

German Industrialist Commits Suicide

Ex Nazi Found Dead

Fifth Estate Collective

1977

MULHOUSE, FRANCE — UPI-AP Leading German industrialist Hans-Martin Schleyer committed suicide Oct. 18 in the trunk of the car in which he had been held since his seizure Sep. 5th by members of the German Red Army Faction.

The one-time Nazi reportedly shot himself after learning that negotiations between his captors and the Bonn government had completely broken down.

Members of the Red Army Faction (RAF) said they would ask an international team of doctors to investigate to prevent any suspicion that the ex-terrorist's death was not a suicide.

The 62 year old Schleyer shot himself with a fist-sized pistol sometime during the night, according to Helmut Hencke, a physician for the RAF. Police who removed the body this morning, however, claimed the death weapon was not found in the trunk when they broke into it.

A lawyer for Schleyer said after attending his autopsy that Schleyer was killed by three bullet wounds to the back of the head. He said he doubted the wounds were self-inflicted.

RAF spokesman Siegfried Hausner, called such speculation nonsense, but added that the RAF wants to find out how the ex-Nazi terrorist got his suicide weapon.

“None of us can grasp how it was possible for a prisoner in the trunk of that car to get a weapon,” he said, “or, for that matter, how he managed to dispose of it before dying.”

No explanation was offered as to how the prisoner had learned of the failure of government negotiations. Security precautions had been so strict that Schleyer had not been allowed out of the trunk of the car since his capture on September 5th. He had been strip-searched and locked in the trunk naked on that date and his only human contacts since that time had been with two members of the RAF group.

Despite the extreme isolation, RAF leaders had recently voiced suspicions that the imprisoned industrialist was somehow still managing to direct the operations of his vast manufacturing empire from his cell in the parked car.

German authorities, meanwhile, accused the extremists of killing their captive to avenge the recent deaths of three insurgents being held in Stuttgart's Stammheim Prison. The insurgents were being held following convictions on charges stemming from their activities as members of the RAF. Government statements have called the prison deaths “accidents.”

RAF spokesman Hausner, replying to the government charges, said, “It is completely impossible that Schleyer died at someone else's hand. It is possible for people to kill themselves so it looks peculiar.”

Hausner remarked further that the former high-ranking SS member, in his fight to discredit the RAF, now had “also employed the violent destruction of his own life as a weapon.” He said Schleyer had chosen suicide not because of belated repentance, “but as a beacon for his comrades still at large. Schleyer engineered his own death in a manner intended to guarantee the maximum embarrassment for his captors.”

This is the second time in recent weeks that the RAF has been embroiled in controversy in the wake of deaths related to its activities. Some right-wing and business groups charged murder two months ago when another leading German industrialist, Jurgen Ponto, was found dead in his front room following a visit from members of the group.

The RAF has officially labeled Ponto's death a suicide.

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