

Hans-Martin Schleyer Remembered

Liberation News Service

1977

Press accounts have generally referred to the kidnapped Hans-Martin Schleyer as “a major West German industrialist.” He was certainly that—head of the West German Employers Association and top board member of Daimler-Benz, the multinational giant which produces Mercedes-Benz cars and trucks and invests throughout Europe, Africa and the United States.

But Schleyer was also something else—a prominent former Nazi who was an active force on West Germany’s political Right until his death.

Schleyer got his start at the age of 16 when he joined the Hitler Youth organization. By the time he began studying law at the University of Heidelberg, he was wearing the black uniform of the SS with a gold medal of honor.

During his college years, Schleyer became a leader in the Reichsstudentenwerk, which contributed to the “nazification” of universities by denouncing, beating up and terrorizing suspected opponents. First stationed in Heidelberg, Schleyer later carried out his specialty in Austria and Czechoslovakia.

After the outbreak of the war, Schleyer remained in Czechoslovakia and took on added responsibilities for “mobilization of economic forces for the war.” His tasks included confiscating businesses owned by Jews, Czechs and Poles and assigning jobs for concentration camp prisoners until they became too feeble to be productive.

Schleyer was also responsible for sending immense funds back to Germany...and it appears that it was at this time that he began to amass a personal fortune as well. At this time, too he made the acquaintance of several other prominent Nazis who remain his political associates to this day, including Eberhardt Taubert, an advisor to Nazi propaganda chief Joseph Goebbels, who exercised his talents devising slogans for the 1976 campaign of the Christian Democratic and Christian Social Unions.

After fleeing back to Germany just ahead of advancing Soviet troops, Schleyer served three years in prison at the end of the war as a high-ranking Nazi. But once he was released, he latched on at Daimler-Benz and advanced fairly quickly to the board of directors, which is headed by Dr. Joachim Zan, another former Nazi.

[Caption for photo of Hans-Martin Schleyer, pictured on this issue’s front page: head and shoulders with a RAF symbol on the wall behind him: “I am a long-time National Socialist and SS leader.” So wrote Hans-Martin Schleyer in 1938, when he was a high-ranking Nazi officer in Germany’s Third Reich. For a while, it seemed that crime did pay for Schleyer (he was the head of the W. German Employers Association and top board member of Daimler-Benz), that is until Sept. 5, when he was kidnapped by members of the Red Army Faction and found dead six weeks later in a small French town.]

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