
Heinz Stahlschmidt – the German Sailor Who Saved Bordeaux

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Heinz Stahlschmidt

Heinz Stahlschmidt, a renegade former member of Germany's World War Two navy, who thwarted plans to wreck the French port of Bordeaux by retreating Nazi forces, has died at the age of 91, officials said. Thanks to Andy Hall at the [Maritime Texas Blog](#) for pointing it out.

[Renegade German war hero who saved French port dies](#)

Heinz Stahlschmidt was serving as a petty officer in the Kriegsmarine when he was ordered to help prepare the destruction of the southwestern city's port facilities as the Germans pulled out ahead of advancing allied troops.

Instead, he set off an explosion in the bunker holding detonators and time fuses for the planned demolition, preventing mass carnage in the port area and, according to some historians, possibly saving up to 3,500 lives.

Stahlschmidt, who was long considered a traitor in postwar Germany, stayed in Bordeaux, taking the name Henri Salmide and working in the port fire department. But he struggled for a long time to win recognition in his adopted country.

"My family were Huguenots (protestant Christians) and I acted according to my Christian conscience," Stahlschmidt told Reuters in a rare interview in 1997.

"I could not accept that the port of Bordeaux be wantonly destroyed when the war was clearly lost," he said.

Stahlschmidt said he blew up the bunker after being contacted by the Resistance who promised to hide and protect him in France in return.

He received the Legion d'Honneur in 2000 and wore the decoration when he revisited his home city of Dortmund for the first time in 2001, the local Sud Ouest daily reported.

A spokeswoman for the Bordeaux mayor's office said he would be buried at the city's Protestant cemetery on Saturday where a representative of the city hall would be in attendance

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