

## THE DEATH SPOT AT KILOMETRE 7.5

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Kilometre stone 7.5 on the national road 75 from Hamburg to Bremen has an evil reputation. Among car drivers it is known as "the death spot of Tostedt." One day an English captain was killed here on the spot, after collision with a tree, without apparent reason on the perfectly straight asphalted road. Since then reports have come in one after the other without cessation: dozens of accidents must have happened at the same place, and this seemed a mystery as there was a clear view of the road which was without any irregularities.

August Wrede, head of the police in Lüneberg, knows the secret. These disasters are no mystery to him. For some time he was stationed at Tostedt, and he then took it upon himself to study this problem. He has no doubt whatever that strong subterranean magnetic forces are at work there, which he calls "death rays." August Wrede has occupied himself for 27 years with the problem of the diviner's rod. He can bring forward a whole range of documents, officially confirmed, which certify that his indications of underground water are invariably accurate. He has pointed out spots for digging wells not only for numerous farmsteads but for a number of waterworks as well. At the Tostedt death spot his rod reacted so strongly that he could hardly hold it in his hand. "If in a moment of weakness," said he, "a driver should not hold the steering wheel firmly here, then death awaits him." Wrede is also convinced that people who regularly sleep in a bed under which there runs a concealed stream of water, may be liable to severe illness, notably cancer.

The little village of Tostedt lies close to the crossing of national roads 3 and 75. At the spot where the accidents occur the road surface is in first class condition, without potholes to which the accidents could be ascribed. But in Wrede's opinion the line of a stream crosses here from South to North. On one occasion a few police officers and journalists and the local government surveyor accompanied Wrede to Tostedt for personal observation of the enchanted spot. The results of their investigations were convincing, almost sensational. The company debated whether the driver or the vehicle was influenced by the "death rays" from the underground stream. Wrede was of the opinion that it was the driver. To put this to the proof it was finally decided to run a car slowly over the death spot, without the driver steering. The government surveyor and a police officer sat in the car. To everyone's stupefaction the car swerved from its line and ran

towards the line of trees at the side of the road at the exact spot where Wrede had made a mark eight metres in breadth. This experiment was several times repeated with others sitting in the car, and still the same thing happened; the car deviated from its course at the suspected spot and ran in the direction of the suspected stream, not only approximately but within a hair's breadth of the "bank of the stream" and it did this nowhere else than at this spot.

August Wrede won then, but he could not convince his brother policemen. As was their duty as bureaucrats they drew up formal proceedings, and made a weak case for Wrede. That is to say they proved that the accidents which were reported in the past year on highway 75 were fairly evenly distributed along the whole stretch. Their reports showed five accidents in a north-easterly direction from Tostedt, and for all of these the police could find quite natural causes: "Swerves due to skids on wet roads," "Skids in snow," "collisions." The only case remaining was the fatal accident of the English captain. This actually happened in the line of the water stream at kilometre 7.5. But, say the police, although a cause cannot be assigned, this does not shut out the possibility of natural causes. It is, however, too soon to conclude that the accident was caused by the influence of rays.

The death spot of Tostedt is not the only one in Germany. There are others, for example, the well-known kilometre stone 23.9 on the road from Bremen to Bremerhaven, which was publicised on the occasion of an accident to Olfer, the President of the Landtag of Lower Saxony. In three years nineteen cars and seven motor bicycle accidents have occurred there. It has been considered whether warning notices should be placed at these and like spots, but the police cannot make up their minds about this, as they think that too many notices will dull the wits. But the spot at Tostedt will come to notice in future, and the causes of accidents happening there will be submitted to an especially critical examination. However, the police cannot decide the question. Only exact scientific investigations on a wide basis may be able to give results which would be of practical importance.

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