

HANNELORE KOHL FOUND DEAD

Oggersheim, July 5, 2001



Hannelore KOHL, 68, wife of former Chancellor Helmut KOHL, was found dead in the couple's apartment in Oggersheim today. She had suffered since 1993 from a severe allergy to any form of bright light, thought to have been the result of penicillin treatment.

Almost unable to go outside because of the illness, she was even prevented from accompanying her husband to the recent wedding of their son Peter in Turkey. EPP President Wilfried MARTENS sent condolences on behalf of the EPP and the wider Christian Democratic family.

Helmut KOHL's office later issued a statement saying she had committed suicide. Hannelore had been a virtual prisoner indoors, having to spend the last 15 months "without daylight in her house" and could only go out in total darkness, the statement said.

As her pain worsened, she was given stronger medication, but medical treatment could not reverse the disease: "Due to the hopelessness of her health situation, she decided to end her life of her own free will. She conveyed this decision in farewell letters to her husband, her sons and friends."

Doctors in Germany and abroad failed to alleviate the extremely rare ailment, the statement said.

The family tragedy came as a court in Berlin ruled that Stasi secret police files - 2,000 pages of notes and phone-tap transcripts - on the former Chancellor would remain closed, posing a threat to his 'privacy and dignity'.

Hannelore Kohl married the future Chancellor in 1960 and stood firmly by his side throughout a long political career - party leader in 1973, and Chancellor from 1982 to 1998 - and the slush fund scandal that enveloped him after he was voted out of office in 1988.

"We survived World War Two. We will also cope with this," she said.

Condolences poured in from Kohl's political friends such as EPP President Wilfried MARTENS, an ally over many years, and from political adversaries. Chancellor Gerhard SCHRÖDER, who wished Kohl and the couple's two sons 'courage and strength to live with this terrible loss.'

Hannelore Kohl founded a charity for helping accident victims who had suffered brain damage, one of her main distractions from her debilitating illness. She was also a talented cook and writer on cooking.

She was born in Berlin on March 7, 1933, the daughter of an engineer from Rhineland-Palatinate. She grew up in Leipzig. After 1945 her family moved west.