

## Report from Bonn by Rainer Apel

### Some genies are out of the bottle

*"Hints" at new investigation of Barschel's death point to East-West arms deals in the 1980s.*

The first gathering on Jan. 13 in the northern city of Lübeck, of senior intelligence, forensic, and political experts on the resumed investigation of the death of Christian Democrat Uwe Barschel, who was killed in Geneva in October 1987, did not yield spectacular results. Judge Heinrich Wille, who is in charge of the new investigation, said, though, that "new hints, more than I originally expected, were put on the table that will help the investigators." They were vaguely described as having to do with "East-West arms affairs in the 1980s."

The investigators in Lübeck have been provided with formerly secret western intelligence protocols of post-1990 discussions with former East German intelligence officers, who hinted about Barschel's involvement in top-secret, arms-related deals across the Iron Curtain during the early 1980s. At least three of these sources, among them a onetime close aide to foreign intelligence head Markus Wolf, said that they know Barschel was killed because he didn't want to go along with some deals that were rated "highly important" at that time.

Unfortunately, some of the top East German officials who knew more about these affairs cannot be interrogated. Arthur Wenzel, who handled the Rostock arms dealership of the IMES operation that had secret business with George Bush's operative Oliver North, supposedly hung himself in a prison in 1991. Michael Wischniewski, who organized many of the secret money deals with western agencies, escaped trial in Germany, went to Israel in late 1994, and ac-

quired Israeli citizenship with the help of some friends of Ariel Sharon, which keeps him safe from German law for the time being.

Further, Bernd Barschel, who knew more, died in October 1990. Bernd worked at the East German University of Jena and, through contacts in the intelligence and science community, was involved in an affair on April 26, 1984. On that day, Uwe Barschel met with "somebody" in the management of the Zeiss Jena optical electronics plant for two hours (as his driver testified years later), and afterwards had a "private" encounter with his cousin Bernd. Bernd had close contacts with the management at Zeiss, and is said to have played a role in this peculiar arrangement.

The visit of a senior conservative West German politician to that Jena plant, which produced key optical electronic components for U.S.S.R. military systems, including Moscow's missile defense project, was even then a big deal. The fact that Zeiss Jena soon after presented a new laser device to improve tank firepower, which in many ways resembled a system produced earlier in the West by the Wild-Leitz firm, also raised eyebrows. The fact that a brother of Uwe Barschel, Eike, was a top manager at the Wild-Leitz Geneva branch is also interesting, especially because Uwe wanted to see him in Geneva on the same weekend that he was killed.

After the collapse of the East German regime, Bernd was able to look at declassified top-secret files at an archive in Gera (not far from Jena) in March 1990. A friend of his recalls that he told him that he had found

"something big"; he "would never have thought something like that possible. Certain things will be unravelled, now." He added, though, that it would be "too dangerous" to talk about it, for the time being.

When Germany was reunified on Oct. 3, 1990, Bernd is said to have felt "safe enough" to speak about his findings in Gera. But on Oct. 14, he suddenly died from a "stroke."

What did he find? Was it the same kind of sensitive material that Uwe Barschel is said to have discovered shortly before his death?

There are hints that what went on between Zeiss Jena and Wild-Leitz, in violation of the western embargo of high-technology transfers to the East, proceeded with the full knowledge of intelligence agencies in East and West. Somebody in the West decided to provide the East Germans with a much-desired military technology in return for some "courtesy." The East Germans were also supplied with some sophisticated weapons by Royal Ordnance, a weapons manufacturer in Britain and supplier of the British Armed Forces and intelligence services.

For the East Germans, these secret deals were handled by Alexander Schalck-Golodkowski, who, at the time Uwe Barschel traveled to Jena, was negotiating with envoys of the West German government for a "visibly reduced Bonn role" in the American Strategic Defense Initiative program.

Strangely enough, all of the files that West Germany had on this period have disappeared. At least this is what the members of a special Bonn parliamentary committee investigating the activities of Schalck-Golodkowski were told in 1993. But there is enough evidence left to keep the secret East-West deals a hot issue, including the Uwe Barschel affair.