

Spy Scare Forces NATO

Deaths and Arrests Seem to Form Pattern; Architect, Pilot and Locksmith Stole Missile

By Andrew Wilson
and Patrick Seale

London Observer

BONN, Nov. 2—NATO is conducting a far-ranging "damage assessment" of its military posture following the violent deaths among senior German and other Allied officers in the past three weeks.

The spy scare sweeping Germany, Italy, NATO headquarters in Brussels and Austria can now be clearly linked by two consequences of the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia:

1. A series of defections by embittered Czechoslovak officers and diplomats including at least one senior intelligence officer.

2. A Warsaw Pact "spying offensive," before, during and after the invasion with the object of probing Western intentions.

Soviet Spies Busy

Was a NATO riposte to be expected, and how were Allied planners likely to react in the longer term to the presence of Soviet divisions on the south German border? In pressing their intelligence networks for answers to these questions, the Soviet spymasters may have

driven their agents to take undue risks.

The most important case is that of Rear Adm. Hermann Luedke, 57, deputy chief of logistics at SHAPE, NATO's Supreme Military Headquarters in Europe, who was found shot dead in the Eifel Forest near Munich on Oct. 8. Luedke was responsible for, and had access to, all NATO tactical nuclear weapon depots, ammunition, fuel and arms dumps, and port, railway and other logistical resources that would back up the Allied forces in war.

If Luedke was a Soviet spy—the supposition that investigators are working on—NATO's 16,000 tactical nuclear warheads would have to be relocated. But the gravest question is whether Luedke could have given away details of NATO's "strike plan"—the contingency plan against a Soviet attack on the West.

The other big question is did Luedke shoot himself or was he murdered? Although suicide was first suspected, most experts now believe that he was shot from behind.

But who killed him, and why, is a mystery. The only

clue to Luedke's possible spying activities was the discovery, by a Bonn photographic shop, of nine pictures of secret NATO documents on a micro-camera film handed in for development. Nobody at the shop remembered who handed in the film, which also contained vacation snapshots of Luedke's family.

The difficulty of believing that Luedke would knowingly have handed the film to a commercial photographer has led to two theories. The first is that the secret pictures were taken by somebody else, using the camera without Luedke's knowledge. (The secret pictures were the first on the film, and the family snaps followed.) In other words, Luedke was "framed" and may then have been murdered by enemy agents to sow suspicion and create havoc in Western defense circles.

Violated Rules

The second theory springs from the fact that Luedke, an amateur photographer, was allowed against all the rules—to take a camera into his office. It is thought he may have had two such cameras, one for personal snaps,

the other for espionage, and that he may have got them muddled.

The Luedke case would not have caused such alarm had it not seemed part of a pattern of violent deaths and espionage arrests. Nahit Imre, 52, a Turkish official and NATO's chief financial controller, was caught red-handed in his office on Sept. 12 photographing secret documents.

Maj. Gen. Horst Wendland, 57, acting deputy chief of West German intelligence (BND) shot himself in his office on Oct. 8, the day of Luedke's death. Lt. Col. Johannes Grimm, 54, security chief at the German Ministry of Defense Building on Bonn, shot himself on Oct. 18. Dr. Hans-Heinrich Schenck, 40, a high official of the West German Economics Ministry, hanged himself at home in Cologne on Oct. 14.

Edeltraud Grapentin, librarian in the Federal Information Service, died of an overdose of sleeping pills on Oct. 15. Gerhard Boehm, 62, a defense Ministry official, disappeared on Oct. 18 and was found drowned near Bonn last Wednesday.

In addition there have

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been the recent deaths, outside Germany, of a former Italian Air Minister, Gen. Renato Sandalli who committed suicide, and, in Belgium, of the Polish-born wife of an American Army sergeant, Albert Fallon, attached to SHAPE, who was found shot dead.

German counter-intelligence sources advance numerous theories to explain away nearly all these deaths — nervous depression, unhappy love affairs, professional frustration, and for Grimm, the mistaken fear of cancer. Most observers see in these theories an attempt to cover up a major scandal.

But in the most colorful case of all — the theft of a missile from a German NATO Air Force base — the theory advanced by German Security, is well supported by circumstantial evidence. The case involves a German architect, Manfred Ramminger a Luftwaffe pilot, Wolf-Diethard Knoppe, and a Polish-born master locksmith, Josef Linowsky.

Routine Check

The story begins in the 1950s when Linowsky, then

living in West Germany, applied to the Polish Military Mission in Berlin for permission to visit relatives in Poland. As a matter of routine, the Polish officers sounded him out on his acquaintances in the West. A copy of their report was sent, again routinely, to Soviet intelligence.

In about 1958, Linowsky met Ramminger, in apparently innocent circumstances. Ramminger was divorced and was looking for someone to live with him. Linowsky moved in. It was not a homosexual relationship.

Ramminger, "who longed for "real excitement," spoke to friends of "doing something really splendid."

About this time Linowsky's contact with the East was suddenly renewed, after a gap of five years, when he was approached by the KGB, the Soviet intelligence service.

Linowsky told the Russians about his friend, and Ramminger and a Soviet contact were eventually brought together socially. Some time after, Ramminger visited Russia.

Starfighter Pilot

At this point Warrant Officer Knoppe enters the story. As a Starfighter pilot at the Zell air force base in south Germany, Knoppe might have been thought to lead a sufficiently dangerous life. But he, too, craved for "real excitement," creating fantasies about himself as a member of high society. Ramminger and Knoppe met by chance playing cards at a night club in Ingolstadt, near the air base—where Ramminger had gone to visit his divorced wife.

Knoppe also alluded to the poor security at his air base.

"Why, you could steal a Starfighter any night," he is alleged to have said. But Ramminger replied that he did not want a whole aircraft, "just a piece of navigation equipment."

It was this piece of equipment that he took to Moscow in his personal baggage, after he, Knoppe and Linowsky stole it in April, 1967. It is not known how the Russians reacted to this unexpected gift, which may not have had any great military value. The same applies to an inertial platform, stolen by the same trio from

the Hanover Industrial Fair this spring.

Sidewinder Stolen

It seems likely, however, that Ramminger returned to West Germany from Moscow determined to show the Russians that he could do even better. This time he chose something stupendously bulky—a Sidewinder air-to-air rocket over nine feet long and weighing 160 pounds. It is difficult to believe the Russians would themselves have chosen this 10-year-old weapon which they must know all about, in preference to some more modern piece of hardware.

Knoppe and Linowsky wheeled the rocket in a loudly squeaking trolley across the concrete of the air base to the perimeter, where Ramminger was waiting in his car. Failure to detect them is explained by the fact that the Zell base is guarded by civilians with dogs. On the night in question it was being disinfested of rats by poisoned meat and the dogs had been locked up.

The Sidewinder, wrapped See GERMAN, A30, Col. 1

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in a carpet and sticking out of the back window of Ramminger's car, was driven to Ramminger's flat in Krefeld, where it was dismantled and packed in cases, which were then airfreighted to Moscow via Paris, as commercial samples at a cost of about \$72.

According to German counter-intelligence sources, suspicion eventually fell on Knoppe after the discovery of the rocket theft in a routine equipment check.

There is considerable rivalry between the three German secret services—BFV, the counter-intelligence organization; BMD, the former "Gehlen organization" for espionage, and MAD, the armed forces se-

curity service. There is also friction between the BMD and the American Central Intelligence Agency, which exercises a first right over all defectors arriving from the East.

Professional frustrations, which might more easily be accepted in a country with unbroken service traditions, are liable, here, to explode in violent acts of disloyalty or despair.

This could have been the case with Wendlandt, who after 13 years as acting No. 2 of the BMD, was told that his status could not be confirmed because of past "in-discretions."

Alarming as it appears, the latest crop of spy scandals are known to form only the tip of an iceberg of espionage, conducted by an estimated 5000 Eastern agents in the Federal Republic.

As the security chief at NATO headquarters puts it: "I am not interested in spies who are dead, or otherwise out of the way—I'm interested in the ones who are still at large."

**VOTE
SCOTT**

Committee to Re-Elect Bill Scott, Gerald
G. Thompson, Treas.