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SECURITY INFORMATION
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DISPOSITION FORM

FILE NO. 0/311/53	SUBJECT Dr. Wilhelm HOETTL
TO CO, 430th CIC Det	FROM G2 Opns
	DATE 12 Feb 53
	COMMENT NO. 1 HOBSON/FPD/prw

1. Subject has had contact with Kurt PONGER, a US citizen recently arrested for espionage on behalf of the Soviet Union. PONGER and his espionage associate, Otto VERBER, will be tried in the US courts on 13 April 1953; it is therefore imperative that Subject's past contacts with PONGER (and in all likelihood, VERBER as well) be expeditiously clarified.

2. The following information constitutes the total information in the files of this office on the relationship between Subject and PONGER:

a. On 6 March 1950 Mr. Peter MILLER, Department of Army civilian formerly attached to CIC Vienna, declared to Mr. Harry PFALTZGRAFF, then Chief of Operations, CIC Vienna, "You know, I was approached by this guy PONGER." PFALTZGRAFF replied, "Oh yes, that's the Commie we had a case on. What did he want?" MILLER explained that PONGER had been approached by WILLI HOETTL, whom he knew well; he had arranged at one time to have a book written by HOETTL, published. HOETTL explained that the Americans had dropped him as an operative, and that he wished to get back in their good graces. He asked PONGER to attempt to intercede for him. PONGER agreed. When MILLER concluded, PFALTZGRAFF said, "The case on that fellow is closed, isn't it?" MILLER said, "I think it's still open." PFALTZGRAFF checked his "open case" file and, discovering no card on PONGER, said, "There's no card on him. The case appears to be closed, as I thought." The discussion then shifted to another theme.

b. A report dated 24 April 1950 contains the following statement regarding Subject: "In a recent conversation with a confidential source of CIC, HOETTL stated that he is in contact with two American Jewish CIC agents, whom he knew from Nuernberg, who keep him informed as to all that takes place regarding his person in Vienna. It is conjectured that HOETTL may be referring to VERBER and PONGER, who are perhaps representing themselves as CIC agents."

c. On 18 October 1950 a controlled American source reported: "Kurt PONGER, presenting himself as a representative of an American literary agency in Vienna, approached Dr. Wilhelm HOETTL in August 1950 expressing an interest in Dr. HOETTL's book on the German secret service ("Die GEHEIME FRONT"). PONGER indicated that he might be interested in any future literary efforts by HOETTL from a business point of view."

"In talking to HOETTL, PONGER developed the following thesis on US foreign policy: He had it on good authority that the US State Department had decided to squeeze the Socialist parties out of the European governments. The Socialists were not trustworthy enough in the event of serious trouble in Europe. One would have to assume that as a result of strong pressure from the extreme left, coupled

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with the threat of an imminent Soviet invasion, persons of the type of FIEFLINGER would emerge in all Socialist parties in Europe. These men would succeed in diverting at least a portion of the Socialist parties to the communist camp by using the false slogan of 'Workers' Solidarity'. This defection would be sufficient to swing Eastern Europe to the side of the People's Democracies. In Austria, too, American policy, which already aims at eliminating the SPOs, would strengthen its efforts in this direction."

d. A report dated 10 January 1951 describes a meeting PONGER and VERBER had with Dr. Karl WINKLER and Dr. Roman LOOS on 24 November 1950 in the apartment of WINKLER at Markus Sittikusstrasse 15:

"After the newspaper men had left, WINKLER and LOOS joined this Agent (Kurt MEITNER). Then inquiring about the newspaper men, WINKLER explained that one was a Kurt PONGER, American citizen and newspaper man from Vienna and an acquaintance of Willi HOETTL. WINKLER further stated that the other man was not identified, but PONGER indicated that he was his brother-in-law. This Agent then asked WINKLER what the purpose of their visit had been. WINKLER replied that he really did not know. The man had remained with him for approximately three hours and had engaged in extensive conversation. WINKLER maintained that only topics of general interest had been discussed. WINKLER then inquired whether he should ask HOETTL for further details about the two men. This Agent replied in the negative.

"The undersigned Agent discreetly interviewed Dr. LOOS on or about 3 January 1951 to ascertain the circumstances and background of the visit of PONGER and his brother-in-law. The interview with LOOS was conducted under the guise that this Agent was attempting to learn the names of other U.S. contacts of the WINKLER complex. Inasmuch as LOOS knew that the undersigned Agent was investigating the activities of WINKLER, his contacts and modus operandi, no undue suspicion is believed to have been aroused. During this interview Dr. LOOS offered the following additional information.

"During the summer months of 1950 (LOOS was unable to recall the exact date) LOOS received a letter from Willi HOETTL in which he (HOETTL) wrote about one Kurt PONGER, an American citizen, who, after the war, was employed with the Department of the Army in Muenberg, Germany, and who is currently residing in Vienna, Austria, where he is working as a news and photo reporter. HOETTL further stated that PONGER wanted to meet LOOS. The latter, however, did not answer HOETTL's letter and disregarded the whole matter.

"At the end of November or the beginning of December, 1950 (again LOOS was unable to recall the exact date) LOOS, while visiting WINKLER in Salzburg (Markus Sittikusstrasse 15), received a telephone call from PONGER who stated that he received WINKLER's telephone number (69023)

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from HOETTL and that he (PONGER) would like to take the opportunity to meet LOOS and WINKLER. Consequently a meeting was arranged and PONGER arrived at WINKLER's apartment at 1800 the same day.

"PONGER introduced himself to LOOS and WINKLER and then requested permission to use the telephone to call his brother-in-law. PONGER placed the call and informed the party on the other line that he (PONGER) could now be reached at Markus Sittikusstrasse 15. Soon thereafter another person arrived at WINKLER's apartment who introduced himself as the brother-in-law of PONGER. Then, PONGER, LOOS, WINKLER and "the brother-in-law" commenced a conversation which continued for about three hours.

"PONGER told LOOS and WINKLER about his former 'work' in Nuernberg. He explained that he was then collecting evidence and information concerning war crimes and crimes against humanity committed by the Germans under the Nazi regime. He indicated to LOOS that he (PONGER) knew LOOS in Nuernberg. However, LOOS answered that he couldn't remember having ever seen PONGER before. LOOS then asked PONGER if he knew one Otto KRELLISHEIM, a U.S. citizen who was LOOS' interrogator in Nuernberg. KRELLISHEIM's father, a former police official in Vienna, served with LOOS in the police headquarters in Vienna. PONGER answered, "Yes, I know him quite well." However, to a subsequent question, is Dr. Otto KRELLISHEIM identical with one KRELLISHEIM who, according to a newspaper, was a speaker at a communist meeting in 1948 in Graz, Styria, PONGER replied that he did not know if the two are identical. Then, apparently in order to avoid any further questions concerning KRELLISHEIM, PONGER stated that he had not seen him for years. PONGER then talked about an acquaintance of his, one UNGER (UNGAR) (fnu) who worked as an investigator for the Czech War Crimes Commission in Nuernberg and who, according to PONGER, is now an important functionary in the Czech Communist Party. The discussion was then changed to atrocities committed in German concentration camps. WINKLER contributed to the discussion by giving his version of the '20th July Affair' and his and Willi HOETTL's part in the 'affair' at the end of World War II. PONGER then questioned LOOS and WINKLER about RIEDL, Friedhof, who, according to PONGER, received news photos from the European News Service, the news service with which PONGER is connected. PONGER stated that RIEDL failed to make the necessary payments and that the European News Service was forced to proceed with a court action against RIEDL.

"The conversation then centered around the current tension between East and West. All present gave the impression of being entirely pro-Western in their viewpoints.

"PONGER and his brother-in-law left the apartment after WINKLER explained that a friend (the undersigned) whom he expected, had arrived.

"In an attempt to clarify a number of points, the undersigned requested Dr. LOOS to answer the following specific questions. Dr. LOOS answered as indicated.

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"QUESTION: Who was the target of PONGER's visit - you or WINKLER?
"ANSWER: I believe I was; HOETTL, in a letter, asked me to meet PONGER.

"QUESTION: What was the purpose of the visit?
"ANSWER: I don't know. I had the feeling that PONGER and his brother-in-law 'did not come to the point'; the whole conversation was general. We talked a lot but nothing was said.

"QUESTION: Did PONGER ask any questions concerning WINKLER's US connections or his connections with the CoVP?
"ANSWER: PONGER did not ask any questions, only about RIEDL. The conversation as I have already pointed out, was very general. There was no obvious purpose in the conversation.

"QUESTION: What do you know about RIEDL's connections with the European News Service?
"ANSWER: Some time ago RIEDL received a number of photos about the southeast (Balkan States) from the European News Service. At that time RIEDL, SCHWAPZKOFF and GEISLER of the ECHO DER WOCHEN were planning to organize a "Southeast News Service". RIEDL gave the photos to SCHWAPZKOFF who used them but never gave the money to RIEDL. I believe RIEDL owes PONGER about 230 A.S.

"QUESTION: Dr. LOOS, are you sure you did not see PONGER in Nuernberg?
"ANSWER: Yes, I am sure. My interrogator was KREILISHEIM. He interrogated me continuously. At the time of my release from Nuernberg prison he asked me about my future plans. After I replied that I would go to Salzburg to join my family, he advised me to go to Vienna and not to Salzburg where 'all the DP's hang out'. He discharged me by saying 'I will see you again.'

"QUESTION: Did you see KREILISHEIM after you left Nuernberg?
"ANSWER: No, I did not. I learned that he left Nuernberg and went to Paris, France. Some time ago I learned from the newspaper that one KREILISHEIM was a speaker at a meeting of the KPOe and wondered if this were the same man I knew. I checked discreetly with the Austrian Police and I received a reply indicating that the speaker at the meeting was identical with Dr. Otto KREILISHEIM, a U.S. citizen who arrived from Paris, France, and was at that time residing in Vienna XIV.

"QUESTION: Did you or WINKLER see PONGER again?
"ANSWER: No, I did not and WINKLER would have told me about PONGER if he had seen him again.

"QUESTION: Did PONGER state that he was connected with any U.S. agency in Austria or the U.S. Government?

"ANSWER: No, he did not. He stated that he left the Government service and is now in Austria as a private citizen.

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"QUESTION: After I (the undersigned) entered the apartment, did PONGER or his brother-in-law inquire who I was? Or whom WINKLER was expecting?

"ANSWER: I don't believe that they noticed you. There was no question asked."

e. S/A Kurt MEITNER reported that on 28 May 1951 Willi HOETTL, Dr. Karl WINKLER, and Dr. Roman LOOS had met in Salzburg and had dined at the local restaurant "Weisses Kreuz" together. LOOS submitted to MEITNER the following report (translated) on the affair:

"With regard to the PONGER affair, HOETTL declared that he met PONGER in Nuernberg and is in constant contact with him. PONGER supplies him now and again with photographic material for use in newspaper articles which he (HOETTL) writes. In addition, he receives from PONGER information on persons (contact with) whom he needs for his literary activity. In return, he is always at PONGER's disposition for information when the latter so desires. PONGER has continual residence in Vienna, works with his brother-in-law, and has quartered himself in a Russian besirk. PONGER did this purposely so that the Russians would let him alone, i.e., so that they would not observe him or place him under observation. The Russians actually observed him closely at first. As they learned (darauf kamen) that PONGER was not engaged in intelligence work, but rather occupied himself commercially with his pictorial service, they paid no more attention to him. And so was his reasoning justified. PONGER told HOETTL about his conversation (Note: Of 24 November 1950), which conversation had been brought about when, in the course of a conversation between PONGER and HOETTL, the latter had mentioned the name of WINKLER and the former had expressed a desire to meet both WINKLER and LOOS. HOETTL explained that he had forgotten to inform WINKLER and LOOS of the surrounding circumstances and excused himself on this account."

f. The following paragraph has been extracted from a report on the interrogation of Walter LAUBER, associate of PONGER and VERBER in their espionage activities:

"During October 1952, PONGER asked LAUBER to drive him on a business trip to Germany. LAUBER agreed, since he wanted repairs made on his car at Munich. LAUBER and PONGER left Vienna early in October and journeyed to Salzburg, where they met a man near the Salzburg Railroad Station. PONGER introduced the man to LAUBER as Willi HOETTL, and announced that HOETTL would accompany them to Nuernberg. LAUBER, PONGER and HOETTL drove forthwith to Munich, where HOETTL left them to stay in a different hotel. LAUBER had repairs made to his car, and on the following day, HOETTL rejoined them. LAUBER then drove to Nuernberg, where they met PONGER's partner in charge of GEP in Germany, (fnu) BACKER. LAUBER recalled that BACKER had had to travel for an hour in order to reach Nuernberg, but does not recall BACKER's address. LAUBER admitted that a number of pencilled notes of names and addresses found in his apartment after his apprehension had been dictated to him by PONGER after this meeting. A

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cursory examination of these names indicates that most are former Nazis. LAUBER does not recall whether PONGER received these names from HOETTL or BACKER, or for what purpose they were obtained. LAUBER had heard the name of HOETTL at PONGER's apartment prior to their initial meeting at Salzburg in connection with the publishing of a book by HOETTL. LAUBER believes that Vera PONGER's literary agency may have had some business with HOETTL in connection with HOETTL's book. HOETTL remained in Nuernberg, and BACKER accompanied LAUBER and PONGER for some miles out of Nuernberg in the direction of Frankfurt. LAUBER and PONGER journeyed through Frankfurt to Wetzlar, where PONGER ordered an amount of photographic equipment. LAUBER and PONGER then returned to Munich, where the equipment ordered was to be picked up. After waiting a day and receiving none of the equipment, LAUBER and PONGER returned to Vienna. Neither HOETTL nor BACKER was again contacted. LAUBER denied any knowledge of HOETTL's background as a former SS officer or his post-war activities as an internationally known espionage agent. LAUBER also knows nothing about BACKER except that he is the representative of CEP in Germany. LAUBER can recall no pertinent details regarding this trip."

(NOTE: BACKER is believed to be identical with Willibald BARKER, Oberfranken 23, PRESSIG-ROTHENKIRCHEN, Germany.)

3. It is requested that an agent from the 430th CIC Detachment, Sub-Detachment "A", be assigned to interview Subject at Alt Aussee 53, Subject's home. Interviewing agent should attempt to ascertain the following during interview:

- a. The circumstances surrounding the initial contact of Subject with PONGER, VERBER, and LAUBER: Purpose of contact, personalities present, topics discussed, etc.
- b. A detailed account of all subsequent contacts.
- c. Description of all "favors" received by Subject from PONGER, et al, and an account of all favors given PONGER in return. (See paragraph 2e above.)
- d. Detailed account of all information submitted by Subject to PONGER et al. (See paragraph 2e above.)
- e. Information concerning any joint literary efforts of Subject and PONGER. (See paragraph 2c above.)
- f. Subject's knowledge of any Soviet contacts of PONGER, et al.
- g. Subject's knowledge of PONGER's contacts other than Soviet.
- h. Information concerning Mrs. Vera PONGER, the literary director of the Central European Press (CEP) as contrasted with her husband, who was the photographic leader of the CEP.

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i. Information regarding Peter BRODY, Hungarian citizen affiliated with the CEP.

j. Any further information regarding the CEP and the intelligence activities of its members.

4. The interviewing agent might well play upon the following themes at various and opportune times during interview of Subject:

a. Fear of exposure. Likelihood of implication in the press of Subject with the espionage activities of PONGER and VERBER. Such implication appears to be justified in view of the information in paragraph 2 above.

b. Vanity of Subject. Did Subject, an experienced intelligence operative really believe PONGER's naive explanation of the reason for his residence in the Soviet sector of Vienna? Did Subject really fail to identify PONGER as an espionage agent after he had received so many clear indications of PONGER's true activity?

c. Subject's desire for renewed intelligence contact with the Americans. Possibility of Subject being required, because of his unequalled knowledge of the general intelligence picture in Austria, to pursue on behalf of the Americans the countless intelligence leads which have appeared in the PONGER-VERBER case.

5. The interviewing agent may make full use of all the information appearing in this disposition form; he may not, however, refer to the specific sources of the information.

6. It is further requested that after Subject has been interviewed WINKLER and LCOS likewise be interviewed. It is suggested that the same agent be used for all three interviews.

FOR THE ASSISTANT CHIEF OF STAFF, G2:

Victor W. Robson, Jr.
VICTOR W. ROBSON, JR.
Lt. Col, GS
Chief, Opns

Regraded Secret by authority of Victor W. Robson, Jr., Lt Col, GS, Chief, Opns, G-2 on 3 March 53 by James Sockridge 2/LT Sig C 430th CIC, Sub A

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