

Translated excerpts from:

**Lutz Hachmeister
Schleyer
Eine deutsche Geschichte
C. H. Beck Verlag
München 2004
ISBN 3-406-51863-X**

pp. 9-15, 132-136 and 252-257

**Lutz Hachmeister
Schleyer
A German Story**

Translated by Philip Schmitz

Contents

1 Introduction

2 The Son of the Judge

Youth and Political Imprinting 39 • The Father 44 • School Days and Entry into the Hitler Youth 57 • Stromer II. – A Member of “Teutonia” in Rastatt 68 • An SA Obergruppenführer as Father-in-Law 72

3 The Nazi Student Leader

“University Revolution” in Heidelberg 79 • Conquering the School of Law 81 • The National Socialist University Revolution 86 • The Militant Fraternity Brothers: Gustav Adolf Scheel and Comrades 89 • The “Heidelberg Line” 100 • Schleyer As a Member of “Suevia” 105 • “The Blood and the Strength and the Self-confidence” 113 • An Affair in Freiburg 127 • Schleyer’s Ideas on “Political Education” 132 • The Heidelberg Student Convention of 1937 136 • Langemarck 140 • Working for the Student Association 145 • In Innsbruck 154 • The Conflict Concerning Legal Training 159

4 An Expert in Prague

German Rule in “Bohemia and Moravia” 165 • The Protectorate and the SS 167 • A Mountain Trooper in France 173 • Student Politics and Working for the Student Association in Prague 176 • The Central Federation of Industry in Bohemia and Moravia 187 • Schleyer’s Mentor: Bernhard Adolf 190 • The Aryanization and Germanization of Czech Industry 193 • Adolf’s Germanization Program 198 • Reinhard Heydrich 199 • Friedrich Kuhn-Weiss 209 • The War Economy: “Rationalization” and “Labor Allocation” 212 • Escape from Prague 224

5 A Career in a Global Corporation

From Internment to Rising at Daimler-Benz 227 • A Career Begins Anew 239 • Starting Out at Daimler 242 • Daimler-Benz during the Reconstruction Years 243 • The Backer: Fritz Könecke 247 • The Personnel Manager 252 • Schleyer and South America 257 • General Manager Walter Hitzinger, The Luckless Linzer 263 • The Duel, Schleyer vs. Joachim Zahn 266

6 President of the BDA and BDI

The Great Labor Conflict of 1963 280 • Chronology of the Conflict 283 • Willi Bleicher 286 • The Employer Federations 290 • Otto A.Friedrich 294 • Schleyer in Cologne 298 • Schleyer's "Social Model" 299 • Employer/Public Relations: the Deutsches Industrie-Institut (DI) (German Industry Institute) 308 • Image Polishing 311 • BDI 317

7 In the Name of Virtue

Hanns Martin Schleyer and the "Red Army Faction" 320 • Mohnhaupt & Co. 333 • The "Red Army Faction" 352 • Peter Jürgen Boock, Bernt Engelmann and the East German State Security Service 373 • Crisis Management Teams and Interrogations 382 • Schleyer's Death and the Reflections of the RAF 394

Appendix

Sources and Bibliography 407

Chronological Table 430

Acknowledgements 435

List of Illustrations 436

Person Index 437

Introduction

News of his death was received on the afternoon of October 19, 1977. A young woman called the Stuttgart office of Deutsche Presse-Agentur (dpa), identified herself with the words “This is the RAF!” and proceeded to read a vicious text that began with the words, “After 43 days we have terminated the deplorable and corrupt existence of Hanns Martin Schleyer. Mr. Schmidt, whose power calculations led him to speculate with Schleyer’s death from the outset, can retrieve the body from a green Audi 100 with Bad Homburg plates the in Rue Charles Peguy in Mulhouse.” Asked to verify her identity, the woman answered, “When you open the car, you’ll see soon enough!” Shortly thereafter German and French detectives cautiously set to work “opening” the green Audi 100 in the Alsatian town of Mülhausen.

At approximately 6:25 P.M. Federal Justice Minister Hans-Jochen Vogel informed Hanns Martin Schleyer’s wife that she would probably have to reckon with “tragic news” later that day. The evening before this nineteenth of October Hanns-Eberhard, son of the abducted president of the German Employers' Association, could still be seen on an ARD TV program, in a newly added segment entitled “Nach Mogadishu” (After Mogadishu). In a spectacular night operation in the capital of Somalia, a German SWAT team had liberated the hostages held in a passenger jet named “Landshut” which had been hijacked by Palestinian commandos. As with the kidnapping of Schleyer, the objective of hijacking the Lufthansa jet had been to pressure the German government into releasing members of the “Red Army Faction” (RAF) leadership cadre from Stuttgart’s Stammheim Prison. In the early morning hours of October 18 Andreas Baader, Gudrun Ensslin and Jan-Carl Raspe had been found dead or dying in their Stammheim cells. A seriously injured Irmgard Möller survived. At 8:35 A.M. *dpa* released an urgent bulletin: “baader and ensslin commit suicide.”

During the ARD broadcast Schleyer’ son was asked for his opinion on the events in Mogadishu. Hanns-Eberhard Schleyer, then 32, had offered a pensive, measured response. Naturally, he was “exceptionally happy and relieved at the outcome of the operation in Mogadishu.” But he couldn’t understand why it hadn’t been possible to make some arrangement with the Somalian government on behalf of his father as part of the Mogadishu operation. He was alluding to the following plan: the imprisoned RAF members surrounding Andreas Baader could initially have been allowed to fly to Somalia. After that, Hanns Martin

Schleyer would have been released by his kidnappers and special German units would have hunted down the RAF terrorists and brought them back dead or alive.

At the time of the ARD broadcast, Hanns Martin Schleyer was probably no longer alive. After the death of “the Stammheimers” – one way or the other, the RAF considered them murdered by the instruments of the “fascist” German Federal Republic – the kidnappers had decided to kill their hostage. From Brussels, where he had last been held prisoner, two RAF members set out with Schleyer in the trunk of the green Audi. In a wooded area just over the Belgian-French border, Schleyer was shot. Actually, the perpetrators had planned to park the Audi with the body in front of the Federal Chancellor’s office in Bonn. But when this appeared too risky, they drove to the Rue Charles Peguy in Mülhausen. The commando declaration regarding Schleyer’s death stated:

“for our anguish and our rage over the massacres at mogadishu and stammheim his death means nothing. to andreas, gudrun, jan, irmgard and to us the imperialists’ use of fascistic dramaturgy for the destruction of liberation movements comes as no surprise. we will never forget schmidt and the participating alliance for committing these bloodbaths. the battle has just begun.”

This volley of hateful catchwords and murderous slogans – *massacre, fascistic dramaturgy, imperialists, destruction, bloodbaths* – leads back to a peculiarly neurotic epoch, namely Germany in the 1970s, where political and generational contemporary German history beginning with the First World War amassed and then discharged. The Red Army Faction was the spearhead and the emblem of leftist militancy in the 1970s. To examine it merely in terms of a radicalized offshoot of the student movement, a minor faction among international guerilla movements, or as the pinnacle of individual insanity falls short of the mark. In many respects the RAF was a very German phenomenon. The Adenauer years and postwar culture played an incubator role in its emergence. This was at least equally as important as the protest movement in the second half of the 1960s when waves of leftist militancy began to take shape. From the perspective of contemporary history, and beyond the most obvious of questions, the impact of the actual events, the attacks, gun fights, executions and suicides had the effect that circumstances and interrelationships remained unexamined. All that remained of the peculiar power struggle between the RAF and the “state” were diffusely charged concepts such as “isolation torture,” “computerized profile searches,” “incommunicado detention,” or “crisis management team” – but primarily all kinds of images and symbols

conveyed through pop culture and the mass media that have allowed 1970s terrorism to survive as a multi-media, total work of art.

This unending reproduction is definitively not the result of some malevolent culture or media industry that exploits and commercializes an aesthetic of violence and the trendy radical fashions of leftist terror after the fact. The founding figures of the RAF themselves were highly presentation and media-conscious in various ways. They were part of a new mix of happenings, action theater and sex & drugs, and they were wrapped in a pop and rock culture that constantly pushed beyond the limits of traditional musical and aesthetic conventions. For the Red Army Faction and the “June 2 Movement” staging show-downs, re-enacting *Road Movie*, existentialist posturing and expressionist drama were part and parcel of their strategy and attitude toward life right from the start. In another sense, stylization through the media was able to have an ever greater effect in the 1970s the more the “armed left” de-politicized and intellectually depleted itself, severed almost all ties to external reference groups and finally kept almost exclusively to itself.

In the case of Hanns Martin Schleyer’s abduction and murder the functional and ultimately murderous self-referencing was also understood later by several RAF members – not so much in the sense of a comprehensive moral-political reflection as in a retroactive and also somewhat instrumentalized after-the-fact strategy debate. At the time of the RAF “operation” Schleyer was 62, a robust, stocky man for outward appearances, slightly overweight, his furrowed face marked by dueling scars he had acquired on the fencing floor at “Suevia,” his old Heidelberg fraternity. In a lengthy article in 1974 Henri Nannen’s influential leftist-liberal magazine *Stern* had portrayed him as the mighty “boss of bosses” who did not varnish but manfully admitted to his Nazi involvement prior to 1945. He was a member of the board of managing directors at Daimler-Benz, the simultaneous president of Germany’s two most influential industrial organizations, i.e. the Bundesverband der Deutschen Industrie (BDI) (Federation of German Industries) and the Bundesvereinigung der Deutschen Arbeitgeberverbände (BDA) (Confederation of German Employers' Associations), a member of numerous corporate supervisory boards, and Honorary Consul of Brazil (the latter only for the state of Baden-Württemberg). Ever since his 1963 vote for an area-wide lock out of striking metal workers in North Württemberg-North Baden, the “storm center” of wage politics, he had acquired a reputation as a “hard-liner” in labor disputes and also on the question of worker participation in management, a debate which at the time had greater

importance for social policy than can hardly be fathomed anymore today. The New York Times described him as a “caricature of the ugly capitalist,” to others he looked like a George Grosz drawing of a typical exploiter. In his book about the “red decade” (1967 - 1977) Gerd Koenen wrote that “anything that could be brought against the war generation from an anticapitalist and antifascist perspective” could be heaped upon this man. “He was a former student member of the SS who had apparently transformed himself without missing a beat, from an organizer of the fascist war economy in the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia into a captain of German industry and the speaker of its capitalist industrialist’s association.” But the decisive factor was that Schleyer represented a negative icon not only for the RAF which was entirely marginalized and constantly on the verge of eradication. Rather, beyond his own narrow camp, in other words in the general public, he was perceived as a thick-skinned lobbyist and the stereotypical Fifties-era capitalist. He had long resigned himself to this image – a distortion that “actually did not apply” to him – and attributed it entirely to fabrication by “the media.” Thus, he found himself in the situation of many top executives and businessmen who, aside from their social power positions, saw themselves threatened in a very real sense by a new “ideological elite” of left-liberal to neo-Marxist provenance.

His Nazi past was also not the reason that the RAF’s “Siegfried Hausner Commando” had kidnapped him. Originally, Schleyer was supposed to be abducted as part of a double attack along with Jürgen Ponto, a financial executive who headed Dresdner Bank, was born in 1923 and had played no significant role under the Nazis at all. But Ponto unexpectedly resisted the attempt to “capture” him and was gunned down by the RAF troop on the spot in his Oberursel home. By kidnapping two captains of industry whose world view was directly associated with “fascism” and “imperialism,” the RAF commando’s initial goal was to extort the release of their sorely missed cadres (primarily “Gudrun” and “Andreas”) from Stammheim Prison, and to spare them further “solitary confinement” and other harassment by the regime. Everything else was a bonus, interesting trimmings, such as the obvious “German continuity” in the biography of Hanns Martin Schleyer. The “exchange value” of the hostage was considered far more important, and so the kidnappers were faced with the dilemma of hardly being able to utilize the knowledge they had gathered about Schleyer’s past for purposes of publicity and agitation. Stefan Wisniewski was 24 at the time and one of the leaders of the commando “on the scene.” In a telling 1977 interview with the Berlin newspaper *tageszeitung* he responded to the question of why the RAF had done nothing to exploit Schleyer’s past “for publicity purposes:”

“That was certainly a political mistake, but under the circumstances we didn’t want to humiliate him, or put him on display, because he was aware that the operation could have a lethal outcome for him. After all, Schleyer wasn’t a popular favorite and so we were also leery that he would no longer be worth exchanging if we cut him down even more. That’s why we also quickly discarded the idea of taking a picture of him with his SS number and a sign reading “A Prisoner of His Own History.” But in retrospect it amounted to an insane reversal: after his written and oral statements, Schleyer came to be seen exclusively as a family man, as a victim.”

All of these ideas about how the kidnapers could have crafted a better offensive based on Schleyer’s Nazi past are somewhat hypothetical. The RAF’s research and their interrogation of the abductee in the “people’s prison” had yielded little insight into Schleyer’s pre-1945 years over and above what was already known in leftist circles anyway. And indeed, in light of the horrid, defensive position in which he found himself any propaganda that drew on recent historical events, regardless of the truth it contained, would have been rather poorly received. Furthermore, the kidnapers had reckoned with a short “operation” that would wrap up in several days with a decision by the German government concerning the release of the prisoners in Stammheim. But then the affair began to drag on torturously and the commando had logistical worries other than devoting closer attention to the curriculum vitae of their hostage. Public perception increasingly focused on the image of a different Schleyer. In the Polaroids and later in the black and white videos with their scratchy sound tracks, a humiliated, deeply apathetic, tired-looking man could be seen, who had a sign hung around his neck reading “Prisoner of the RAF.” The longer his abduction lasted the more the majority of the viewing public, irrespective of their political views, projected itself into the situation of the victim.

To the extent a hostage is not an outright monster (in which case the person would not be a suitable abductee to begin with) the psychological process is inevitable: the sympathies lie with the individual who finds himself powerless in the concrete situation. People empathize with the victim’s family and friends. Indifference or the notorious “secret delight” that are surely prevalent initially in some people, give way to pure pity and sympathy. Once the people’s warriors had murdered their hostage they transformed the image of the executive Hanns Martin Schleyer even more, simultaneously rendering all the stereotypes of his

biography permanent. Ever since, the public memory of Schleyer's life has been defined by his demise. People remember a figure dressed in an undershirt, the man with the horn-rimmed glasses comes to mind, sending desperate messages to his wife and sons, to former political adversaries, to the German government, suspecting all the while that his efforts are in vain. People recall images of Chancellor Helmut Schmidt with his head bowed standing between the widow and her sons at the state ceremony while President Walter Scheel speaks the words, "We bow before the deceased. All of us are indebted to him. In the name of every German citizen I ask you, the family of Hanns Martin Schleyer, for forgiveness. The weeks we have lived through are certainly the darkest in the history of the Federal Republic."

Since "every German citizen" had therewith become beholden to the murdered business leader, all serious research into the biography of the man whom the state had sacrificed also abruptly came to a halt in 1977 – with one exception which will be discussed later on. Thus, the familiar categorizations along ideological lines remained intact: he was either "the boss of bosses" or the fair, dependable arbitrator in matters of social politics. In 1978 a conservative Stuttgart publisher, Seewald Verlag, released a book of condolence letters compiled by Father Heinrich Basilius Streithofen who was a friend of the family. The very nature of these expressions of sympathy elevated the deceased to a larger-than-life status: "a paragon of a forthright, brave and foresighted man who was consumed by his service to the people and society" (Johannes Binkowski, publishing association president at the time), "a model, a mediator for the economy" (Peter Tamm, Springer Verlag), "warm-hearted, charming, modest, helpful, humorous, devoid of all falsity, an unendingly diligent, smart, foursquare and upright man (Wilfried Guth, Deutsche Bank).

Schleyer's Ideas on "Political Education"

In the year of his conversation with President Metz of Freiburg University Schleyer's student political career in Heidelberg had reached its high point. As early as 1934 he had received an entry-level position in the office of "Arbeitsdienst und Landhilfe" (work service and rural aid), where his duties centered on coordinating student allocations in factories or in harvest assistance along the Reich's border areas. Beginning at Easter 1934 six months of work service became mandatory for all high school graduates with an Abitur, females included, prior to entering a university. During this period the future university students were monitored by leaders from the Reichsarbeitsdienst (RAD) (Reich Labor Service) and assessed for physical fitness and comradely "dependability." It was a practical test in the spirit of the new folk-community and consisted of paramilitary exercises and road or dike construction work. Complaints about the "corrupt, inhumane overall atmosphere" (Otto B. Roegele) within the RAD leadership corps were not infrequent, although there were also students who actually enjoyed the rough language and rubbing shoulders with "genuine workers." At any rate, Schleyer had already performed work service in 1933 in Schleiz entirely of his own free will, and signed on again in March 1936 for several weeks of student factory service at Heinrich Lanz AG in Mannheim, although the latter was more benign.

In 1935 his falling out with Suevia occupied Schleyer so completely that he was unable to participate in the common initiative of the student body to raise the profile of Heidelberg University in an academic sense as a "borderland university in the west of the German Reich." According to Heinz Franz, the Ruperto Carola¹ would no longer be "a gateway for invading western thought" but rather a "bastion of National Socialist will," that was "attuned through folkish bonds to demands from the East." Then, in 1936, Schleyer began working for the Studentenwerk (Student Services) and additionally advanced to the "Hauptstelle für studentischen Einsatz" (Head Office for Student Allocation) in the "Gaustudentenführung Baden" (Baden Regional Student Directorate). One year later, in the spring term of 1937, he became director of the offices of "Wirtschaft und Soziales" (Economic and Social Affairs) and "Politische Erziehung" (Political Education) in the Heidelberg Student Directorate, heading the Office of Economic Affairs in the Regional Student Directorate as well. Together with his friend Ballreich (now director of the office of "Wissenschaft und Facherverziehung")

¹ "Ruperto Carola" is an abbreviation for "Ruperto Carola Heidelbergensis," the Latin name of the University of Heidelberg.

(Academics and Professional Training) and the permanent deputy student leader Hans Tritt, who was pursuing a law degree, Schleyer now ruled the political campus in the City on the Neckar – particularly since student leader Kreuzer imitated Scheel’s martial diction but otherwise remained overshadowed by his predecessor. Schleyer had a gift for public speaking but hadn’t particularly taken to the written word. As director of political education and with a major student convention scheduled in 1937, he now also had to begin putting words on paper. Since the student fraternities were no longer contenders, the diffuse status of “Kameradschaftserziehung” (comradeship education) called for elucidation.

In the spring term of 1937 Schleyer published an article entitled “So soll der neue Student sein! Ziel und Sinn der studentischen Erziehung” (How the New Student Should Be! The Goal and Purpose of Student Education) in the first issue of the journal *Heidelberger Student*. Lower classmen arriving at the university often no longer had any idea of how “the student education and community reform developed.” Naturally, Schleyer drew on the remarks of Scheel who had delivered a policy speech on November 10, 1936, at Solitude Castle, stressing as one of his key objectives “the creation of a student community from which a new life style must emerge.” The “numerous conflicts” of the past “which in most cases were arguments over form anyway” had therefore “become immaterial,” in Schleyer’s interpretation.

“Student camaraderie” based on the “principles of voluntarism and selection” was the central theme at the core of student education work and fell under the purview of the National Socialist Student League which, “as a division of the Party, has been charged with ideological education.” Granted, the “final form” of the new student life style had not yet emerged, but it had to be shaped through the “spirit of the men” who lived together in the fraternities. “Thus, the ideas which inspired the original fraternities more than a century ago have become reality. Camaraderie, discipline, honor and an ultimate degree of readiness for political deployment are the foundations of our student fraternities and the standard of value for selection within them.”

Schleyer devoted special attention to the “mandatory granting of satisfaction,” especially since “the Führer himself” at the 10th anniversary of the National Socialist Student League had expressed the view “that honor could only be restored through blood.” The Student League would keep watch “that in the future points of honor would be treated with all necessary gravity,” while infractions of discipline which had no bearing on matters of honor

in the strict sense would be brought before the “student disciplinary court.” Schleyer defined student allocation in villages and factories as a type of practical test for the dueling by appointment which the Reich Student Führer had now designated exclusively “for settling points of honor.” “A person who has experienced the problem of folk and state on Germany’s eastern border or has come to understand the social question in a factory setting has not merely expanded his horizon superficially but, through his labor in such venues, has in a sense passed a test indicating that comradeship training in the previous semester was successful. Over and above that, in the case of factory service, for example, he will take justified pride that his deployment has provided additional vacation time for a worker in need of rest.”

Equalizing the individual fraternities would make no sense. The Student league need only provide “a political foundation for all fraternities through ideological education.” In any event, Schleyer rejected in the “most decisive terms” the type of person “who occasionally attempted to put himself forward and demonstrate revolutionary sentiments through inflated rhetoric and particularly ‘revolutionary’ deportment.” Likewise, those who “believe there is no longer time for humorous jest” would also “with time find themselves marginalized.”

The “Hochschulführer der Universität Heidelberg” (Heidelberg University Guide for the 1937 Spring Term) which was published by the Student Directorate reprinted this text under the title “Political Education,” although Schleyer had stiffened it through an additional passage:

“Selection also always means eradication. If all of the lower classmen who try their best to be National Socialists, for whom honor is inviolate, who stand ever ready to exert themselves in every way on behalf of the folk and the movement, find each other in the fraternities, there will automatically be no room left for those whose character or politics do not meet such standards. Thus, the question of leadership will also be resolved by the fraternity itself: he who has best proven his worth in the community for two terms will of necessity assume leadership.”

In the spring semester of 1937 Schleyer penned the feature article for No. 6 of *Heidelberger Student*. The occasion was the Reich working conference of German student leaders. As Ernst Kreuzer stressed in his foreword, the event stood under the sign of a “united, cohesive German student body with a strong external image.” Referring to the previous 550th anniversary celebration of Ruperto Carola, Kreuzer pointed out that Heidelberg was increasingly becoming “the city of German students.”

Schleyer now tried his hand at writing folkish history in the superlative-laden style of the day. “Every intellectual renewal movement, every folkish-political idea found German students ready to apply themselves selflessly and enlisted a fanatical vanguard there among those who were faithful to the oath that academic youth had sworn at Wartburg castle during times of dire humiliation: For Honor, Liberty, Fatherland, Unity and Justice.” He drew a line from the “soldiers of the wars of liberation,” those who “stormed the barricades in 1848,” naturally the “students of Langemarck” and, not last, “those who re-anchored these ideals in the German student body at the student convention in Würzburg following the Great War.”

Other than that he essentially reports his own text, published only a few weeks before in *Heidelberger Student*, with an additional reminder that every former member of a fencing fraternity had to reach a decision whether his student interests related narrowly to his own fraternity or whether they applied to “student education as such.” In Heidelberg the path of reason had been taken and, “it is our firm belief,” that “a satisfactory solution for both parties” had been found. Recapitulating his own experiences Schleyer writes, “If the conflicts were in part very vehement in this particular area,” the only possible explanation is that “a small minority lost sight of their task as students and believed that they could only hold their banner high – after all, it signified more than the existence of their own league – until the time of their own end had arrived.” To the honor of the Heidelberg student body, however, it had to be said that “these forces, particularly under the leadership of our comrade Scheel, had encountered a united front consisting of the student leadership and members of dueling fraternities.” Individual conflicts had been “treated with unjustifiable ado and had often been so distorted in the process,” so that “we must now all openly and candidly admit the mistakes we made.”

The banner of the Student League now flew above six houses. “The common initiative undertaken at the Axel Schaffeld Haus in Heidelberg during the spring term of 1934 by representatives of all fraternities and faculties, in order to make a new form of education possible and to permit the inclusion of all positive elements, has now become reality.” Now the common effort needed to focus on one goal only, namely “educating the German student body to become manful supporters of the National Socialist idea, of a National Socialist university and of National Socialist scholarship in the service of the nation.”

The Personnel Manager

The new position placed him on the employer side of the front line in the traditionally hotly contested North Württemberg-North Baden wage region. Several of the mightiest metalworking companies, Mercedes, Bosch and Porsche along with numerous subcontractors in close proximity, were located along the mid-Neckar River and in the heavily populated surroundings of Mannheim. Given the high level of union organization in his firm – roughly 90% of the blue-collar and 40-50% of the white collar workers – the role of spokesman automatically fell to the representative of Daimler. From this time on and with his own particular type of verve and perseverance Schleyer developed a penchant for smoky, beer-saturated, sometimes dreaded rounds of negotiation that lasted until the break of dawn. His portentous, public typecasting as a “tough customer” and a “hard-liner” began to take shape during this phase. At the same time he was formulating the theoretical components of his view of the “entrepreneur as a model for society,” as a patriarchal “high-level, fully developed personality who had an exemplary effect,” (*Berliner Zeitung*) not merely on his own employees, but in a higher sense on the people as a whole. Responding to a question from *Spiegel* in May 1970, “Isn’t it hubris to presume, so to speak, that company management knows, either through insight or a dispensation of Providence, what is best for the common weal?” Schleyer countered nebulously: “We have never presumed to have infallible knowledge of what lies in the interest of the general public and the community as a whole at a given time. We merely experienced a sense of obligation – and I continue to experience it today – that we must make an effort to serve the interests of the community as a whole at a given time.”

In reality he equated freedom primarily with free enterprise, the object being to preserve a position for the entrepreneur somewhere above democratic institutions. “So in a sense that also amounted to a declaration of war on the parliamentary system,” Stern reporter Kai Hermann characterized Schleyer’s positions. “The entrepreneur ranked higher than parliament and had to intervene if parliament made a wrong decision.” Schleyer actually preferred the holistic business philosophy of welfare capitalism, casting a vote – based on his experiences under National Socialism – in favor of people-oriented business practices and management which went beyond mere technocracy and profit maximization. At Mercedes, the entire corporate culture with its mixture of Swabian punctiliousness, pride in the art of engineering,

brand awareness and sense of identity, was tailored to this concept. “Those are traditions the workers were proud of,” commented Franz Steinkühler, later head of IG Metall (German Metalworkers Trade Union). “For many years a person who worked for Daimler had something like a life insurance policy on a secure job. That was worth something, and people were willing to give in return. They invested themselves in the company.” The well-paid skilled laborers at Daimler who built their own homes were regarded as prototypes of the “labor aristocracy” which later garnered reproach from the Left. Up until the 1970s (when the rebellious “Plakat-Gruppe” (poster group) formed around Willi Hoss) Daimler plants were dominated by completely docile and dependable union functionaries. A pronounced sense of company community, the stability offered by a common geographical background, and the haven of the central office in Stuttgart suited Schleyer very well. He would put in a showing at anniversaries and Christmas parties, founded SG Stern, the company sports club (“his in-company hobby”), “ran around in a sweater over there” (Arnd Schleyer) and sought contact with his people. He did whatever lay within his power to promote employee identification with the corporation and was genuinely pleased when a delegation from SG Stern appeared on his birthday. Arnd Schleyer sums up: “For him, Daimler was a forum that offered an opportunity to fulfill or address his every idea. Between Daimler and my father there was a regular synergistic connection.”

Observers at the time agree that Schleyer’s in-house continuing education program had a lasting effect on corporate policy. In this context his name is still associated with “Lämmerbuckel.” Schleyer took what was originally a recreation home on the Schwäbische Alb for “apprentices of modest means,” and beginning in 1953 also for long-standing employees in need of rest, and equipped a secluded operations center for his in-company training program. “I was at Lämmerbuckel,” could soon be heard in administrative offices and factory halls when, beginning in 1956, Daimler’s junior staff was sent off to Schleyer’s 14-day social and pedagogical get-togethers.

Primarily, this affected a small circle of “executives with above-average qualifications who appeared suited for tasks entailing greater responsibility.” Future department heads were sent to the so-called “Daimler-Benz Seminar” which was one of Schleyer’s first initiatives and remains the centerpiece of continuing executive education to the present day. In addition to a “free exchange of contacts” between senior employees and representatives of the public sector, the goal of the training program, according to Richard Osswald’s *“Arbeitswelt,”* was

also the selection of candidates “who had sufficiently well-evolved inner structures which would allow them to function as independent personalities and credible representatives of the current economic and social order, and enable them to develop it further in the future.” This helped “high-potential individuals to receive the support needed to achieve personal growth and concrete professional development,” although ordinary trainees were also invited to Lämmerbuckel. The seminar curriculum from a course for commercial apprentices in April 1958 reflects Schleyer’s holistic educational approach to “continuing personality development.” In addition to introductions to Daimler history, the “Organism of a Major Corporation,” “Market Economy” and “Currency,” the program included early morning exercises, “Song and Games,” hiking, “Slides of South Tyrol,” and a dubious evening get-together billed as “You and the Girls.” At times, the lessons were more theoretical with headings like “What is Democracy?,” “Communism,” or “Reunification and You.” Thus, basic ideological training was also included. And with evening film presentations such as “Amerikas Weg zur Freiheit” (America’s Road to Freedom) or, interestingly, “Tanz in die Freiheit. Dresden, Böhmen und Mähren” (Dancing to Freedom. Dresden, Bohemia and Moravia) the school day often never drew to a close. There was bowling, drinking and discussions that sometimes lasted into the morning hours, and Schleyer thrived on it, just as he had in the world of fraternities. Participants such as later Personnel Director Wolfgang Hirschbrunn long recalled Schleyer’s paternal management style, which was also defined through the congenial male company in the evenings at Lämmerbuckel:

“Acquaintances were made, and he enjoyed that. At the time, Schleyer was a senior board member and I was a staff worker, so it was surprising that we were conversing as equals: he would let me have my say. If you occasionally disagreed with him, then he would look at you with a kindly expression and say, ‘Some day, my young friend, you’ll see things my way.’”

In contrast to the public ritual of confrontational wage negotiations, Schleyer the social politician presented his benevolent side. Employee motivation, human warmth within one’s own company and a sympathetic attitude were apparently close to his heart. “He had a strong attachment to the company as a social affiliation,” in the words of Kurt Biedenkopf. “As he always said, he stood by his people. He was a leader of people.” Schleyer’s social policy accomplishments within the company soon resulted in the management camp designating him a “progressive social democrat,” tongue in cheek. In the words of Daimler supervisory board member Eberhard von Brauchitsch, “Early on we adopted a principle which is common

currency everywhere today, namely ‘A company is only as good as its employees; the employees are its most valuable asset.’ ” This “other” Schleyer extended home construction loans, disbursed financial support and stopgap assistance, established the Daimler-Benz Relief Fund and took up the cause of capital accumulation benefits. On June 9, 1976, *Zürcher Weltwoche* wrote, “Thus, he was one of the motors driving the 1961 employee capital formation law and furthering its application. His interest focuses on shaping modern employment law, which he in no way wishes to see applied with partiality to the employer.” In keeping with Schleyer’s concept of “gentle capitalism,” Benz AG regularly issued employee stock at a preferential price beginning in 1973. When it came to employee participation in productive capital, Schleyer, the “people’s capitalist” (*Berliner Zeitung*), sided with Deutsche Bank chairman Hermann Josef Abs who had been one of the concept’s sponsors in the late 1950s. “A capitalist system where only several dozen people participate – or 1,000 – will not be championed by the population as a whole. It has to involve millions and millions, in my opinion.” By the end of 1977 some 31,000 Daimler employees had acquired more than 77,100 employee shares at a preferred price of DM 262.00.

Personnel manager Schleyer also did not forget his old cronies. His Party comrade Kurt Dickerhof, former aide-de-camp to the Reich Student Führer, had remained on friendly terms with him and in 1969 rose to the position of “Président du Directoire,” the top job at Mercedes Benz France. In the late 1950s, Heidelberg attorney Klaus Huegel, a member of the SS from 1933, specialist for Switzerland and Italy in Department VI of the Head Office for Reich Security and ultimately commander of the security police for greater Verona, became personnel manager at Porsche Diesel Motorenbau GmbH in Friedrichshafen. Schleyer’s sons Arnd and Jörg report that he subsequently became director of the Daimler-Benz Museum in Stuttgart. And one further person wound up on the Daimler payroll due to the good offices of Schleyer. On January 25, 1956, his mentor in Prague, Bernhard Adolf, was released from a Czech prison and deported to the FRG. According to his son, Bernhard Adolf, Jr., he began receiving free-lance assignments from Daimler-Benz the same year. From 1959 to 1962 Adolf served as general manager of Alfons Zieren GmbH, a Cologne-based manufacturer of chemical plants. When he was buried in January 1977 Schleyer held a graveside oration.*

* After 1945 Schleyer was a close friend of ex-SS Hauptsturmführer and Ribbentrop staff member Albert Prinzing, who had parlayed his relationship to school friend Ferry Porsche into a top management position at Stuttgart’s second major automobile manufacturer.

Prinzing, too, was employed at Porsche Diesel Motorenbau (as general manager), then at AEG, and finally became CEO of Osram. “That was one of his best friends,” Waltrude Schleyer confirms. Schleyer’s son Jörg remembers the nickname “Alberto” for Prinzing, who was knowledgeable about Italy.