

## Report from Bonn by Rainer Apel

### Mysterious deaths

*Why are the authorities so quick to label the death of Green Party leaders Petra Kelly and Gerd Bastian "suicide"?*

**T**hose in Germany who, like this author, were watching the midnight news on Oct. 19, were shocked to learn that two founding members of the Green Party, Petra Kelly (44) and Gerd Bastian (69), had been found dead at their home in Bonn-Tannenbusch about two hours before. Since October 1987, when the former governor of the state of Schleswig-Holstein, Uwe Barschel, was found drowned in a bathtub in a Geneva hotel, Germany has not seen the death of a prominent politician under such strange circumstances.

The news reports were conflicting. The state attorney on duty, Mr. Komp, said soon after the discovery of the bodies that he wouldn't rule out murder. The news that the two corpses had been lying undetected for at least seven days, maybe even twice that, added to the gloomy picture.

Early the next morning, criminal inspector Otto said that there was "no evidence of outside involvement of another person," that the two had committed suicide. According to Otto's report, Bastian must have shot Kelly in the left temple while she was asleep, and then killed himself with a shot in the forehead, in a way described as "fairly professional" by the police.

Suicide? Yet no letters of farewell were found, and the two had given no indication of depression. This author was not the only one left suspicious.

Green Party spokeswoman Anne Nilges, who was interviewed as one of the foremost among Kelly's political collaborators, said she knew of recent threatening letters by neo-Nazis to

leading Green Party members, such as the state minister of environmental affairs in Hesse, Joschka Fischer. Nilges seemed to imply that the two deaths in Bonn could have been caused by an act of neo-Nazi terrorism. Kelly and Bastian had been engaged in political campaigns against xenophobic violence and neo-Nazi terrorism.

No threatening letters were found by the police in the Bonn home of Kelly and Bastian. On the other hand, forensic tests had not even been completed, when the investigating authorities pronounced the word "suicide."

Now, let us go back to the case of Uwe Barschel, whose body was found in that Geneva hotel bathtub, with no traces of "outside involvement" except some strange bruises about the forehead and neck. Initial reports about evidence of an assassination were suppressed by the media, and the case was officially declared "suicide." But crucial material, like pictures of the corpse and the conditions under which Barschel had been found and tissue samples, had mysteriously disappeared. Hints about forensic evidence never really taken into consideration made their way into the media only four years later.

Barschel's family, at least, never bought the story of a "suicide" but is still demanding a reopening of the investigation. The fact that Barschel's name had been raised many times as someone who had come across a delicate aspect of illegal arms transfers linked to the Iran-Contra affair, points

rather to the "murder" variant—and there were 20 file cabinets packed with secret data on Barschel, found in the vast archives of the abolished East German intelligence agency, the Stasi.

Neither Kelly nor Bastian was ever mentioned in close connection with dark affairs such as those that may have caused the untimely death of Uwe Barschel. But it is said that Kelly was instrumental in uncovering facts about secret overlaps between the Stasi and western intelligence agencies. This is a story on which especially the Greens from east Germany have been working for some time.

An act of revenge against Petra Kelly, an effort to deter those who are looking into this East-West intelligence affair? And if so, carried out by whom?

Such questions cannot be answered at this point, but they should be followed up, if only to protect those who are bold enough to look into such sensitive matters as the Iran-Contra case.

For the time being, this author would locate the death of Kelly and Bastian in the context of the somewhat mysterious tide of extremism and political violence in Germany ever since the nation was reunified in October 1990.

Experts studying the similarly mysterious tide of violence and terrorism in Italy through the 1970s and 1980s use the term "strategy of tension" to describe the process of many seemingly "unconnected" incidents that, taken together, form a stream of political destabilization against the state and its institutions. It is well known by intelligence hands that people tend to be most terrorized by incidents that seem to have no clear motive or reason, like an arbitrary bombing or the strange death of a prominent person.