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VISAS DONKEY, EUR

DEPT. FOR CA/VO/L/C - BOB DOLCE

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TEXT
TAGS: CVIS, GE (REYL, GERHARD ALFRED WILHELM)
COMBINE: COMPLETE

SUBJECT: SAO REQUEST - POSSIBLE 212(A)(3)(E)(I),
FORMER 212(A)(33) INELIGIBILITY

REF: (A) BERLIN FAX OF JUL 21, 1994; (B) FRANKFURT
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1. VISAS DONKEY
2. REYL, GERHARD ALFRED WILHELM
- 28 JANUARY 1924, ANGERSBACH, GERMANY
- RETIRED TEACHER
- B-2 VISA
3. SUMMARY: ON AUGUST 16 CONOFF INTERVIEWED SUBJECT

FOR COORDINATION WITH ^{ed} State

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
SOURCES METHODS EXEMPTION 3B2B
NAZI WAR CRIMES DISCLOSURE ACT
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CONCERNING HIS ACTIVITIES AS A MEMBER OF THE WAFFEN-SS. THE INFORMATION SUBJECT PROVIDED CORRESPONDS TO THAT IN REF A, BUT IS MORE COMPLETE. MOST SIGNIFICANTLY, SUBJECT ADMITTED TO HAVING WITNESSED MASSACRES PERPETRATED BY HIS SS-DIVISION OF THE ENTIRE CIVILIAN POPULATIONS OF TWO YUGOSLAVIAN VILLAGES. SUBJECT CLAIMS NOT TO HAVE PARTICIPATED PERSONALLY IN EITHER OF THE TWO MASSACRES. THIS TELEGRAM GIVES AN ACCOUNT OF ALL OF SUBJECT'S THREE YEARS IN THE SS, RECOUNTING IN PARTICULAR DETAIL WHAT SUBJECT TOLD CONOFF ABOUT THE ATROCITIES HE WITNESSED. END SUMMARY.

BASIC TRAINING

4. AT THE AGE OF 18 SUBJECT JOINED THE WAFFEN-SS VOLUNTARILY. HE WANTED TO DO HIS PART TO WIN THE WAR QUICKLY FOR GERMANY, AND SERVED FROM MARCH 1942 UNTIL THE END OF THE WAR. HE ADMITS HE WAS COMMITTED TO NAZISM WHEN HE JOINED THE SS, AND ATTRIBUTES HIS COMMITMENT TO HIS FATHER, WHO JOINED THE NSDAP IN 1932 AND BROUGHT HIS SON UP TO BELIEVE IN **ADOLF HITLER**.

5. SUBJECT BEGAN HIS MILITARY CAREER IN BASIC TRAINING IN THE HAGUE FROM MARCH 15 TO JUNE 15, 1942 WITH THE SS POLICE / INFANTRY SIGNALS CORPS / REPLACEMENT COMPANY (SS-POLIZEI / INFANTERIENACHRICHTEN / ERSATZKOMPANIE). HIS COMPANY COMMANDER WAS CAPTAIN (HAUPTSTURMFUEHRER) SCHLECHT, WHO SUBJECT SAYS WAS A VERY GOOD PERSON WHO HAD NOT VOLUNTARILY JOINED THE SS AND LEFT THE SS AS SOON AS HE COULD. BESIDES BASIC TRAINING, SUBJECT ALSO RECEIVED SIGNAL CORPS TRAINING WITH AN EMPHASIS ON THE USE OF COMMUNICATIONS EQUIPMENT IN MOUNTAINOUS TERRAIN. SUBJECT STRESSES THAT THE WORD "POLICE" IN HIS COMPANY NAME DID NOT MEAN THAT THIS UNIT ENGAGED IN POLICING ACTIVITIES. RATHER, THE COMPANY WAS FORMED IN 1939 WITH DRAFTED RECRUITS FROM CIVILIAN POLICE FORCES. THE FIRST NON-POLICE VOLUNTEERS WERE NOT BROUGHT INTO THE UNIT UNTIL ABOUT THE TIME SUBJECT JOINED IN 1942.

PRINZ EUGEN DIVISION--UNTERNEHMEN WEISS

6. FROM JUNE 1942 TO JULY 1943 SUBJECT SERVED AS TELEPHONE AND WIRELESS OPERATOR WITH THE HEADQUARTERS COMPANY OF THE 13TH REGIMENT / SS MOUNTAIN DIVISION PRINCE EUGEN (STABSKOMPANIE / 13. REGIMENT / SS-GEBIRGSDIVISION PRINZ EUGEN). DURING THIS PERIOD WITH THE PRINZ EUGEN DIVISION SUBJECT WITNESSED THE AFOREMENTIONED MASSACRES OF YUGOSLAVIAN VILLAGERS. HIS COMMANDING OFFICER WAS SIGNAL CORPS COMMANDER HAUPTSTURMFUEHRER MOELLER, WHOM SUBJECT CHARACTERIZES AS HAVING BEEN "STRICT AND UNJUST." A CHILLING EXAMPLE OF HAUPTSTURMFUEHRER MOELLER'S "STRICTNESS" IS

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AN INCIDENT SUBJECT RECALLS IN WHICH MOELLER HAD A YOUNG SS RECRUIT SHOT BECAUSE OTHER SS SOLDIERS HAD STOLEN THE KEY TO THE OFFICERS CLUB AND DRUNK SOME OF THE CLUB'S LIQUOR ON THE NIGHT THIS RECRUIT WAS ON GUARD DUTY. SUBJECT CLAIMS NOT TO KNOW, HOWEVER, WHETHER MOELLER WAS EVER INVOLVED IN ATROCITIES AGAINST ENEMY PRISONERS OR CIVILIANS.

7. SUBJECT'S TIME WITH THE PRINZ EUGEN DIVISION CAN BE DIVIDED INTO THREE DISTINCT PERIODS. DURING THE FIRST PERIOD SUBJECT WAS ASSIGNED TO REGIMENTAL HEADQUARTERS IN UZICE, SERBIA AS SWITCHBOARD OPERATOR AND THEN, BEGINNING IN JANUARY 1943 UNTIL THE END OF FEBRUARY, TO "OPERATION WHITE" (UNTERNEHMEN WEISS) IN CROATIA AND BOSNIA. IN UNTERNEHMEN WEISS, THE PURPOSE OF WHICH WAS TO RETAKE THE AREAS OF BOSNIA AND CROATIA WHICH WERE UNDER THE CONTROL OF TITO'S PARTISANS,

SUBJECT ALSO SERVED AS SWITCHBOARD OPERATOR, BUT UNDER BATTLEFIELD CONDITIONS. SUBJECT SAYS THAT HE HEARD MOST OF THE COMMUNICATION GOING ON OVER THE PHONE DURING UNTERNEHMEN WEISS, INCLUDING ORDERS THAT HE WAS NOT SUPPOSED TO OVERHEAR. WHEN ASKED WHETHER HE HAD EVER OVERHEARD ANY ORDERS TO SHOOT CIVILIANS OR PRISONERS, HE SAID HE HAD NOT. HE EXPLAINED THAT SUCH ORDERS WERE NEVER ISSUED OVER THE PHONE, BUT HE DID NOT DENY THAT IT WAS A GENERAL UNDERSTANDING THAT PARTISANS WERE TO BE SHOT WHEN CAUGHT AND THAT THIS WAS UNDERSTOOD AS A PERSONAL DIRECTIVE FROM HITLER HIMSELF (FUEHRERBEFEHL).

8. SUBJECT REMEMBERS THE EXACT DATE OF THE FIRST MASSACRE HE WITNESSED. ON JANUARY 30, 1943, AFTER THE GERMAN SURRENDER AT STALINGRAD HAD BEEN ANNOUNCED, THE THIRD BATTALION ROUNDED UP THE ENTIRE POPULATION--MEN, WOMEN AND CHILDREN--OF A SMALL VILLAGE, BROUGHT THEM TO THE TOWN SQUARE AND MURDERED THEM IN COLD BLOOD. SUBJECT SAYS THAT THE MASSACRE WAS ORDERED BY A COLONEL BROSER (SUBJECT GAVE THE RANK AS "OBERST;" PRESUMABLY HE MEANT THE SS RANK "STANDARTENFUEHRER"). SUBJECT CLAIMS HE WAS NOT INVOLVED IN THIS MASSACRE, AND MAINTAINS THAT HE WAS NOT EVEN AN EYEWITNESS. HE SAYS HE WAS IN A NEARBY FARMHOUSE AT THE TELEPHONE SWITCHBOARD WHEN THE MASSACRE OCCURRED, THAT HE KNEW IT WAS GOING ON BECAUSE HE HEARD MACHINE GUN FIRE AND SCREAMING, BUT THAT HE HAD NOT LEARNED THE DETAILS REPORTED ABOVE UNTIL AFTER THE FACT.

9. SUBJECT SAYS HE CANNOT REMEMBER THE NAME OF THE VILLAGE, BUT HE RECALLS THAT IT WAS SOUTH OF THE TOWN OF BIHAC. HE SAYS HE HAS SEARCHED FOR THE VILLAGE ON THE MAP SEVERAL TIMES SINCE THE END OF THE WAR, AND THAT HE EVEN TRIED TO LOCATE IT WHEN HE WAS IN YUGOSLAVIA AS A TOURIST A FEW YEARS AGO, BUT THAT HE COULD FIND NO TRACE OF IT.

PRINZ EUGEN DIVISION--UNTERNEHMEN SCHWARZ

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10. SUBJECT'S SERVICE IN UNTERNEHMEN WEISS ENDED WHEN HE FELL ILL IN MARCH 1943. AFTER RECOVERING IN A FIELD HOSPITAL IN LEVNO, BOSNIA HE WAS TRANSFERRED TO "OPERATION BLACK" (UNTERNEHMEN SCHWARZ) IN MONTENEGRO, WHERE HE SERVED AS A WIRELESS OPERATOR, PASSING ON MESSAGES IN MORSE CODE FROM HEADQUARTERS TO THE UNITS IN THE FIELD AND BACK. HE WAS INVOLVED IN UNTERNEHMEN SCHWARZ FROM MAY TO JULY 1943, AND WAS PROMOTED TO CORPORAL (STURMMANN) DURING THIS TIME.

11. SOMETIME THAT SUMMER, SUBJECT WITNESSED ANOTHER MASSACRE OF CIVILIANS. THIS TIME HE WAS AN EYEWITNESS. SUBJECT RELATES THAT HE WAS RETURNING TO HEADQUARTERS ONE EVENING AFTER HAVING BEEN IN THE FIELD ALL DAY WITH THE SIGNALS UNIT. HEADQUARTERS HAD BEEN SET UP NEAR THE VILLAGE OF DONJA BRESNA IN A MOUNTAINOUS AREA OF BOSNIA CLOSE TO TITOGRAD. THE HOUSES IN DONJA BRESNA WERE STRETCHED ALONG THE SINGLE ROAD THAT LED THROUGH THE VILLAGE, AND EACH HOUSE WAS ABOUT 100 TO 300 METERS AWAY FROM THE HOUSES ON EITHER SIDE. AS SUBJECT AND HIS UNIT REACHED THE BEND IN THE ROAD THAT LED INTO THE VILLAGE, SUBJECT IMMEDIATELY SAW THAT MOST OF THE HOUSES HAD BEEN BURNED TO THE GROUND, OR WERE STILL BURNING. AS HE CONTINUED TOWARD THE VILLAGE HE SAW THAT THE HOUSE NEAREST TO WHERE HE WAS WAS STILL STANDING. HE SAW MEMBERS OF HIS BATTALION FORCING WOMEN AND CHILDREN INTO THE HOUSE AND THEN FIRING THEIR WEAPONS INTO THE HOUSE UNTIL THEY THOUGHT MOST OF THE PEOPLE IN IT WERE DEAD. FINALLY, HE SAW THE SOLDIERS SET FIRE TO THE HOUSE. THE ENTIRE TIME, SUBJECT SAYS, HE COULD HEAR THE PEOPLE INSIDE SCREAMING.

12. WHEN CONOFF ASKED SUBJECT WHAT HE DID WHEN HE REALIZED WHAT HE WAS SEEING, SUBJECT REPLIED THAT HE TRIED TO ASK HIS COMMANDING OFFICER MOELLER, WHO WAS STANDING IN THE ROAD, WHAT WAS GOING ON. WHEN MOELLER SAW THAT SUBJECT WAS THERE, HOWEVER, THE OFFICER BECAME EXTREMELY AGITATED AND ORDERED SUBJECT TO LEAVE IMMEDIATELY. SUBJECT REPORTS THAT AS HE THEN CONTINUED ON HIS WAY TO CAMP, HE SAW THE BURNT BODIES OF THE VILLAGERS IN THE RUINS OF THE BURNT-OUT HOUSES. CONOFF NOTES THAT THIS ACCOUNT CONTRADICTS SUBJECT'S PREVIOUS ASSERTION THAT HE WAS NOT AWARE OF MOELLER'S INVOLVEMENT IN ATROCITIES AGAINST THE CIVILIAN POPULATION.

13. ACCORDING TO SUBJECT, COLONEL BROSER WAS RELIEVED OF HIS COMMAND SHORTLY AFTER THIS INCIDENT. SUBJECT DOES NOT KNOW WHY THIS HAPPENED, BUT CLAIMS THAT BROSER'S SUCCESSOR, A LIEUTENANT-COLONEL (OBERSTURMBANNFUEHRER) SCHERHAUFER, REFUSED TO ORDER HIS MEN TO COMMIT ANY FURTHER ATROCITIES ALTHOUGH IN DOING SO HE WAS DISOBEYING HITLER'S DIRECTIVE.

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SUBJECT EVEN RECALLS HEARING SCHERHAUFER SAY TO ANOTHER OFFICER, "MEINE MAENNER SIND KEINE MOERDER" ("MY MEN ARE NOT MURDERERS"). UNFORTUNATELY SUBJECT DOES NOT REMEMBER THE SETTING OF THAT CONVERSATION OR ANYTHING ELSE SPECIFIC ABOUT IT.

PRINZ EUGEN DIVISION--NERETVA VALLEY

14. IN JULY 1943 SUBJECT WAS PROMOTED TO SERGEANT (UNTERSCHARFUEHRER) AND TRANSFERRED TO THE 2ND BATTALION OF THE 13TH REGIMENT / SS MOUNTAIN DIVISION PRINCE EUGEN IN THE NERETVA VALLEY IN YUGOSLAVIA. HERE HE WAS THE DEPUTY COMMANDER OF THE SIGNALS PLATOON (STELLVERTRETENDER NACHRICHTENZUGFUEHRER) UNDER SIGNALS PLATOON LEADER TECHNICAL SERGEANT (OBERSCHARFUEHRER) KREPPPEL. SUBJECT'S JOB WAS TO RETRAIN THE SIGNALS PLATOON, WHO WERE FLOUNDERING WITH A COMMUNICATIONS SYSTEM THAT DID NOT WORK. THEN, ON SEPTEMBER 16, 1943, THE BATTALION WAS SENT INTO COMBAT. THEY WERE SURROUNDED ON THE ROAD FROM SINJ TO SPLIT BY TITO'S PARTISANS ON THAT FIRST DAY OF FIGHTING, AND SUBJECT WAS SEVERELY WOUNDED IN THE SHOULDER.

OFFICER TRAINING AND THE FINAL DAYS OF THE WAR

15. AFTER LONG MONTHS OF RECOVERY, SUBJECT WAS SENT TO THE SS SIGNALS CORPS REPLACEMENT REGIMENT (SS-NACHRICHTENERSATZREGIMENT) IN NUERNBERG IN MARCH 1944. HE SPENT A LITTLE MORE THAN A WEEK IN NUERNBERG BEFORE BEING ORDERED TO REPORT ON MARCH 15 TO AN OFFICER CANDIDATE TRAINING COURSE (FUEHRERBEWERBERLEHRGANG) AT THE SIGNALS CORPS SCHOOL IN METZ. IN MAY SUBJECT WAS PROMOTED TO SS RESERVE OFFICER CANDIDATE (SS-JUNKER DER RESERVE) AND TRANSFERRED TO THE SS OFFICER CANDIDATE SCHOOL (JUNKERSCHULE) IN POSEN-TRESKAU, WHERE HIS COMMANDING OFFICER WAS LIEUTENANT (OBERSTURMFUEHRER) UNGETUEM.

16. AFTER FAILING THE INTERMEDIATE EXAMINATION IN POSEN-TRESKAU SUBJECT WAS TRANSFERRED TO THE SS CHALK MOUNTAIN RIFLE BRIGADE REPLACEMENT COMPANY (SS-KARSTJAEGER-ERSATZKOMPANIE) IN CIVIDALE IN NORTHERN ITALY, WHERE HE HELPED TRAIN TROOPS IN THE ART OF SURVIVAL AND OF WARFARE IN MOUNTAINOUS TERRAIN. HIS COMMANDING OFFICER WAS LIEUTENANT (OBERSTURMFUEHRER) KUHBNANDNER, ABOUT WHOM SUBJECT DOES NOT HAVE ANY UNUSUAL RECOLLECTIONS. IN TALKING ABOUT THIS PERIOD, SUBJECT WAS CAREFUL TO RELATE THAT HE HAD FAILED HIS EXAMINATION IN POSEN-TRESKAU BECAUSE HE HAD NO DESIRE TO BE AN SS-OFFICER AFTER WHAT HE HAD SEEN IN YUGOSLAVIA, AND THAT HE HAD SOUGHT TO JOIN THE

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MOUNTAIN RIFLE BRIGADE IN ORDER TO AVOID HAVING TO RETURN TO THE PRINZ EUGEN DIVISION.

17. ON JANUARY 2, 1945 WAS AGAIN ORDERED TO REPORT TO THE OFFICER CANDIDATE SCHOOL IN POSEN-TRESKAU. UPON ARRIVAL HE WAS ASSIGNED TO THE TASK FORCE (KAMPFGRUPPE) BRAUNSCHWEIG AS THE HEAD OF A TANK INFANTRY UNIT (PANZERGRENADIERGRUPPE) UNDER MAJOR (STURMBANNFUEHRER) SCHNEIDER, A TACTICS INSTRUCTOR FROM THE OFFICER CANDIDATE SCHOOL. THIS TASK FORCE SAW COMBAT AGAINST THE SOVIETS DURING THE RETREAT OF THE GERMAN FORCES FROM POSEN TO LIEGNITZ IN SILESIA. ON FEBRUARY 5 SUBJECT WAS AGAIN SEVERELY WOUNDED, AND SENT TO A MILITARY HOSPITAL IN HIS HOMETOWN OFFENBACH. HERE HE REMAINED UNTIL OFFENBACH WAS OCCUPIED BY AMERICAN TROOPS ON MARCH 26, 1945.

SUBJECT'S MISGIVINGS ABOUT THE SS

18. SUBJECT REPORTS THAT AFTER WITNESSING THE TWO MASSACRES IN YUGOSLAVIA HE BECAME DEEPLY DISAPPOINTED IN THE SS, ALTHOUGH HE DID NOT LOSE HIS FAITH IN NATIONAL SOCIALISM. HE CLAIMS HE DID NOT CONSIDER DESERTION ONLY BECAUSE HE KNEW THAT HIS FAMILY WOULD BE PUNISHED IF HE DESERTED. SUBJECT SAYS HE DID TRY TWICE TO GET OUT OF THE SS LEGALLY, HOWEVER. DURING RECOVERY LEAVE IN OFFENBACH IN MARCH 1944 HE ATTEMPTED UNSUCCESSFULLY TO PERSUADE THE LOCAL HITLER YOUTH UNIT TO ACCEPT HIM AS AN INSTRUCTOR. ABOUT SIX MONTHS LATER, IN NOVEMBER-DECEMBER 1944 IN CIVIDALE, HE ASKED HIS COMMANDING OFFICER KUHBNANDNER TO GET HIM TRANSFERRED TO THE NAVY, BUT WAS TOLD THE NAVY WOULD NOT TAKE HIM BECAUSE HIS SHOULDER WOUND HAD AFFECTED HIS ABILITY TO MOVE HIS ARM FREELY.

COMMENT

19. CONOFF BELIEVES SUBJECT IS TELLING THE TRUTH ABOUT THE GROWING MISGIVINGS HE FELT ABOUT THE SS AFTER SEEING THE ATROCITIES HIS BATTALION COMMITTED IN YUGOSLAVIA. CONOFF ALSO BELIEVES THAT SUBJECT NOW TRULY REGRETS EVER HAVING BELIEVED IN HITLER AND NATIONAL SOCIALISM, AND THAT SUBJECT TOOK PAINS TO BE COOPERATIVE AND FORTHCOMING, AT LEAST UP TO A POINT, IN TELLING ABOUT WHAT HE HAD SEEN. IN FACT, CONOFF HAD THE IMPRESSION THAT SUBJECT FELT HE WAS SOMEHOW FULFILLING PART OF HIS MORAL RESPONSIBILITY TO THE VICTIMS OF THESE MASSACRES BY TELLING CONOFF ABOUT THEM. IN SPITE OF SUBJECT'S SINCERITY AND HELPFUL ATTITUDE, HOWEVER, CONOFF CONSIDERS IT QUITE POSSIBLE THAT SUBJECT STOPPED SHORT OF TELLING CONOFF

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EVERYTHING ABOUT SUBJECT'S INVOLVEMENT IN THE MASSACRES. THEREFORE CONOFF RECOMMENDS THAT DEPARTMENT RESEARCH CAREFULLY SUBJECT'S RECORD, ESPECIALLY OF HIS SERVICE WITH THE PRINZ EUGEN DIVISION, BEFORE DECIDING WHETHER SUBJECT CAN MEET THE BURDEN OF PROOF THAT HE DID NOT PARTICIPATE IN ACTIVITIES WHICH WOULD RENDER HIM INELIGIBLE UNDER 212(A)(3)(E)(I)(I).

20. OUT OF FAIRNESS TO SUBJECT, CONOFF ALSO REQUESTS THAT DEPARTMENT MAKE ITS DECISION AND INFORM POST AS FAR AS POSSIBLE IN ADVANCE OF SUBJECT'S PLANNED OCTOBER 14 DEPARTURE DATE. THE PURPOSE OF SUBJECT'S TRIP IS TO PARTICIPATE IN A CONCERT TOUR WITH A MEN'S SINGING GROUP FROM HIS HOMETOWN. SUBJECT EXPLAINED THAT IT WOULD CAUSE HIM CONSIDERABLE, PERHAPS IRREPARABLE, EMBARRASSMENT AND SHAME IF HE DID NOT RECEIVE A VISA TO TRAVEL WITH THIS GROUP. WHILE CONOFF URGES DEPARTMENT NOT TO ALLOW THIS CIRCUMSTANCE TO INFLUENCE ITS DECISION, A TIMELY DECISION WOULD BE GREATLY APPRECIATED.

WARDLAW

ADMIN
END OF MESSAGE

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