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“Leads by the score”: no let up in the jeweller Düe thriller
By Christoph Windscheif, dpa

Hanover (dpa) – The finest crime writers would be hard put to create a mystery thriller to top the tale of Hanover jeweller Rene Düe.

This week has seen not one, but two new twists given to the 19-year-old unsolved case, a story involving agents, jewellery and millions in cash. It's as if those involved in the “Düe Affair” had waited for the best part of twenty years for the sequel, as speculation now mounts once more on the mysterious story of 40 kilograms of vanished jewellery.

The more than 13 million Deutschmarks worth of jewellery disappeared in October 1981 after a raid on Düe's shop in Hanover. Investigators immediately suspected that the jeweller himself had set up the robbery and stashed the jewellery away. Düe was first sentenced to seven years imprisonment, though this was later overturned in a retrial that brought his acquittal. The court's decision did not, however, dispel lingering doubts about the innocence of the jeweller who now lives in seclusion on the island of Sylt.

Rene Düe's past caught up with him recently when a lawyer delivered eleven packages to the public prosecutor's office in Hanover. The contents turned out to be almost eleven kilograms of jewellery, which, according to the lawyer, were part of the 1981 robbery haul. But there's more. Workers discovered the parcels stuffed with rings, chains and watches during renovation work. And where? Of all places, at the former goldsmith's studio once run by Rene Düe's father.

“We are not investigating Herr Düe, we are investigating a robbery”, explained a spokesperson from the Hanover public prosecutor's office. Even if the Düe case should turn out to have been insurance fraud, the crime was committed too long ago to be punishable now. According to those who were involved in the case, however, the place of discovery does incriminate the jeweller. The obvious question is, who, apart from him, could have hidden the jewellery behind panelling in his father's shop. There are, in addition, other pieces of evidence against Düe which have never been sufficiently examined.

Amongst other things, there is the murder trial in Turkey reported in the Hurriyet newspaper. In 1992, an Istanbul court convicted a Turkish man for strangling one of his acquaintances to death and then sewing up his mouth. The man had testified in court that he and his acquaintance had been hired by Rene Düe to carry out the Hanover robbery. The other man had had to be killed because he wanted to talk.

Information on the confession of the Turk, who was known to have frequented the red-light scene in Lower Saxony, is said to be in the possession of the Hanover public prosecutor. The authorities, however, point to the masses of case files in the Düe case. Düe's written documents are still lying in numerous cardboard boxes in the archives. “We are, however, following up on every lead”, said spokesman Klinge.

Rene D e protested his innocence via his lawyer Klaus Malottke. "He realises however, that the location of the find does not work in his favour and that there is much to incriminate him", says Malottke. The state criminal investigation department is now examining the jewellery and its packaging. According to them, the results can be expected in about a week. "There are plenty of fingerprints. Though these may be from people who were legitimately handling the jewellery", said Klinge. The D e case has lost none of its suspense.

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