

# Numerous deaths in Iranian arms scandals

by Thierry Lalevée

But for Uwe Barschel's assassination in Geneva on Oct. 11, many other deaths might have gone without notice. For example, less than 24 hours after the discovery of his body, an AP wire from Vienna asked an embarrassing question: "Is there a link between the deaths of Uwe Barschel, Herbert Amry, and Heribert Apfalter?" On Oct. 13, the Munich daily

*Abend Zeitung* reprinted the wire and elaborated on the cases. On Oct. 14, the question was again asked in a banner headline in the mass-circulation Austrian daily, *Wiener Kurier*.

A common thread in the wires and the articles were the quotes from "security experts" asserting that "there exists toxic gas which can induce a heart attack, without leaving any organic trace."

The question not only hints at a wave of unsolved murders, but defines a link between each of them: illegal arms sales to Iran.

Who were Herbert Amry and Heribert Apfalter? They were two crucial figures in a scandal that is threatening to rock the Austrian political scene. Austria's state military industry, Voest-Alpina, sold at least 200 GHN-45 cannons

## Death in Geneva: a chronology

At three o'clock in the afternoon of Sunday, Oct. 11, international newswires started reporting on the mysterious death of German politician Uwe Barschel, whose body had been found at 12:30 p.m. in the Beau Rivage Hotel in Geneva.

Barschel had come to Geneva, to meet an "important informant," who would provide "the last piece of a puzzle proving that a longstanding plot" had been conducted against him, as Barschel told his wife, his sister, and his brother in separate phone calls Saturday evening. Before coming to Geneva, Barschel had been spotted at the private estate of Irangate figure and international arms dealer, Adnan Khashoggi, on Grand Canary Island.

At a press conference in Geneva on Monday, Oct. 12, Uwe Barschel's brother Eike Barschel and his widow Freya Barschel presented the following story:

Although Barschel's stay in the Canaries was secret, the informant had called him there Oct. 9, asking the politician to meet him in Geneva "alone, without bodyguards." The informant, giving his name as "Robert Rohloff," had previously telephoned him at a secret, unlisted number on Sept. 26, offering "information."

Freya Barschel added that her husband was afraid from the moment he got the first call, that "they were after him." After meeting with the informant, Uwe Barschel phoned his brother Eike, and said he had gotten "names in Germany." He would not speak about it on the phone.

He had arrived at Geneva's international airport Cointrin at 3:10 p.m. and met with the informant for about 10 minutes, he later told his relatives. He took detailed notes on the encounter. He was to meet the informant after 6:30 for the second time at the Geneva Hilton Hotel, he told Eike Barschel by phone at about 6:20.

The brothers agreed to either meet that same night, or Sunday morning for breakfast at Eike's home in Yens, near Lausanne. According to the hotel's telephone recorder, Barschel tried to call Eike again at 7:06, but failed. Eike Barschel guessed that his brother's second meeting with the informant had lasted longer, and grew concerned only Sunday morning, when Uwe Barschel did not show up for breakfast. The regional police were informed. Eike tried to call his brother at the Beau Rivage at about 10:00 a.m., but no one answered at the hotel room. Alerted again, the police filed a missing persons report.

At 11:00, the hotel detective noticed a sign outside Barschel's room requesting that the room be cleaned, and then another sign at about 12:00 saying "Do Not Disturb." At 12:30, *Stern* magazine reporters, who had tracked Barschel down from Grand Canary Island to Geneva, showed up and found the door unlocked, they told police. Looking inside, they found the bed unused. Apart from a broken glass and one shoe lying around, the room looked as if just cleaned. In the bathroom, they found Uwe Barschel in the tub, fully clothed and lying on his back in the water, as if asleep. There were no waterspots on the floor, the faucet was shut off, the towels not used, and no wound was visible on Barschel's dead body. Yet the reporters told other media later, that Barschel seemed to have shot himself to death.

The notes Uwe Barschel had made after meeting the informant were not in the hotel room.

to Iran in 1985 and 1986. The transactions were disguised through one of Voest Alpin's subsidiaries, Noericum, whose then-director, Peter Unterweger, was arrested last September.

As Austrian press have pointed out, there have been some strange deaths associated with the case. Herbert Amry was the Austrian ambassador to Greece, who realized that weapons supposedly sent to Greece, in fact never arrived. He exposed that fact in the spring of 1985. Vienna set up a commission of inquiry, but Amry never made it back to testify. He died in July 1985 of a "heart attack," but he had no previous record of heart troubles. His body was quickly cremated, without autopsy.

In August of this year, the commission called for testimony from Heribert Apfalter, the general director of Voest Alpin in that period. Hours after reportedly meeting with an informant, who might have provided him with exculpatory evidence, and a few days before testifying, Apfalter died of a "heart attack" on Aug. 26, 1987. Despite several autopsies, the body revealed no trace of poisoning, and the investigation of his death was closed.

Officials of the security services pointed out the obvious: A man who dies of a heart attack cannot be found lying peacefully on his bed, without any signs of struggle. It was a sound argument, but didn't prove powerful enough to convince higher Austrian authorities, eager to close the matter.

Barschel's murder may cause the reopening of these cases, and thereby raise the question: If these were murders, who committed them and why? Was some \$500 million worth of contracts with Iran worth such murders, or is there more at stake, yet to be revealed?

## Arms and Freemasonry

A pattern similar to that which followed the assassination of President John Kennedy seems to be emerging. Key witnesses, and for that matter, key players in a game for which they seem to have outlived their usefulness, are dying off. There was the shooting of Swedish Prime Minister Olof Palme and a leading Swedish military officer. There was the presumed suicide attempt of Robert MacFarlane and the timely death of William Casey. How many other deaths have gone unnoticed?

Another death now under scrutiny is that of Federico Federici, the Italian former lawyer for Licio Gelli, the fugitive grand master of Italy's P-2 Freemasonic lodge who surrendered to the Swiss authorities on Sept. 21. As the Geneva weekly *L'Hebdo* pointed out, Federici died "under obscure circumstances," of a "heart attack"—what else?—on Sept. 15, just as Gelli arrived in Geneva, but before he surrendered to the police.

With that background, Italian authorities decided to take no chances when a 25-year-old arms-smuggler who was wanted for interrogation in Italy, suddenly died in Lugano of a "heart attack" on Oct. 12. They requested a full autopsy of the body. Saudi national Rashid al Jarrah was part of a large

ring operating among Italy, Yugoslavia, and Lebanon, smuggling large quantities of Kalashnikov rifles under cover of a toy factory owned by his father, Mohammed Najah al Jarrah, who was himself assassinated in August 1985.

An isolated smuggling ring? Not at all. It was revealed that Rashid al Jarrah collaborated in Switzerland with one Swiss-Hungarian national, Peter Jeney, who is now wanted for his role in the Borletti arms-to-Iran scandal that erupted in Italy in September.

It started with the arrests of Count Ferdinando Borletti at the beginning of September, following the police seizure of the *AlBoustany*, a Lebanese vessel. Weapons and documents found on board (see *EIR*, Sept. 25, 1987, p. 45) proved that Borletti's Vasella Meccanotecnico company had been selling sea-mines to Iran for years, and was involved in a broader arms-smuggling operation running from Italy to Barcelona's Bovega company, thence to Syria before reaching Iran.

On Sept. 8, more light was shed on the Swiss connection to this arms traffic, when businessman Walter Demuth of the Helitrade company was arrested in Turin, on charges of smuggling spare parts for jet fighters to Iran. Demuth's arrest led to the arrests of several of his Italian associates, and also unveiled a \$300-million deal with Ben Banerjee's B&RW Industry of Britain.

As later investigations revealed, Banerjee has been a close associate of Oliver North since the very beginning, and a participant at the Nov. 20, 1984 meetings in Hamburg hotels where North's "Iran connection" was established. Banerjee's company organized the delivery of 1,250 TOW missiles to Iran in early 1985. Months later, he organized shipments of Polish-made 9-mm machine guns to the Contras.

Exposure of the deals made by Banerjee, and some other, less important companies, played an important role in convincing the reticent British government to close down the Iranian military procurement office in London in mid-September.

It also shed new light on the much-covered "German connection." On Sept. 27, a front-page article in the daily *Die Welt*, followed by a longer, Sept. 29 story in Hamburg's *Abendblatt*, underlined the role of then-Iranian ambassador to Germany Javad Salari in negotiations with North, and the fact that the Foreign Ministry in Bonn, under Hans Dietrich Genscher, knew all about it!

Yet, this is only the tip of the iceberg. For example, on Sept. 26, another ring illegally running weapons among Italy, Yugoslavia, and Iraq was dismantled in Trieste. Two days later, a famous mafia lawyer, Giuseppe de Lupis, was caught at the Swiss border with 30 billion lira worth of false Indonesian promissory notes. Their sale was to finance the purchase and resale of weapons to Lebanon and Syria.

On Oct. 5, an Argentine-German woman, Charlotte Petzold de Gramsch, was arrested in Wuppertal, West Germany. She was the representative of Argentina's Mabox company, which produces German tanks, and had organized the sale of tanks and jet fighters to Iran.