

Wochenspiegel

Jewellery Robbery Solved

July 12, 2000

Hunsrück agent Werner Mauss and one of his most spectacular cases

Mauss: "I have been vindicated in my conclusions".

Kreis (zen.) Nineteen years after the René Düe jewel robbery case in Hanover new evidence has emerged: 10.8 kilograms of jewellery from the alleged robbery have been found. Werner Mauss, the undercover agent from the Hunsrück played a central role in investigations in 1982 when he was employed on the case as a civilian operative by the Federal Criminal Police Office (BKA). Working together with a special police unit, he was successful in bringing the jeweller to justice.

What happened? From the time that jeweller René Düe was found bleeding on the floor of his jeweller's premises the police harboured a suspicion that the raid had been a set up job. Why? The alleged robbers, who, according to witnesses, were two southern-European looking persons with black hair, left Düe's premises carrying two attaché cases.

However the jewellery stolen amounted to a total of over 3,400 individual items and weighed over 40 kilos. How could all that have been carried off in two attaché cases? Even three suitcases would not have been sufficient for such an amount. Why was the closed-circuit security system not switched on? Why was the safe open? All questions to which the investigators wanted answers.

The police set up a special investigation unit, firstly through the Hanover police force and later through the criminal investigation department (LKA) of Lower Saxony. A special prosecutor initiated proceedings against Düe for insurance fraud because the valuable gold jewellery, which had been specially provided by Düe for an exhibition by commission agents, was insured for 13.2 million Deutschmarks.

The LKA then requested the services of BKA civil investigator Werner Mauss. Mauss was the man to call upon for investigators Europe-wide when cases proved difficult to crack. Using the pseudonym of "Claude" Mauss, working in cooperation with the Lower Saxony LKA, set to work on Düe with the aim of proving that the jeweller had set up his own robbery. After several months of working on what Mauss describes as "confidence-building measures" René Düe believed his new friend "Claude". Düe talked to Mauss, alias "Claude", about his robbery. The pressure of the police investigation led Düe and his brother-in-law Achim B. to ask for Mauss's help in laying a false trail that would help incriminate a jewellery supplier.

To further strengthen his credibility, Mauss took up the suggestion and flew to New York. Düe was convinced, and brought along 15 striking items of jewellery, all of which he had previously reported stolen, carefully hidden between new hand towels in a large suitcase.

For the special police investigators this was clear evidence that Düe had planned the robbery himself. The LKA acted, Düe was arrested, and in 1983 sentenced to seven-and-a-half-years imprisonment. The Federal Supreme Court quashed the judgement because of a procedural error and Düe was later acquitted. Some of the evidence was not allowed to be heard.

For agent Mauss the case became a nightmare. Then, in the investigative committee something happened that can be the difference between life and death for a secret agent. Agent Mauss's identity was revealed. With the revelation of his identity his greatest capital was gone. A first, though admittedly blurred, picture of him began circulating in the German press. And, at the same time, another image made its appearance, one that has been sticking to him ever since – a reputation for using dubious methods. Events last week, however, must have done much to dispel this suspicion in relation to the Düe investigation.

The reason being that renovation work in Hanover turned up 10.8 kilograms of gold jewellery, all neatly packed in eleven cartons. The jewellery was revealed, carefully hidden behind ceiling panelling, during renovation work. A rather awkward detail arises from the fact that a jeweller operated a goldsmith's business in the house until the early 1980's. His name? Friedrich Düe, none other than the father of René Düe.

For agent Mauss it provides a late vindication: "The 1981 robbery was a set up job, I wasn't wrong." Mauss comments: "Who could possibly believe that anyone else would choose to hide the jewellery in the ceiling of the premises they had stolen it from?"

By courtesy of the Wochenspiegel SW

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