Reinforced	made stronger by adding extra support
Concrete	a hard building material made from cement, sand, and stones
Ventilation	fresh air moving through
Ushered into	led or guided into the place
Proceeded to	began or went ahead to
Briefcase	a flat bag for carrying papers or documents
Spare	extra, unnecessary
Wrapped	folded or placed
Prime	get it ready to explode
Assurances	promises that it would happen

Operation Valkyrie & The Plot To Kill Hitler

In full flow	happening actively or at its busiest moment
Leaning	bending his body or moving it towards it
Slid	moved smoothly over the surface
Making a beeline for	going straight and quickly towards it
Perimeter	the edge or boundary of the area
Blast	strong explosion
Mobilise	organise or prepare
Appoint	choose someone for the position
Interim	temporary, for a short time until someone permanent was chosen
Unbeknownst	without him knowing
Tucked	pushed or put into
Patriotic	showing love for his country
Shreds	small torn pieces
Eardrum	the thin part inside the ear that helped him hear sounds
Burst	broke open suddenly

Operation Valkyrie & The Plot To Kill Hitler

Aftermath	the time after the event
Wandering	walking around without a clear purpose or direction
Rubble	broken pieces of stone or brick
Precision	exactness or accuracy
Triggered	caused to start or happen
Seize	take hold of
Crush	completely stop or destroy
Signed off	officially approved or agreed to it
Take him down	remove or defeat him
Rogue	acting alone and not following the rules
Namely	that is to say; to be specific
Martial law	military rule
Pin	attach or fix
Blame	responsibility or accountability
Treacherous	not loyal, likely to betray

Operation Valkyrie & The Plot To Kill Hitler

Overt	open and easy to see, not secret
Coup	a sudden and illegal change of government
Snipers	people who shot from a hidden place
Overthrow	remove him from power by force
Aristocrats	people from rich or noble families
Homogenous	all of the same kind or type
Pragmatic	practical or realistic
Landings	times when soldiers arrived by sea or air to attack
Rapid	very fast
Motley crew	a group of people who were very different from each other
Pinning	attaching or fixing
Rebel	opposing or resisting
Touched down	landed
In full swing	at the height of activity
Reserve army	extra soldiers who were kept back until needed

English Learning for Curious Minds | Episode #580

Operation Valkyrie & The Plot To Kill Hitler

Key	very important
Neutralised	made harmless or stopped from acting
Plotters	people who had secretly planned it
Crashing down	suddenly failing or ending
Buy	believe or accept as true
Crackdown	severe measures
Contradicting	saying the opposite thing
Mobilised	prepared and moved for action
Arresting	catching and taking them into custody
Seizing	taking control of quickly
Proclamations	official public announcements
Tense	causing nervousness and worry
Contingency	a plan for an unexpected situation
Rooting out	finding and removing
Detain	keep him under control or stop him from leaving

Operation Valkyrie & The Plot To Kill Hitler

Reservists	members of the reserve army
Detained	kept under control
Duped	tricked or fooled
Conspirators	people who had secretly planned the operation
Disarray	a state of confusion and disorder
Conspirator	a person who had joined the secret plan
Aide	a helper or assistant
Cover his tracks	hide what he had done
Chaos	complete confusion and lack of order
Tide had well and truly turned	the situation had completely changed
Impromptu	done without preparation or planning
Try	judge in a court
Court-martialled	judged in a military court
Courtyard	an open space surrounded by walls or buildings
Express	clear and direct

Operation Valkyrie & The Plot To Kill Hitler

Damn	a mild swear word used to show anger or surprise
Witnesses below ground	have the witnesses killed
Show trials	unfair public trials used to shame people before punishing them
Raging	very angry
Humiliated	made to feel very ashamed or foolish
Strangled	killed by squeezing the neck
Bunker	a strong underground shelter
Venue	a place where the event happened
Breezier	with more air moving, cooler
Contained	kept inside, not spread out
Intended	planned or meant to happen
Disloyal	not faithful, ready to betray
Spared	not killed or hurt
Haunting	sad and staying in people's thoughts for a long time

Language spotlight

1. Make a beeline for

- **Meaning:** to go quickly and directly toward something or someone
- **Synonyms:** go straight to, head directly for
- **Antonyms:** wander around, take the long way
- **Examples:**
 - As soon as the meeting ended, everyone **made a beeline for** the exit.
 - When the doors opened, the reporters **made a beeline for** the Prime Minister.

2. Cover your tracks

- **Meaning:** to hide evidence of what you have done so that no one can find out
- **Synonyms:** hide evidence, conceal your actions
- **Antonyms:** confess, reveal the truth
- **Examples:**
 - The spy tried to **cover his tracks** by deleting all his messages.

- She **covered her tracks** so well that no one realised she was involved.

3. The tide had turned

- **Meaning:** the situation has changed completely, usually to the opposite direction
- **Synonyms:** things changed, the situation reversed
- **Antonyms:** things stayed the same, no change
- **Examples:**
 - At first, the rebels were losing, but soon **the tide had turned** in their favour.
 - It looked bad for the company, but then **the tide turned** when they released a new product.

4. In full swing

- **Meaning:** at the most active or busy stage
- **Synonyms:** fully active, in progress
- **Antonyms:** just starting, nearly finished

- **Examples:**

- By the time we arrived, the party was **in full swing**.
- The construction work is now **in full swing**, and the building is taking shape.

5. Root out

- **Meaning:** to find and remove something or someone bad or unwanted

- **Synonyms:** eliminate, get rid of, remove completely

- **Antonyms:** protect, hide, ignore

- **Examples:**

- The new government promised to **root out** corruption.
- It took years to **root out** the spies working inside the organisation.

Quiz

Listening Comprehension Multiple Choice Questions

1. What did Stauffenberg do immediately after leaving the meeting room?
 - a) He went to report to his superiors
 - b) He made a phone call to confirm the plan
 - c) He got into a car and flew back to Berlin
 - d) He hid in the forest nearby

2. Where did Colonel Claus von Stauffenberg place the bomb?
 - a) In Hitler's car
 - b) In a briefcase under a table in a bunker
 - c) Inside a ventilation shaft
 - d) Behind a concrete wall

3. Why did the explosion not kill Hitler?
 - a) The bomb failed to go off

Operation Valkyrie & The Plot To Kill Hitler

- b) Hitler left the room early
 - c) The table leg blocked the blast
 - d) Stauffenberg used the wrong kind of bomb
4. What did the conspirators in Berlin try to do after the explosion?
- a) Escape to Switzerland
 - b) Hide in the countryside
 - c) Destroy all evidence of their involvement
 - d) Mobilise the army and seize control of the government
5. What happened to Stauffenberg after the plot failed?
- a) He was court-martialled and executed
 - b) He escaped Germany
 - c) He was sent to a prison camp
 - d) He was spared and went into hiding

True or False

6. The meeting where the bomb exploded was held in an underground bunker.

(True/False)

7. Many people involved in the plot were members of the German army. (True/False)

8. Hitler's injuries from the explosion were fatal. (True/False)

9. After the failed assassination, the Nazi regime launched a massive crackdown on suspects. (True/False)

10. Some of the conspirators believed killing Hitler was the only way to save Germany.

(True/False)

Fill in the Blank

11. He was still without one eye and seven fingers, so he was transferred to office duty, far from the _____ line.

12. When von Stauffenberg arrived a couple of minutes late for the meeting, instead of receiving a _____ down and being shouted at by the Führer, there was a quiet nod of acceptance.

13. It had been drawn up as a genuine emergency plan to crush unrest or uprisings, and Hitler himself even signed ____ on it.

14. It was a motley ____, but what did unite them was a firm belief that Adolf Hitler needed to be removed from power.

15. And if Hitler wasn't dead, then the whole thing came _____ down.

Vocabulary Practice

Choose the correct definition of each word or expression as used in the podcast.

16. **Assassinate**

- a) To make someone a leader
- b) To kill an important person for political reasons
- c) To remove someone from office peacefully
- d) To fight against the army

17. **Mobilise**

- a) To relax and rest
- b) To delay a plan
- c) To block something from happening

d) To prepare and move people or equipment for action

18. **Conspirator**

a) Someone who secretly plans to do something illegal or harmful

b) Someone who works in a government office

c) A soldier who fights in a foreign country

d) A lawyer working for the army

19. **Coup**

a) A secret document

b) A sudden and illegal change of government

c) A peace agreement

d) A political campaign

20. **Crackdown**

a) A strong effort to stop bad behaviour or opposition

English Learning for Curious Minds | Episode #580
Operation Valkyrie & The Plot To Kill Hitler

- b) A time of celebration
- c) A calm discussion
- d) A public speech by a politician

Answers

1. c) He got into a car and flew back to Berlin
2. b) In a briefcase under a table in a bunker
3. c) The table leg blocked the blast
4. d) Mobilise the army and seize control of the government
5. a) He was court-martialled and executed
6. False
7. True
8. False
9. True
10. True
11. front
12. dressing
13. off
14. crew
15. crashing
16. b) To kill an important person for political reasons
17. d) To prepare and move people or equipment for action
18. a) Someone who secretly plans to do something illegal or harmful
19. b) A sudden and illegal change of government
20. a) A strong effort to stop bad behaviour or opposition