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Germany not against Tom Cruise war film



Photo : AFP

The German government does not object to Tom Cruise playing a German aristocrat behind a failed plot to assassinate Adolf Hitler, but will not allow his film to be shot where Claus von Stauffenberg was executed, a spokesman said Saturday.

On the contrary Berlin supported the film "Valkyrie," to be made over the coming months by director Bryan Singer, implicitly denying a report that Cruise's involvement with the Church of Scientology was a stumbling block.

However Singer would not be allowed to film in the so-called Bendlerblock, where Stauffenberg was shot in 1944 following the failure of the bomb plot, which now houses government departments, spokesman Tortsen Albig said.

The spot was a place of memorial, he said following a meeting to discuss the movie on Friday between government officials.

Stauffenberg's 72-year-old son Berthold has objected to Cruise playing in the film, saying in a newspaper interview that the actor "should keep his hands off my father."

Stauffenberg said Cruise's professed faith in Scientology was "off-putting," adding that the church was not a religion but a "business."

"I am not saying that Cruise is a bad actor -- I cannot judge that. But in any case I fear that it could turn into horrible kitsch," he said, adding that he had been deeply disappointed by previous films on his father.

Stauffenberg said he would not take legal action to try to stop "Valkyrie" but hoped Cruise would drop the project nevertheless.

Stauffenberg led a group of Nazi officers who planted a bomb under a table in Hitler's eastern headquarters in East Prussia on July 20, 1944.

But the Nazi leader escaped with slight injuries because an officer had moved the briefcase containing the explosives behind a sturdy leg of the oak table.

The fact that the assassination attempt failed is now generally regarded as one of the great tragedies of the 20th century.

Between July 1944 and the end of the war in Europe in May 1945, mass killings in death camps were stepped up and four million Germans, 1.5 million Soviet soldiers and more than 100,000 other Allied servicemen lost their lives.

The US-based Church of Scientology is regarded with suspicion in many European countries, Germany, where authorities contend its leaders seek economic gain and use totalitarian methods to keep supporters in line.

The group is under observation by the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution and several state security watchdogs, although not by the Berlin authorities following a successful court challenge by the group.

The church opened a giant new centre in Berlin in January, sparking fears that it is trying to muscle in on German politics.

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