

Hannoversche Allgemeine Zeitung

Hannoversche Allgemeine Zeitung No. 149, 29.06.2000

Mauss believes Düe guilty

Hanover (sw). Former Federal Criminal Police Office (BKA) agent Werner Mauss believes jeweller René Düe to be “guilty” of insurance fraud. Mauss defends the methods he employed as undercover investigator in the Düe case in 1982:

“I did nothing wrong.”

The spectacular jewellery find in the old town has brought the Düe case back into the news. Now agent Werner Mauss, a central figure in the 1982 case, has also made his feelings known. Using the alias Claude he worked his way into the jeweller’s confidence with the aim of proving insurance fraud. Mauss’s cover was later blown – and since then his reputation has been dogged by rumours of his suspect methods.

Mauss cannot avoid making the headlines. Most recently, in 1998, he was accused of having paid Columbian guerrillas to obtain the release of hostages without the Columbian government’s knowledge. He was acquitted.

Mauss has remained a secretive person. Asked about where he lives, he answers briefly: “In Germany”: Is he still on the Düe case?

Questions in this direction arouse an indignant rejection. HAZ editor Stefan Wittke talked to Werner Mauss.

The jewellery supposedly stolen from René Düe was found in his father’s former workshop. Is that a late triumph for you?

In all my thirty-plus years of work as an undercover investigator I have never felt any sense of triumph. That is still how I feel today. But it is true that the original suspicions on the part of the police, the public prosecutor’s office and the state department of criminal investigation were vindicated. Düe arranged the robbery himself. He is guilty.

You’ve not been directly involved in the case for a long time, why does it still hold so much interest for you?

A number of journalists used the Düe case over several years to severely damage my reputation. Now the conclusion reached by the original investigation may be confirmed. Of course I have a strong interest in making sure that the public is made aware that the investigations that were carried out by the police and myself at that time were both legitimate and in compliance with the law. Public prosecutor, Hans-Jurgen Grasmann was successful in gaining – wrongly, as we now know for sure – an acquittal for Düe at the Brunswick trial, leading to the police later being accused of persecuting the supposedly innocent Düe. The police officers involved, and myself, have suffered a great deal because of this.

You were a key player in this case; it was largely your work that brought Düe's conviction in Hanover, although he was later acquitted in Brunswick. According to those involved in Brunswick, even today, the Hanover trial was characterised by "manipulation". Did you make mistakes?

As undercover investigator I used my experience and my psychological knowledge to crack the case. The investigation was lead by the state criminal investigation office. My job was to follow just one of many leads in the case. I only worked on establishing direct contact with Düe, and everything I did was agreed upon with the police and public prosecutor's office and approved by them in advance. I am of the opinion, therefore, that I did nothing wrong.

Are you still convinced that the methods used by yourself and the police were in accordance with the rule of law?

My methods were proper and correct. If you are hinting at the bugging operation used against Düe in France, I can tell you that it did happen, but it was done abroad and by the police, not by me. As far as I know this took place on the basis of letters rogatory to France and with the collaboration of a French investigating magistrate. I was not aware that such measures were contestable at that time in Germany. The current legal situation would allow such measures in Germany also.

After his acquittal, Düe was paid a very considerable sum in compensation by the state of Lower Saxony for his two years in prison. What do you think about that now?

At his original trial in 1983, René Düe was given a seven-year sentence. In 1992, a few years after his 1989 acquittal, the Hanover district court dismissed Düe's damages suit against the Mannheimer Insurance Company on grounds of his "wilful deceit". The verdict was upheld by the Federal Supreme Court. The judges saw Düe as guilty because of the fact that he had given some jewellery to me in 1982 that he had previously reported as stolen. This judgement meant that all damage claims were forfeit. What I find inexplicable is, that despite this, the state of Lower Saxony went on to pay out the sum of 2.5 million Marks to Düe.

What do you think the Hanover public prosecutor's office should now do to clear up the Düe case once and for all?

I believe that the police and public prosecutor's office have taken steps in the right direction; steps that will confirm that the results of investigations submitted by their colleagues at that time were correct. What, in my view, now needs followed up on, are the leads from the alleged contract murder in Turkey.

Does your bringing up of the Istanbul murder trial mean that you believe that René Düe was involved in murder as well as insurance fraud?

My experience of Düe was of a clever swindler. In 1982, he cold-bloodedly attempted to deflect suspicion away from himself and onto his main supplier in New York. Whether or not he is the type of person to arrange a murder; I don't know. Do you think it likely that the public prosecutor's office will soon be calling on you again as witness?

I cannot say. I certainly see no problem with setting my knowledge of the case at the disposal of the courts at any time.

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