

# EL MUNDO

## **The 30 years of trials of the relative of Queen Sofía to recover the castle that the Nazis stole from her grandfather after attacking Hitler**

**Himmler stole the castle and the forests of the grandfather of Friedrich V. His grandson has been trying to recover the properties since the fall of the Berlin wall, but Germany opposes the restitution of the assets, currently in public ownership**

Prince Friedrich V of Solms-Baruth ceded

This is the story of **a robbery perpetrated by the Nazis** whose loot benefits democratic Germany today. Its plot features exceptional characters: [Adolf Hitler](#) , the Third Reich, [Admiral Canaris](#) , the German Federal Republic and a **dynasty of princes** related to [Queen Sofia](#) whose domains were taken from them by the Nazis and who are now trying to recover.

**Prince Friedrich V of the house of Solms Baruth** has been fighting Germany since the fall of the Berlin Wall in court **to get back the properties that the Nazis stole from his grandfather Friedrich III** , a prominent anti-Hitler nobleman who conspired with army officers. to kill the Führer.

Assets that consisted of **a castle** an hour from Berlin - which even had a private train station - **surrounded by a forest of 140 square kilometers** .

A fight against the German judicial apparatus during which **Friedrich V assures EL MUNDO that he has been a victim of the concealment of evidence** by the Government, of an **arson attack** that was never investigated and of alleged **negligent behavior** on the part of the judiciary, to which he accuses of delaying the process and refusing to accept evidence in his favor.

"Right now we are **presenting an appeal to the European Court of Human Rights** to order the Constitutional Court to review our case," explains Friedrich V. A hearing for which he has the representation of Lord Peter Goldsmith, former Attorney General of England.

**" The German judges believe they know more about Nazism than the historians .** The courts have not commissioned any investigation, nor have they accepted our investigations. The testimony of the experts has not been admitted either," he adds.

At the same time, it has also decided to open a criminal case against the German executive. **" The government is keeping documents with key evidence** for our case. If this was done by an individual, it would be a crime and it would be punished," argues Friedrich V.

Two new cases that are added to the dozens of procedures and sub-procedures presented in different jurisdictions in Germany. Meanwhile, the forest is exploited by the administration for wood. **" The state is benefiting from what the Nazis stole ,"** she protests.

To understand this struggle in depth, it is necessary to travel back in time to the days and months that preceded July 20, 1944, the day on which the [Valkyrie Plan](#) was carried out , **the most famous attempt against Hitler .**

**The Valkyrie Plan** was that **Colonel Claus von Stauffenberg was to plant two briefcases with explosive charges** during a meeting with Hitler in the *Wolfsschanze* (Wolf's Lair), the *Fuhrer* 's bunker in East Prussia.

Then, with Hitler dead, the rest of the conspirators had to form a new government to negotiate peace with the allies. A complicated bet considering that **the Normandy landings had already taken place** , the Americans were advancing unstopably towards northern Italy and **the Soviet thrust had shattered the German defenses** in the central army sector.

However, the Valkyrie operation failed miserably. **Stauffenberg was only able to activate an explosive charge** whose detonation caused **superficial injuries to Hitler** and the conspirators, among whom was **Friedrich III of Solms Baruth** (grandfather of the plaintiff Friedrich V) were arrested. And it is precisely at this point in history that it is necessary to return to the present to **understand the importance of the case of Friedrich V**. Until now, historiography considered that this attack against Hitler occurred without the knowledge of the allies. However, **an investigation commissioned by the German prince to the historian Nigel West** (the literary pseudonym of the British politician Rupert Allason) has shown that **"the family castle functioned as the headquarters to prepare the operation of July 20"** and that " the British secret service was aware of the situation.

"Admiral Canaris [responsible for military intelligence from where he conspired against Hitler until he was executed after Valkyrie] had installed **a unit in the rooms of my grandfather's castle** . It was too predictable that at the home of an

anti-Nazi like him [he **resigned his job as a captain in the army so as not to have to swear allegiance to Hitler** and was accused in 1943 of "sabotaging the war effort"] the meetings were held," explains Friedrich. They gave meetings on horseback and in the woods to avoid being spied on.

Unlike most of the conspirators involved in the bombing, Prince **Friedrich III was not executed, although he was imprisoned and tortured by the Gestapo** . Furthermore, **he was forced by Himler to relinquish all of his businesses and property** to a criminal network "who took it upon themselves to wipe the evidence from the records," in exchange for his family's survival.

At the end of the war, Prince Friedrich III ended up in the British sector of occupation and pulled family contacts to leave his country. " **The mother of Queen Sofia of Spain, Federica of Hannover, was my grandmother's niece** and my grandparents wrote to her," he says. Frederica of Hannover, who spent the bulk of the war between South Africa and the United Kingdom, contacted the South African Marshal Jan Smuts (godfather of Princess Irene of Greece) and the Government of London.

" **The British secret service investigated my grandfather** . They produced a report showing that he was a friend of Admiral Canaris, that he was anti-Nazi and that he had participated in the attack on Hitler. Then **Smuts gave a secret order that allowed my family travel to South Africa** , fast-track citizenship and gave us back the farm [in what is now Namibia] that had been confiscated from my grandfather during the war because it was owned by Germans.

Friedrich III died shortly after arriving in Namibia, but **his family prospered there through farming** . Five years after his death, his grandson was born.

"When I was 6 years old, my father told me that what had happened was part of my identity. He told me that **the most important thing was duty to the family and its history** . In Namibia, Queen Victoria's granddaughter, Princess Alice, visited us , and he insisted that we should never forget our origins," he recalls. "However, as long as the GDR existed there was nothing to do," he notes.

As soon as German reunification took place, Friedrich V returned to begin his legal battle and **was met with more than expected opposition** .

"During the first trial, **the judge told me that he was tired of hearing how bad the Nazis were for people to get something out of him** ," he recalls. "Another magistrate told us that he had more urgent things to attend to but that if we wanted we could all grow old together during the process," he adds.



Friedrich V, before the grave of his grandfather: Friedrich III

To date, Friedrich's claims have been unsuccessful. The State and the judiciary have used two arguments. First, that the transfer of the assets of Friedrich III to Himmler was voluntary. Afterwards, they **were confiscated by the GDR** , so they would not be entitled to restitution.

According to the prince, the first argument would be false based on **the intelligence reports produced by the British** . Meanwhile, the second argument would be dismantled, among other evidence, by **the ink present in the few documents that are preserved** , whose chemical composition would point **" unequivocally to the Nazi era ."**

At the same time, Friedrich V has managed to **recover part of his grandfather's domain at the stroke of a checkbook** : a small part of the forest - for which he claims to have developed "a business project that will generate 500 jobs in the area" - and a part of the castle.

"After rehabilitating it, a fire broke out and the firefighters took three hours to arrive . The investigation showed that it was caused but the authorities refused to investigate further," he laments. "What's more," she adds, " the local police came to accuse me of having provoked him to defraud the insurance, but there was no policy."

With the process stalled in Germany, he has his eyes on the European Court. "It may take a year or two, but we've already been 30. **The process is draining my finances and I've spent millions on lawyers , experts and research but I'm going to move on,**" he says.

What do you plan to do if you get the land back? " **Everything is limited to the mission that my father instilled in us as children .** Our family has had a responsibility for five generations with the community of the area and with nature."

## **A PROBLEM OF MANY JEWISH FAMILIES**

The case of Friedrich V has unique elements worthy of the cinema. However, he assures that he is not the only one who is denied the restitution of his assets. "There are many Jewish families who are in the same boat and **the German state puts all kinds of obstacles in their way to get their property back ,**" he explains.



Friedrich III of the house of Solms-Baruth. **ASSIGNED**

"I have a Jewish friend who tried to recover a building in Berlin that the Nazis stole from his family. The courts **used as evidence to deny him a death certificate in a concentration camp** of his relative and alleged a time problem," he protests.

A dynamic that assures that it is "a general strategy that Germany uses that **causes families to be ruined and exhausted**".

"The German government makes a big splash when they return a painting to a Jewish family but keep hundreds of them. They advertise it at the time but the rest of the time they try to keep any valuable **property at all costs**."