

W. Germany Murders 3

Fifth Estate Collective

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If you think the story to the right concerning the death of Hans-Martin Schleyer sounds absurd, then you know exactly how we feel every time we read the equally ridiculous stories of the “suicide” deaths of the three Red Army Faction (RAF) members now filling television screens and the pages of the print media everywhere. In fact, all the statements contained in our Schleyer article are either lifted verbatim from newspaper and magazine accounts of the RAF “suicides” or paraphrased from similar statements in those same accounts. Everywhere the most ludicrous contentions of the state are being taken at face value by the “media” and reproduced as “objective” fact, even when they fly full in the face of any normal human being’s perceptions.

Ever since October 18, when the news of the three deaths was made public, a seemingly endless stream of sensationalized and mutually contradictory stories has emerged, and each day has seen yet newer changes in the “official” version of the three deaths.

Finally, after nine days, the German government now has its official “official” version of the deaths following the report of a commission appointed by the Baden-Wurttemberg Ministry of Justice. The panel, consisting of nine officials from the state prosecuting staff, police detectives, ballistics experts and other so-called “specialists” in criminology, dutifully confirmed the original explanation of suicide, but changed the reasoning behind the act somewhat.

Originally, the government had suggested the “suicides” were done to create “instant martyrs to the radical cause” (as *Time Magazine* of Oct. 31 put it), but now the government panel stated in its report to the Justice Ministry that, “It can be assumed that the prisoners planned to stage their own suicides in a manner that let them appear as the actions of others.”

This preposterous explanation has been routinely accepted by the world media even though it flatly contradicts, among many other things, their own reports of statements from Irmgard Moller, the sole survivor of the “suicide” plot. In the *New York Times* of Oct. 26, Moller is quoted as denying she was part of any pact, saying instead that she heard “screeching noises in her cell,” and the next thing she remembers she was lying on a stretcher covered with blood. She has told her attorney quite distinctly that her wounds were not self-inflicted.

Moller’s story is at the very least plausible and consistent, but what of the government’s version(s) of her attempt? First she was reported to have slashed her throat with a butter-knife, then it changed to her having stabbed herself three times in the left breast, and then, finally, to have, instead, used a carving knife to stab and slash her throat. With each twist and turn, the media simply reported the latest version without comment.

The commission itself cited a letter Andreas Baader wrote to Stuttgart Justice authorities two weeks ago in which he said, “None of us plan to kill ourselves. If we are found dead, we have been killed.” The prison chaplain at Stammheim Prison told investigators that Gudrun Ensslin spoke to him of the possibility of an “execution.” In Alice in Wonderland logic, the commission concluded this was further evidence of the “suicide plot,” rather than the four prisoners’ anticipation of what was in store for them.

The only thing that can be accepted as fact is that Jan-Carl Raspe was shot in the head with a 9-mm pistol and Andreas Baader was shot in the back of the neck (a strange and awkward way to commit “suicide”) with a 7.65-mm pistol. Gudrun Ensslin is said to have hanged herself.

The most obvious question is how did these prisoners come to have weapons while incarcerated at Stammheim Prison, one of the most secure buildings in the world, designed solely for the trial and imprisonment of the Red Army Faction? Security was incredibly tight, with daily searches and checks for contraband, electronic surveillance of cells, metal detectors at all entrances, etc., and each prisoner kept in solitary confinement.

The government answered these questions very easily: the security that they had bragged about for so long, in fact, was not tight at all, but very lax; probably, they said, RAF defense lawyers had smuggled the weapons in “piece by piece!”

The RAF prisoners had been held incommunicado for over six weeks prior to their deaths, denied all access to the outside world.

Time magazine, October 31, reports that “since the Schleyer kidnapping, they (the RAF) had been in solitary confinement, separated from each other and denied visitors (including their lawyers) and access to newspapers, radio and television. Almost daily, guards searched their cells.”

Time answered the question of how guns could have been hidden under such tight security by mouthing the government statement that the weapons were hidden in holes in the wall (in a new prison?) and dealt with the question of how the four were able to communicate by repeating the incredible story that the RAF prisoners had kept in contact with each other through the use of a “primitive” telegraph system hooked into the thermostats of the prison heating system. They also reported that a radio (they had to explain how information about the hijacking got to the prisoners), explosives and 14 rounds of Ammunition were found “hidden” in various niches in these maximum security cells.

Even if all this were true, why were all the hiding places and devices suddenly (and conveniently) all found after the alleged suicides?

(An as-yet unconfirmed report has come to us through a telephone conversation with a comrade in Berlin, who told us that along with the bullet that killed him, there were also four spent shells in Andreas Baader’s cell. This has appeared nowhere in the capitalist media.)

The only death under somewhat “plausible” conditions was that of Gudrun Ensslin, who reportedly took her own life by hanging herself by a phonograph cord. However, this brings up too many memories of the prison murder of RAF leader Ulrike Meinhof, who was found hanged in her cell on May 9, 1976 at the same prison. At least two independent inquests into the circumstances surrounding her death found the official version of her “suicide” as incredible as the current fictions being spread by the present commission.

But the question of plausibility has apparently not even entered the head of a solitary “journalist” in the Western world; nowhere, to our knowledge, has a single member of this vast body of “objective” reporters had the temerity to suggest that there is something even slightly fishy about the German state’s topsy-turvy version of reality.

The contorted and concocted story necessary to somehow prove a simultaneous decision among four persons denied access to each other for more than six weeks, to take their own lives “as a signal for further terrorist actions” could only make sense to those with a preconceived desire to accept the government version, no matter how absurd.

The real terrorists are the West German state and the Bundesgrenzschutz (Federal Border Guard) who have used the mini-wave of RAF selective terrorism (against ruling class and imperialist targets only) to increase the national police force by thousands, to curtail the rights of unions and to violate democratic rights on a wholesale basis. Just as the FLQ kidnapping seven years ago in Quebec was used by the Canadian government to justify the suppression of the separatist and labor movement, so the West German government has created its justification for the use of any repressive measures it cares to institute, all under the heading of “suppression of terrorism.”

In whatever manner it was performed, and for whatever reasons, it seems obvious to us that Rasp, Baader and Ensslin were murdered. Take away the pathetic inventions of how the deaths occurred and the self-serving definitions of the RAF members as “fanatics” and you are left with German “justice” of a generation ago, where political prisoners routinely “committed suicide” inside of Nazi jails and concentration camps.

Red Army Faction Origins

The Red Army Faction (RAF) was formed in 1970 out of the fragments of the West German student movement and many of its early actions were aimed against U.S. involvement in Vietnam, including a 1972 bombing of the U.S. army headquarters for troops stationed in Frankfurt and Heidelberg that left four dead and several wounded.

The arrest of several of the group's early leaders, particularly Andreas Baader, Holger Meins and Ulrike Meinhof, was followed by a lull in RAF activity that lasted until a hunger strike by imprisoned RAF members ended with the death of Holger Meins on November 9, 1974. On the next day, the president of the Berlin Supreme Court was killed in his home while resisting a kidnapping attempt.

Since that time the RAF has escalated its attacks against a government that comes to resemble more and more the repressive police state denounced in RAF statements. Two other RAF members have died in prison, including the murder by prison guards of Ulrike Meinhof, whose prominence in the early days had given the group the nickname "Baader-Meinhof gang."

Over the last few years, the RAF has kidnapped the Christian Democratic party's candidate for mayor of Berlin and exchanged him for six prisoners; executed the chief federal prosecutor; killed one of the nation's most powerful bankers in the course of an unsuccessful kidnapping attempt; and continued a series of bank robberies that may have netted as much as \$3,870,000 since 1971.

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