

## Count Helmuth James von Moltke before the People's Court in Berlin (January 10, 1945)

### Abstract

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Count Helmuth James von Moltke was born in 1907 into one of Prussia's most distinguished noble families – he was the great-grandnephew of Helmuth von Moltke (1800-1891), Chief of the Prussian General Staff under Bismarck. In 1935, Moltke began working as a self-employed lawyer in Berlin, where, among other professional activities, he used his expertise in international law and international private law to help victims of Nazi persecution emigrate. At the same time, he also took advantage of any opportunity to make contacts for the German resistance, especially in England. As founder of the resistance group known by the Gestapo as the Kreisau Circle [*Kreisauer Kreis*] (Kreisau being the name of his family's Silesian estate, where group meetings were held), Moltke was actively involved in planning Germany's new political and social order after the hoped-for downfall of the Hitler regime. On account of his Christian convictions, however, he initially rejected the idea of assassinating Hitler. In his work in the Office of Military Intelligence [*Abwehr*] within the High Command of the Wehrmacht (OKW), Moltke tried to prevent the German military from engaging in activities that were against international law. At the same time, he also used his access to secret information to strengthen the opposition.

In January 1944, Moltke was arrested for warning a friend of his own impending arrest. At first, he was not charged with anything. A year later, Roland Freisler's (1893-1945) People's Court sentenced him to death for high treason in connection with the July 20, 1944, assassination attempt on Hitler. It was a kangaroo trial, with the government ultimately failing to prove his participation in preparations for the act. He was executed on January 23, 1945.

### Source

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