

Matter 3

Summary

Interesting Gods

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Report

Prof. Dr. med. Peter Richter
Consultant psychiatrist

CONFIDENTIAL PSYCHIATRIC REPORT

On

Karin Fuchs

(date of birth 1937-02-15)

Instruction

This preliminary psychiatric assessment has been prepared at the instruction of Schreiber Vogt

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Rechtsanwälte of Hamburg, who represent Miss Fuchs.

Miss Fuchs is charged with three counts of Criminal Offences Dangerous to the Public, leading to eight counts of Homicide and 39 of Causing Bodily Harm. There are two separate charges of Criminal Offences against Public Order.

The purpose of this report is to assist the Court in understanding Miss Fuchs' mental state. The defence seeks to clarify Miss Fuchs':

- decision-making concerning her alleged activities;
- ability to form the intent necessary to have undertaken these activities;
- current diagnosis and prognosis of medical care;
- likelihood of receiving a fair trial in the light of her condition.

Introduction

I am Prof. Dr. med. Peter Richter, consultant psychiatrist.

I am currently approved as having special experience in the diagnosis of mental disorder. I qualified as a doctor in 1954 and became a consultant in 1963. My specialism is the assessment and treatment of high-risk adult offenders with mental disorders, particularly in the area of fitness to plead.

I confirm that I understand my duty to the Court in writing this report. I believe that the facts contained within it are true.

Confidentiality

Miss Fuchs has been made aware that the usual guarantee of client confidentiality could not be given because this report may subsequently be made available to the Court.

Sources of Information

- Instructions from Schreiber Vogt Rechtsanwälte dated 1970-03-26.
- Three two-hour interviews with Miss Fuchs at the pre-trial detention centre, Lübeck, in the mornings of 1970-05-05, 1970-05-07 and 1970-05-12.
- A 45-minute telephone conversation with Dr Ernst Fuchs, Miss Fuchs' father, in the evening of 1970-05-13.

Note that I am unable to corroborate all the information told me by Miss Fuchs or Dr Fuchs. If it is incomplete or inaccurate, this may affect my assessment and recommendations.

Family Background

Miss Fuchs told me that there is no history of mental illness in her family. Her father confirmed this.

She is an only child. Both her parents were biochemists. Her mother died in 1946 in a labora-

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tory accident; her father, now retired, is still alive albeit in frail health.

Miss Fuchs is unmarried but has a partner, Dieter Hofmann, with whom she had a son. Her present crisis was precipitated by her son's death, aged four. While playing, he found one of his mother's handguns, loaded it as he had seen her do, then accidentally discharged it while looking down the barrel.

Development

Neither Miss Fuchs nor her father could recollect any instances of poor health during her childhood. She reached most early milestones (such as being able to walk and to talk) well before the majority of children.

She grew up in the town of Bargteheide, Schleswig-Holstein. She told me that she had a happy childhood, with Bargteheide being less affected by the war than were the bigger cities.

The most traumatic event to affect her development was the death of her mother when Miss Fuchs was aged nine. She told me that this was devastating and that it was several years before she fully came to terms with it.

Education

Miss Fuchs attended the local schools of Bargteheide. She told me that she was almost always at the top of her class. She said that she got on well with her schoolfriends and was able to

avoid being drawn into the cliques that formed and reformed among many of her peers.

She spent most school holidays with her maternal grandparents in Bad Oldesloe, some 15km from Bargteheide.

After leaving school, Miss Fuchs attended the Christian-Albrecht University of Kiel, which was in the process of being reconstructed on its present site following the original site's destruction by bombing in the war. She told me that her association with the politics of revolution began during this phase of her life.

Employment

Upon graduating in 1958 with a 1.0 degree in physics, Miss Fuchs was encouraged to undertake a master's degree but declined to do so. She told me that she had had enough of education and wanted to get out into the real world. To this end, she took a job in operations management at the port of Hamburg.

Miss Fuchs told me that although she excelled at this and was promoted several times, she found the work boring and was not happy. She nevertheless remained in place until the day in 1965 when she affixed explosives to one of the port's chemical storage tanks. One person died and seven were injured in the resulting blast.

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Relationships

Miss Fuchs describes herself as heterosexual. She said that she had formed several relationship, two of them serious, before meeting Mr Hofmann in 1964.

She was critical of Mr Hofmann in his attitude to their child. She had wanted the pregnancy, but Mr Hofmann had been ambivalent. He had shown no interest in fatherhood, which Miss Fuchs said she found increasingly frustrating. Other than this, she was supportive of him and spoke of him positively.

Character

Miss Fuchs was reluctant to make statements about her own personality and enduring character. Her rationale for this was that following the death of her son, she didn't know who she was any more. She evaded even direct questions, such as whether she would describe herself as an introvert or an extrovert. She had no qualms about ascribing such qualities to other people, only to herself.

She did confess to having a very good understanding of her own thinking.

Dependencies

Miss Fuchs told me that she does not smoke and does not drink alcohol. She said that she has never tried recreational drugs. She asserts that she is against them in principle, because they impair thought.

Offences

Miss Fuchs was insistent that she had never committed an offence of any kind prior to causing the explosion at Hamburg docks. She said that she had been a well-behaved child, and although curious about the world around her, was not so reckless as to break the law.

Although Miss Fuchs is a prominent member of the left-wing urban guerrilla group known as Red Protest (which grew out of the 1968 student protests), she professes that she has no interest – and furthermore never has had any interest – in the politics of revolution as such. Her driving motivation was to cause disruption and chaos. She formed Red Protest with Mr Hofmann as a means to an end. She stressed that, unlike herself, Mr Hofmann is totally committed to the group's stated political ideals.

Physical Health

Miss Fuchs is a 33-year-old woman in good physical health.

She told me that she had experienced no problems during either pregnancy or childbirth, even though at the time she had been on the run from the police and therefore unable to receive medical advice.

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Mental Health

Miss Fuchs told me that she has never had any form of mental health problem – depression, anxiety, psychosis, personality issues or anything else. She said that I was the first psychiatrist ever to assess her. She considers herself to be a mentally stable and resilient individual.

Current Mental State

In my interviews, I observed no indications of mental health problems in Miss Fuchs. Modulo the necessities of her incarceration, her appearance was neither dishevelled nor unduly fastidious. She made full eye contact, breaking it only when in thought. She exhibited no perceptual difficulties.

There were no abnormal changes in her behaviour, such as restlessness or sudden changes in levels of activity. She showed no obsession with details and no vagueness other than when invited to comment on her own personality.

She engages fully with conversation. She does not embellish answers with half-truths. She neither rambles nor gives single-word replies except when appropriate.

She described her mood as fatalistic. She said that she had handed herself in to the police but expected to be shown little mercy by the Court. She explained that she had internalised her situation and was resigned to it. For this reason, she said that she did not feel despondent or dejected;

rather, she felt as if a great weight had been lifted from her.

In undirected conversation, she spoke mainly of her parents, of whom she was proud, and of her (deceased) grandparents on her mother's side, whom she missed dearly. She did not attempt to paint her family history as being either distinguished or humble.

The Question of Decision-Making Regarding her Alleged Activities

Miss Fuchs freely accepts that's she committed the offences of which she is accused.

Nothing suggests that Miss Fuchs did not know what she was doing when she committed these violent acts. However, her stated reason for why she committed them is strongly indicative of a delusory state of mind.

Delusion can take many forms – of persecution, of grandeur, of love, of jealousy, of ill health – but Miss Fuchs' delusion is in the rare category of the bizarre delusion.

I shall now summarise what she holds to be true.

Miss Fuchs maintains that the world was created by gods who have lost interest in it. Her evidence for this is that for more than two thousand years no gods have walked among us. She does not know who these gods are or were, nor does she care; she does not worship them. The important point, about which her philosophy is

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centred, is that these same gods, who created the world, will uncreate it unless it becomes interesting to them.

Miss Fuchs continues to maintain that this characterisation of reality is accurate, but now questions how she acted upon it.

She told me that through her terrorist activities, she strove to add chaos and drama to the world, that the gods might notice. This, she believed, would give them reason to allow the world to continue to exist.

Miss Fuchs asserts that she surrendered to the police because she now believes this strategy to have been counter-productive. Her crisis of faith was, she told me, precipitated by the death of her son: having experienced first-hand the suffering that death brings to the living, she repudiated the idea that the gods would find it stimulating.

She claims that she had been concerned for some time that her cause was misguided. If the events of the war had not led to the reappearance of the gods, she had wondered what manner of disruption would. She concluded that the world would have to be engulfed by a nuclear apocalypse to make the gods take notice. Destroying the world in order to save it did not, however, seem to her to be a desirable solution. Would not a devastated world give the gods greater, not lesser, cause to end it?

Miss Fuchs insisted that despite these doubts, she kept following her path because she wanted a

future for her son. His death brought about much soul-searching. She felt that she had lived her whole adult life in vain, following a cause that she still believed but now no longer believed in. Her existence had lost its meaning. She no longer cared whether the world was to be ended by the gods or by mankind.

When asked how these beliefs had originated, she advanced that she had been taught them as a child by her parents and grandparents. Although legions of others also knew the truth, she was not to speak of the matter in public because then self-interested forces would try to prevent her from saving the world.

Had the nature of Miss Fuchs' crisis been provoked by, say, disillusionment with the politics of revolution, then I could state with confidence that she was dealing with the effects of a breakdown in her worldview caused by unsustainable cognitive dissonance. This is not the case, though. Put succinctly, Miss Fuchs has become disillusioned with what is itself a delusion.

It is therefore my opinion that Miss Fuchs was indeed competent to make decisions regarding her criminal activities, but that the foundational basis for making these decisions was a falsehood that she believed to be the truth.

The Question of Ability to Form Intent

Other than mental conditions (such as alcohol abuse) that I have already dismissed, two dominate

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the proposition that an adult defendant is unable to form criminal intent. These conditions are manic depression and schizophrenia.

Miss Fuchs shows no signs of either depression or mania. Furthermore, the events in which she participated are not spaced in such a way as to indicate cyclical problems.

Bizarre delusions, while rare, are nevertheless a recognised symptom of schizophrenia. Other symptoms should also be present, however, and in Miss Fuchs' case they are not. She does not experience hallucinations, disorganised thinking, apathy, social withdrawal or any of the lesser indicators that such a diagnosis would require.

It is therefore not my opinion that Miss Fuchs would have been unable to form the necessary intent to commit the acts of which she is accused.

The Question of Diagnosis and Prognosis

It is my opinion that Miss Fuchs is suffering from long-term psychosis.

I contacted Miss Fuchs' father, Dr Ernst Fuchs, by telephone so as to learn what he knew of his daughter's claims. In his reply, he stated that as a child, his daughter had created many make-believe worlds, which imaginative children often do. He did remember one of them that involved gods who wanted to end the world, which at the time he had hypothesised she had constructed to help her to make sense of the war; it was, however, but one

story among many, all of which she had abandoned before her teens.

Drawing on Dr Fuchs' recollections, my analysis is as follows.

As a child, Miss Fuchs invented many imaginary worlds. Although she did outgrow most of them, the death of her mother was devastating to the nine-year-old Miss Fuchs. She held onto one idea, about a universe that could be ended at any moment by capricious gods, and incorporated it into her world view. This enabled her to project an aura of normality while giving her a secret internal demon upon which to vent her many frustrations concerning the injustices she saw about her.

As an adult, while knowing that her by-now extensive fiction was just that, a fiction, it nevertheless had come to form a sufficiently potent part of her sense of identity that she attached herself to a lifestyle which enabled her to live it out. That the consequences of indulging these imaginings led directly to the death of her son, she found unbearable. To escape this truth, she did as she had done before: she retreated into herself. Only by accepting her fictional world as real was she able to absolve herself of responsibility for her son's death. She could frame it as a tragic accident arising from the pursuit of a noble ideal, rather than as an all-too-real consequence of acting out a self-indulgent fantasy.

It is my opinion, therefore, that Miss Fuchs' subconscious mind has acted to save her conscious

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mind. She has a rational, integrated and stable identity as a result, but is now possessed of a genuine belief that her tale is true. Were she ever to be disabused of this, there would be grave consequences for her sanity.

The Question of a Fair Trial

My answer to this question is framed by my answers to the other questions in this report, most cogently the question of diagnosis and prognosis.

It is not my opinion that Miss Fuchs would be either unable to plead, unable to understand evidence or unable to give instructions to her legal counsel. It is my opinion that to do so would have dangerous repercussions for her state of mind, and for this reason she should not stand trial.

While Miss Fuchs gives every appearance of being of sound mind, it is my opinion that were she to be cross-examined then her every response would be delivered through the lens of her imagined reality. In the event that she did not disintegrate mentally as a result of such an assault on her core beliefs, it would not take the Court long to conclude, as I do, that she is a more suited to spend her days in a psychiatric hospital than in a prison.

P. Richter

Prof. Dr. med. Peter Richter
Consultant psychiatrist

Notes

Translated from the German by Dr Krista Weiß, Aug 1970. The original document was destroyed in a fire that consumed the offices of Schreiber Vogt Rechtsanwälte the night of 21 Sep 1970.

Peter Richter was killed by a hit-and-run driver 2 Sep 1970.

Karin Fuchs died 28 August 1970 in a shoot-out with police during a failed rescue attempt by her partner, Dieter Hofmann. Hofmann himself died of his wounds two days later.