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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
SOURCES METHOD EXEMPTION 3828
NAZI WAR CRIMES DISCLOSURE ACT
DATE 2006

13 September 1966

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

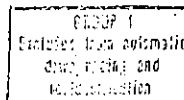
SUBJECT: Debriefing of Colonel Alfons REBANE, []
For HEINE/RAUS Case

1. Contact with Colonel REBANE was set up in August via two channels: (a) [] talked to SMOTH [] concerning our desire to debrief REBANE, with particular reference to any knowledge he might have from [] which might reflect on HEINE's biography, and (b) [] Aleks KURGVEL. KURGVEL is acquainted with REBANE and has talked to him during the latter's visit to the U.S. At my request he wrote him from Washington on 19 August to determine his availability for a meeting with "an American friend". He received an affirmative reply, after which he wrote a second letter giving REBANE my ETA, and he also gave me a letter of introduction to hand carry to REBANE. These letters were in Estonian, and English translations are in the file for record purposes.
2. During my meeting with [] and [] at [] on 30 August, [] dictated a letter to REBANE (whom he addressed as [] introducing me as [] and assuring REBANE that he could talk freely about his experiences [] A copy of [] letter is likewise in the file.
3. Finally I carried with me a brief note from RAUS in Estonian assuring REBANE that I was a good friend of the Estonian people, or words to that effect.
4. Arrangements were made in Munich Ops Base on 1 September for use of a safe-house in case I should be able to persuade REBANE to come to Munich for extensive debriefings. I then proceeded to Augsburg and went directly to his home. His address is:

Herr Alfons Rebane
89 Augsburg-Kriegshaber
Schmutterstrasse 20/I

The street is in a quiet residential area, although the house is next door to a small automobile work-shop. REBANE lives on the []

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second floor of a two-family private house complete with garden, balcony, and a good view of the nearby American Army Caserne. REBANE greeted me at the door and introduced me to his wife, a lady of 50 plus, heavy set, hausfrau type. She then left us and the conversation proceeded mainly in English with some German and Russian also used. It should be noted that REBANE speaks English quite well but his thoughts do not flow very freely in the language, and in our later debriefings we used Russian and German. I presented my three letters and he accepted my bona-fides without question, waving aside my AGO card. I told him that the purpose of the visit was to consult with him on certain aspects of HEINE's biography and particularly with that period of HEINE's life relating to his service in the partisan movement (1946-50) about which REBANE could conceivably comment knowledgeably [I told him that I had with me a colleague who had studied the HEINE case in detail, and I proposed that he come to Munich where we would sit down with documents and maps and perform a minute analysis of HEINE's biography.

5. REBANE was, of course, familiar with the current lawsuit. He stated that he had met HEINE twice, once during his 1961 visit to the U.S. and again during his 1964 visit. From what he heard about HEINE's biography he had been extremely suspicious from the start and had pretty much determined that HEINE must have been recruited somewhere along the way by the RIS. He had passed on his suspicions to a couple of people during his visits to the U.S. He felt that RAUS had been somewhat brash and too direct in his tactical handling of his AIS mission to pass on to the Estonian emigration a warning about HEINE, and he remarked that RAUS should be more like his father. (RAUS' father was an Estonian Army captain and REBANE knew him well.) At this stage his analysis of HEINE was that he had a hero complex. He said that there were plenty of Estonians who had signed pledges to work for the RIS in exchange for an agreement to repatriate to Germany during the early days of the war or to be released from POW captivity in the 1950's, and once in the "Free West" had immediately admitted their forced agreement to work for the Soviets and wanted nothing more to do with them. At this stage he felt that HEINE could easily fall into this category, but felt that he was too proud and too much of a "hero" to confess. (NOTE: After 4 days with REBANE his opinion changed considerably.)

6. REBANE's history, or at least most of it, is contained in a report prepared by RAUS in May 1966 and attached hereto. The

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following brings it up to date from 1944 to the present: REBANE commanded the 46th Regiment of the 20th Grenadier Division (1st Estonian) during the battles with the advancing Red Army in August-September 1944, first on the Narva front and later in the final defeat of the Estonians below Tartu. The broken elements of the three regiments (45th, 46th, and 47th) retreated from Estonia, crossing into Latvia on 24 September and thence through Lithuania and East Prussia to Camp Neuhammer in Silesia and the 20th Division was reformed in October 1944 with approximately 10 or 12,000 men in three under-strength regiments. They trained until mid-January then were sent to Opel where they saw action against the advancing Red Army and at the end of hostilities in May 1945 were in Hirschberg. After the capitulation most of the men made their way west through Czechoslovakia and wound up in southern Germany. My notes show nothing for the following period until REBANE emigrated to England in 1947. He started to work [

Baltic States which terminated in 1955-56. [] however, until 1958. At this point he says that with the increase of trade relations between the British and the USSR he believes that there was [

[] the best that was offered him was work as a bus conductor. He refused this and went on the dole, while his wife took some menial work to help things along. REBANE's elderly mother and father are still alive in England but he nevertheless decided in 1961 to return to Germany where it would cost him much less to live. He is now employed in his own home doing translations for "private German firms" in various languages. He has native Estonian, German, and Russian, very passable English and good Latvian and Polish as well. [

[] came out somewhat more strongly later in our meetings after we had had a few drinks. He now makes some 1,000 to 1,300 DM per month from his translations and manages to struggle along, since his life is fairly simple and quiet. He says that as a "Ritterkreuztraeger" he will be eligible for early pension from the German Army, and this should provide him an additional 1,000 to 1,500 DM monthly, which will considerably change his economic situation. (COMMENT: When I later spoke to [] in Hamburg he told me that he believes that REBANE had been aided in returning to Germany by Dr. Hjalmar MAE who now resides in Graz, Austria and was titular head of the Estonian Government under the German occupation. [] knew MAE quite well during

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his Vienna assignment and MAE once told him that he had not only helped REBANE to return to Germany but had made it possible for him to work as a translator "for the Germans". [] believes therefore that the "private firms" are probably in fact the BND.)

7. As to any other current contacts with German intelligence REBANE volunteered nothing, except that he related an incident when he had been called to Bonn by the Ministry of Defense to debrief a returning German Army officer who had served in Estonia and about whom the Germans had certain suspicions. REBANE debriefed him, wrote a report showing that the man had almost certainly been recruited by the RIS and then departed. He doesn't know what the Germans did about it. Thus from these two small elements we can assume that he could have some current connection with the BND, or even the BFV. There is no particular reason to trace him with them at the present time.

8. On 2 and 3 September REBANE came to Munich where we spent all day with him both days in the safehouse at Herzogstrasse #80. We were driven to the safehouse the first day by [] of MOB, who was introduced to REBANE as [] but was introduced in the operational alias []" but REBANE paid no attention to the name, obviously assuming that it would not be a true name. Throughout our talks I addressed [] as [], which REBANE would remember. On 5 September, [] and I travelled to Augsburg for a final session with him and also to take care of some administrative business. During our analysis of the HEINE biography we started right from the beginning and used the several sources of information and documentation available to us, going over HEINE's biography in great detail. I read pieces of HEINE's deposition in English but our conversation and analysis was almost entirely in Russian. (REBANE went to a Russian gymnasium in Estonia and remarked that every Estonian Army officer had to be absolutely fluent in Russian for his job.) [] took notes, and his report of REBANE's comments is attached hereto.

9. By the time we had finished on Monday, REBANE had decided that it would be a good idea if the senior representatives of the Estonian Emigration, after the close of the trial, were to summon HEINE to appear before the Estonian World Council in order that they might clarify once and for all the controversial elements of his biography. This was REBANE's own idea and I believe he is unaware that we led him to the suggestion -- asking why the Estonian emigres themselves had never really tried to get to the bottom of

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the HEINE case. REBANE intends to write to the chairman of the Estonian World Council, Mr. Alfred J. Anderson in New York, making this suggestion to him. (He showed me a letter he recently received from Anderson enclosing a copy of the 400 questions which had been put to RAUS by HEINE's attorneys, and which proved to Anderson that the Soviets were behind this entire trial and were trying to uncover AIS secrets.) If such an invitation should be issued and HEINE should refuse to appear, his standing in the emigration would go down to zero, and he might indeed find it difficult to remain in the West. If he should present himself, REBANE wants to be a part of the commission since he is absolutely confident that he can completely destroy HEINE in such a hearing.

10. It is clear that this would be an action extremely favorable to us and it would be very much in our interest that REBANE himself should participate in such a commission. I therefore suggested to him that in the event that the World Council should be unable financially to invite him to the U.S. or Canada for such a meeting, we would find a way to make the trip possible--obviously through some indirect means.

11. Aside from this action REBANE himself volunteered to check out ten or a dozen different elements of HEINE's biography which he can do through contacts with various people in Germany and elsewhere. He will communicate the results to me. A list of the points which he will check out is included in [] report. For purposes of future contact I gave him three alternate possibilities:

(a) By letter to me:

[]
Box 1390
Main Post Office
Washington, D.C. 20013

(b) By personal visit to [] American Consulate General, Munich in the event of urgency. -NOTE: I had previously coordinated this action with [] Prior to my departure I left a memorandum for the record on REBANE in the MOB file so that they know exactly the course of the action.

(c) By letter to RAUS or [] with an internal sealed envelope for me.

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INTERVIEW WITH COLONEL ALFONS REBANE

The following report covers major substantive items developed during the interviews with Colonel REBANE in Munich and Augsburg on 2, 3, and 5 September 1966.

1. HEINE's repatriation in 1941:

a. REBANE discussed briefly the secret agreement for repatriation of Germans or individuals of German origin from Estonia to Germany. He stated that the Soviets were very careful in letting these individuals out of occupied Estonia. Subject stated that in February of 1941 many persons were aware that war between USSR and Nazi Germany was imminent. Subject said that there were several instances when Estonians who wanted to leave the USSR (Estonia) pretending they were Germans were unsuccessful in this undertaking. Subject stated that the final decision rested completely with the Soviet authorities (NKVD), but the Germans at that time seldom rejected any Soviet-approved returnee or deportee. There were occasions when the NKVD refused to recognize the eligibility of Estonians of German origin for repatriation to Germany.

b. Subject stated that because of:

- 1) HEINE's arrest in connection with his membership in the Kaitselit (anti-Soviet) organization,
- 2) His long imprisonment (about 9 months) by the NKVD in Tallin,
- 3) His alleged uncooperative behavior during his NKVD interrogations,
- 4) His insistence before an NKVD repatriation commission that he was not a German but an Estonian (i.e. Soviet citizen) --

there was no doubt that under these circumstances HEINE would not have been repatriated. In Subject's opinion HEINE was recruited by the NKVD during his imprisonment and sent out to Germany as an agent as early as in 1941.

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2. HEINE's service in Estonia and in the German army after his repatriation:

a. Subject stated that the Estonian units of the German Wehrmacht were first organized in September 1941, their original purpose being to guard the rear lines of the advancing German armies.

b. In September 1941 battalions were formed -- the 181st, 182nd, and 186th, each of which had four companies. These Estonian units were first called "Sicherungs-gruppen". Some of these units were engaged in battles with Soviet troops and incurred substantial losses. Thus in the fall of 1942 the remainder of these units were formed into "Ostbattalions", ## 658, 659, 660. REBANE was assigned as commander of the 658th Battalion. At this time many Estonians volunteered to serve in these battalions and went to Tallin in order to be enlisted in these units. Subject reiterated that during his long service with these and other units (including the 20th Waffen SS Division) he never met HEINE.

c. Subject commented on HEINE's statement in the deposition that he was allegedly personally called by the Estonian National Government to appear in Tallin and to join the Estonian Political police -- as implausible and ridiculous. HEINE was a young man and not well-known. Subject added that in all probability HEINE went to Tallin on his own, as did many other Estonians at that time. He could have been recruited into the Political Police upon his arrival in Estonia.

d. Subject was asked to provide information as to the status of the Estonian Political Police, where HEINE allegedly served as an interrogator. Subject replied that he was not familiar with this establishment because of his purely military functions. However, Subject was quite sure that the Estonian Political Police in Tallin had been under control of the German SD. There were two branches: one consisted of Germans the other consisted of Estonians, but both branches were supervised by the German SD.

Subject mentioned that one of his acquaintances, the former chief of Estonian branch of the Political police in Tallin --

* Ain MERE, 180 Mere Road, Leicester, England could provide much more information on this topic.

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e. Subject expressed definite doubts in respect to HEINE's statement that he had interrogated the former Minister of Welfare of the Estonian SSR Neme RUUS. According to Subject this was a famous case -- RUUS was arrested by the Estonian Political police in the fall of 1941 and he believes that at the end of the same year he was executed by the Germans as a Soviet agent. Subject added that because of the political importance of such high level cases, HEINE would have been permitted by the Germans to enter the RUUS case. Such cases were immediately transferred to the German organs of the SD or Gestapo.

3. HEINE's service in the 20th Grenadier Division:

a. Subject stated that in the fall of 1942 the Germans formed an Estonian military unit which was called-- "Estnisher Legion". In the summer of 1943 this unit was re-grouped as a Brigade under the name "Estnisher Brigade". Then in January 1944 this Brigade was hastily formed into a Division, which became the "20th Grenadier Division". This division (about 10,000 men) consisted of three Regiments (two battalions in each regiment)--the 45th, 46th, and 47th. Subject was commander of the 46th Regiment. The 20th division was sent to the Narva front where the Soviet armies attempted to advance and break through the German lines. The 20th division stopped the advance but in June 1944 was finally outflanked and defeated by the Red Army.

b. The men and officers of the 20th division were Estonians (or as Subject put it -- "Soviet citizens"). For liaison purposes each Regiment had a German officer as an "Adjutant".

c. Subject does not recall HEINE at all as an officer of his division; according to him, however, he could not know all the officers of the division.

d. Subject emphasized that the Soviet troops opposite the Narva River knew well with which kind of unit they were to fight -- that this was a Waffen SS Division consisting of Estonians, i.e. Soviet citizens. Subject added that if an officer was captured by the Red Army he was treated as a Soviet citizen, that is, as a traitor and not as a German officer. Subject maintained that at that time a German officer would have been treated better than an Estonian. Subject did not believe HEINE when the latter stated that he was sent to a German POW camp after his capture. Subject

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commented on this part of HEINE's deposition as a complete distortion of existing reality. Subject stated that according to his information one of his colleagues -- Captain *LASI, was hanged by the Soviets in 1945 or 1946 because of his service in the Ostbattalion.

4. HEINE's Partisan Activities:

a. Subject stated that during 1945 and part of 1946 there were several clashes between the Estonian anti-Soviet partisans and the Soviet troops. There were other clashes later, but as Subject emphasized, the Soviets did not hesitate to send special NKVD divisions in order to eliminate small partisan groups. According to Subject's information as soon as the Soviets received a message about a partisan unit or even a group -- special NKVD battalions, border guard troops or a special destruction unit (istrebitelnyy otryad) would be sent to the scene with the orders to surround and capture or kill all the members of that "bandit" group. All these operations were planned and directed by a Moscow staff and the Soviets took their fight against these small anti-Soviet groups, which endangered their prestige, very seriously. Subject underscored that according to his own experience the anti-Soviet partisan movement in Estonia was penetrated and controlled by the Soviet authorities.

b. In connection with the above, Subject concluded that HEINE's engagements in most of the fighting with the Soviet troops do not correspond with the reality which prevailed at that particular time. Subject strongly indicated that HEINE's stories about his fighting and arrests during this time are distortions and fabrications.

c. HEINE's story about his trip to Siberia in 1947 was discussed with Subject in detail. Subject stated that he had not heard about HEINE's trip to Siberia previously and he was surprised that anybody could believe this story. Subject stated that this extremely suspicious aspect of HEINE's story should have been detected during our interrogations as early as in 1957 when he first came to our attention. Subject was very skeptical about the purposes of HEINE's decision to go to Siberia at that time. As Subject explained, he was familiar with the partisan movement at that time, and the partisans in Estonia did not have enough food and supplies for themselves, much less for additional people whom he intended to "bring back from the labor camps from Siberia". According to Subject this purpose was most fantastic and unrealistic.

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d. In 1947, according to Subject, the air flights from Tallin to Leningrad or Moscow were a rarity and an exceptional luxury -- only Soviet officials were permitted to fly and really could afford it. Such a man as HEINE who was allegedly closely associated with the anti-Soviet underground would have been easily recognized by the vigilant Soviet authorities and detained or even arrested before he would have been able to board the plane or make a reservation. This especially is true because HEINE undertook his Siberia trip using a stolen passport under the name of Pritt POLTSAAMA. Subject concluded that HEINE's trip to Siberia in 1947 (if he indeed did make it) could have been successful only with NKVD assistance. Subject added that in all appearances the main purpose of HEINE's trip was to bring back to Estonia some Estonian exiles with him to create for himself an image of the hero, the "liberator", for the relatives of these exiles.

e. According to Subject's experience, the Estonian anti-Soviet partisans usually moved during the winter from the woods to the villages. This was done because during the winter the underground activities were hampered in the woods -- the footprints in the snow were easily detected by the Soviet anti-partisan and NKVD units. Therefore HEINE's story about his activities during winter time in the Estonian woods sounded strange to Subject.

5. HEINE's arrest in 1950 and his repatriation as a German in 1956:

a. Subject stated that HEINE's description of his arrest in 1950 by the NKVD (according to the Deposition) was most unrealistic. The NKVD never arrests a man in such a demonstrative way -- especially during a festival in the presence of hundreds of people who gathered for a traditional Estonian festival of folk songs. Such arrests are executed always in complete secrecy. Subject was sure that the story about HEINE's arrest at the festival is a complete fabrication.

b. HEINE's story about his subsequent NKVD-MGB interrogations and his death sentence (the manner in which it was passed) sounded as ridiculous to Subject as HEINE's statements that, because of his affiliations with the Estonian Political police (SD), he was considered a German citizen by the NKVD.

c. Subject continued his evaluation of HEINE's deposition stating that HEINE could have been finally repatriated in 1956 only

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because of a special interest of the Soviet intelligence in sending HEINE out to the West with another intelligence mission. Subject added that HEINE's previous activities as an anti-partisan and as a Soviet agent-provocateur, provided means for his control by the Soviet intelligence. Subject surmises that during HEINE's engagements as a Soviet agent in Estonia he most probably was not only the traitor to the cause of his fellow anti-Soviet partisans, but also could have been responsible for their deaths. Such activities are considered by the RIS as a warranty that he never would tell the truth in the West during his work as a Soviet agent.

6. Subject's encounters with HEINE in the West:

a. As it was already stated, Subject never met HEINE before he appeared in the Free World in 1956. Subject first met HEINE in the fall of 1961 in New York where he was invited for a party at PODRANG's home. During this party HEINE told various guests about his experiences as an anti-Soviet partisan in Estonia. Some of these stories sounded strange to Subject, however he did not pay much attention to HEINE then. Later on during this party HEINE was introduced to Subject. HEINE expressed his wish to provide Subject with the order of the "Cross of Freedom" which HEINE had had made on his own, allegedly to honor all Estonian "Freedom Fighters". Subject, however, argued with HEINE explaining to him politely that such an order should be provided by the exile government of Estonia in London officially rather than by private persons. After this remark HEINE immediately retreated. Subject mentioned that HEINE's stories were inconsistent and he (Subject) considered him a suspicious individual. However, at that time Subject did not know HEINE's complete biography and therefore assumed that before HEINE came to Canada he had been thoroughly screened by the Western intelligence services.

b. Subject met HEINE again in 1964 in Toronto during a party given by one of his friends. At that time HEINE together with his wife approached Subject and HEINE's wife complained to Subject that they "were called traitors". Subject was silent and HEINE and his wife retreated. This event occurred after many Estonians emigres suspected HEINE of being a Soviet agent.

c. After our full review with him of HEINE's story, REBANE stated that he had no doubts that HEINE was sent to the West as an agent of the RIS. He also expressed his astonishment that the Western intelligence services did not detect HEINE's

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hostile intentions towards the West and towards the Estonian emigre community at least 7-8 years ago. Subject added that until the present time the Soviets succeeded in their penetration attempts because even the German authorities responsible for the Western security believe in any story which was advanced by sources from the Iron Curtain.

During our interview Subject was cooperative, understanding and in opinion of the undersigned expressed himself frankly.

[]

Addendum:

Items which Colonel REBANE will check out for us:

- (1) Source of photograph of HEINE in Estonian yearbook (whether from Karl HINTZER or somebody else).
- (2) Whether there was a "Burgermeister Poltsamma" in Estonia as mentioned in the 1957 debriefing.
- (3) Lembit Pensa -- biographic info
- (4) Whether JOAB or PASTAK were in Bad Tolz (both of these names given at various times by HEINE as the individual who betrayed him in Tallinn in July 1950).
- (5) Konstantin Treffner -- whether he was in fact principal of the Treffner gymnasium.
- (6) Anything about a ballet master named Prit Poltsamma in Tartu.
- (7) Police Sergeant Uudekuel -- whether known to any Estonians in West.

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(8) Date of civilian evacuation of Tartu in August 1944. This is possibly significant since HEINE claims in the deposition that his mother was in Tartu when he was captured in late August and REBANE doubts this.

(9) PARTEL -- was there such an individual recruiting for the Estonian battalion in June-July 1941?

(10) When Neeme RUUS was executed by the Soviets. REBANE thinks this was prior to the time when HEINE claims to have interrogated him.

(11) Was there a political police unit in Haapsalu? REBANE is not certain but is inclined to doubt it.

(12) Whether there is any chance that a young "assistant second class" would have been assigned to interrogate Neeme RUUS, according to modus operandi of Estonian political police.

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