The assassination attempt on Hitler and planned coup of 20 July 1944 was the greatest act of treason accomplished in Nazi Germany. Consequently, alongside the deteriorating war situation, it was the catalyst for the widest implementation of *Sippenhaft* and has rightly come to symbolize the distinct radicalization of German-on-German terror within the Third Reich. As noted earlier, the 20 July incident had significant ramifications for the infliction of *Sippenhaft* against other forms of resistance, such as the NKFD and BDO, as well as within the German military in general. Certainly, the arrests of the relatives connected to the plot were initially driven by Himmler and the Gestapo and, with few exceptions, there was little distinction between various families. Senior and junior members of the military, parents, grandparents, brothers, sisters, wives, adolescent children, infants, uncles, aunts and cousins were all taken into custody due to their relationship to an identified conspirator. The range of victims was matched by the punishments, including imprisonment in police and military prisons, concentration camps, and labour camps, to many male relatives being reassigned to penal and punishment battalions.

It is apparent, however, that some resistance developed against the application of *Sippenhaft* and a number of distinct inconsistencies developed. In some of these cases it is evident that local officials were moderating the extent of the terror, perhaps with an eye towards saving their own skin at the end of the war. It can also be argued that the inconsistencies that developed in the infliction of *Sippenhaft* reflect weaknesses...
in the whole comprehension of the policy. On the one hand, this view
does not acknowledge the widespread and effective nature of the fear
that *Sippenhaft* provided the regime, as news and gossip began to spread
concerning the fate of the families of the conspirators. Similarly it
ignores the effect of other agencies – such as the Wehrmacht – which
were beginning to promote *Sippenhaft* at the same time. This chapter
will try to present a picture of the official and unofficial policy of
*Sippenhaft* as it developed after the 20 July coup. An assessment of who
was released and who remained in custody will assist in determining
whether *Sippenhaft* retained any coherent purpose to the regime. Lastly,
an account of the fates of those who remained under *Sippenhaft* arrest
will conclude the story of the adults arrested. This will illustrate that,
despite the cessation of arrests, for a core group of prisoners, *Sippenhaft*
remained a practical instrument of extra-legal punishment until the
end of the war.

**Establishing *Sippenhaft* and 20 July 1944**

Since it has received considerable scholarly attention, there will not be
an in-depth discussion concerning the background and causes of the
coup attempt of 20 July 1944, or the roles of the individuals who partici-
pated in the conspiracy. After several aborted attempts, Colonel Claus
von Stauffenberg, Chief-of-Staff for the Home Army, managed to place a
bomb near Hitler’s feet during a briefing at his East Prussian headquarters
in Rastenburg in the mid-morning military conference on 20 July 1944.
As is well known, the bomb exploded but only succeeded in slightly
wounding Hitler. The complot, which was planned and executed from
the Berlin headquarters of the Home Army High Command known as the
*Benderstrasse*, could not but fail when Hitler survived. Of the senior
officers who knew of the plans, some, including the Commander of
the Home Army himself, Colonel-General Friedrich Fromm, and the
Supreme Commander of the Western Front, Field-Marshal Günther von
Kluge, had vacillated, offering their support of the coup on the condi-
tion of Hitler’s demise. By midnight of 20 July 1944 pro-Hitler forces
had succeeded in recapturing control of the *Benderstrasse*. Colonel von
Stauffenberg, along with three other main conspirators, was summarily
executed in the courtyard of the building. The successful implementa-
tion of a parallel coup in Paris, which involved the arrest and imprison-
ment of a significant number of Gestapo and SS men, merely proved to
be a temporary success, and by the following day all these prisoners had
been released.