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Mentioned in Article in NATO Scenario of Spies and 'Suicides'

By [Thirard] Philby de VOSJOLI

Author of NATO Scenario of Spies and 'Suicides'  
Published in Life magazine, Vol. 65, No. 24, Chicago, Illinois, 13 December 1968, Pages 26-29

CIT: FRANG.  
OCC Author

In introducing the author, the editor notes that de VOSJOLI is a former French intelligence agent who had written the story of the defection of a key Soviet agent known as MARTEL in an article in Life date 26 April, 1968.

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In this article, the author says that in October 1968, the West German Government was engulfed by a mysterious wave of suicides of high government officials, including General Horst WENDELGANN, the number two man in BND,

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the West German equivalent of the CIA, Lieutenant Colonel Johannes GRIMM and Gerhard BOHM, two high officials of the West German Ministry of Defense, and Hermann LUDKE the West German admiral assigned to NATO.

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According to de VOSJOLI, the deaths were in fact not suicides but murders hastily carried out by the Spetsburo, a division of the KGB, whose sole job is to arrange the execution of agents. Their object was to protect the KGB's top man in West Germany [unnamed]. According to the author, the sequence of events was as follows.

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Some very important members of the KGB [names not mentioned] had defected to the West and were busily spilling the beans. At least one of them was a Czech employed by the KGB [name not mentioned], who had become disillusioned with the Soviets after they invaded Czechoslovakia. At the time this article was being written, he was somewhere in the United States revealing Soviet secrets. His disclosures, as well as those by other defectors, were blowing the cover of other Soviet agents in West Germany and other NATO countries. At that time a team of top intelligence officials from Washington is said to have gone to London to join their British counterparts. Together they went to Bonn to seek the cooperation of General Armin ~~BRCK~~, chief of West German counterintelligence. Using information that had been provided by the defectors, they began investigations into the activities of a number of highly placed Germans, including six nuclear scientists. The scientists were more fortunate than some of the other suspects. A leak alerted them that they were being watched and within hours they were able to make their way to East Germany.

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At about that time, the West German counterintelligence organization responsible for security within the German Army (MAD) was acting on a tip passed along by another defector (unnamed). The suspect in that instance was Admiral Hermann LUDKE, deputy chief of logistics at NATO.

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On 27 September 1968 LUDKE was interrogated by MAD agents who confronted him with evidence -- a roll of film which they claimed he had sent out to be processed commercially and which contained photographs of NATO documents classified as top secret. The author says that he suspects that the whole photography business was an MAD

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fabrication because LUDKE could hardly have been so unprofessional as to have mixed his personal and his official photography on one roll of film and given it to a commercial shop for developing. In any case, LUDKE admitted nothing and all he did was consent to having his apartment searched the next day. When copies of the classified NATO documents were found there, he apparently was able to offer an acceptable explanation. He was not arrested.

One week later, MAD officials met with their counterparts in the BND, and reported that they now had enough evidence on LUDKE and had decided to arrest him.

CIT CLAM  
OCC MIL

That decision triggered the mysterious parade of deaths. General Horst WENDLAND, second-in-command at the BND, attended the meeting and then returned to his office in the same building. Less than an hour later, his secretary found him dead on the floor with a bullet hole in his head. Although the death was called a suicide by the German Government, the author finds it strange that WENDLAND had not left a suicide note nor indicated to anyone that he wanted to take his life.

Admiral LUDKE died on the same day -- three hours later. His body was found in the front seat of an automobile in the Eifel Mountains where he had gone on a hunting trip. He had a hole through the upper torso made by a bullet from his own rifle. The police report listed his death as suicide, but the gamekeeper who found LUDKE's body said he had been shot in the back.

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The author stresses the importance of placing Soviet agents, who have been fingered by defectors, beyond harm's way. He illustrates by pointing out that in 1962 when he was in Washington, disclosures by a defector [redacted] and Hans CLAMANN, two men highly placed in West Germany's intelligence system. The two men were arrested and placed immediately under protective custody. The information they gave helped to uncover an important Soviet network.

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Within a week there were four more so-called suicides. Dr. Hans Heinrich BOENKE, 40, an official in the Economics Ministry, died by hanging in his mother's apartment in Cologne. There was no suicide note. Miss Edaltraud GRAPENTIN, 52, an employee of the Information Ministry, died one day later from an overdose of sleeping pills. A Government spokesman labelled her case a personal tragedy. In fact, however, there had been reports that she was the liaison agent for the six nuclear scientists who had been working for the Soviet country. Lieutenant Colonel Johannes GRAMM, a major official in the Ministry of Defense, was shot to death in his office. The official version was suicide. The police said that he had had cancer. Three days later, however, [redacted] that doctors had recently examined GRAMM to be in perfect health. Gerhard BOHM, 61, also an official of the Defense Ministry, disappeared at about the same time. His body was fished out of the Rhine River eleven days later. The authorities called it suicide, saying that he had been disappointed at being passed over for promotion.

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The author argues that so many deaths in such a short time could not be a matter of coincidence. The embarrassed German authorities called them suicides in an attempt to cover-up.

Meanwhile, de VOSJOLI says, in London and Washington the debriefings of the defectors goes on (1968). Such debriefings become a "long and tedious process, sometimes taking years. But already there are signs that the interrogations are uncovering KGB agents in other countries besides West Germany." For example, in Italy four men [unnamed] were arrested for passing NATO secrets to the Soviets. In the U.K., two members of the Soviet Embassy [unnamed] were expelled from the country for recruiting British servicemen as agents and transmitting information they had supplied to Moscow. Perhaps most significant of all, however, was the uncovering of Nahit LMRE, a Turk who had been comptroller of finances at NATO headquarters in Brussels. "Now under interrogation in Ankara, he is giving more and more detail on his activities and his Soviet contacts. He might even lead Western intelligence experts to Mr. Big in Germany -- despite the KGB's extraordinary and unprecedented efforts [six murders] to keep his identity secret", the author concludes.

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