

1 April 1953

Interrogation of Dr. Wilhelm ROETTL: Preliminary Report

1. Purpose of Interrogation. The interrogation of Dr. Wilhelm ROETTL, which occurred between 25 and 29 March 1953 had four purposes listed in order of priority as follows:

- a. To determine whether ROETTL is an active Soviet agent.
- b. To determine the extent of ROETTL'S involvement, witting or unwitting, in the TOLHOFF complex.
- c. To determine the extent of compromise, witting or unwitting, of U.S. and other anti-Soviet intelligence operations to hostile intelligence services.
- d. To develop information on ROETTL'S present and past activities and connections.

2. Circumstances

a. Arrest. ROETTL was met in Bad Ischl by Special Agent Ralf E. RINGEL about noon on 25 March 1953 and was requested in a friendly manner to accompany RINGEL to Salzburg to meet someone who wished to talk to him further. ROETTL willingly agreed to this proposal and was brought to an interrogation room on Hellbrunnerstrasse 5. The warrant for ROETTL'S arrest which RINGEL had carried with him was not served until after the first two hours of interrogation.

b. Search. At the time of ROETTL'S arrest a search was carried out with proper warrants of his home in Altamsee and of the office of the Riblungerverlag in Linz. During this search a large quantity of material was impounded and subsequently brought to Salzburg. This material consisted of ROETTL'S correspondence with persons connected with his publishing business, with his literary activity, and with his clandestine activities. Also impounded were one pistol, four blank Austrian identity cards, a sum of approximately 1,265 rounds in British bank notes (issues 1925 through 1927) and a false passport issued ostensibly in Liechtenstein during the war, which bore ROETTL'S picture and a false name.

c. Interrogation. Sessions of interrogation were conducted as follows:

(1) 25 March 1953, 1400 through 1600.

(2) 26 March 1953, 1300 through 1500; 1900 through 2300 (Note: This night session covered particularly ROETTL'S association with KUNER and WEBER and was based on a brief prepared in G-2 operations from correspondence between KUNER and ROETTL which had been given to RINGEL on a previous occasion.)

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and continued infrequently through October 1952, did FONGER indicate leftist inclinations or display curiosity about ROETTL's clandestine activities. ROETTL claims that he first thought FONGER to be a Vienna representative of Amt Gehlen and that later he concluded with the Israeli Intelligence Service. He states, however, that he never considered at any time that FONGER appeared to be the least intelligence member of the group when ROETTL met. Concerning LAUBER, ROETTL says that this man was reticent and quiet and seemed to have no particular interest in common with the others except photography. Concerning Vera FONGER, whom ROETTL met on one occasion for a period of 1 1/2 hours, according to his own statement, he says that he formed the impression that she dominated her husband. He adds that upon learning through the newspapers that FONGER and VERBER were alleged to be Soviet agents he assumed that VERBER was the leader of the team but that Vera FONGER played an important and possibly dominant role. When faced in the interrogation with the two alternatives, that he was a willing member of the Soviet-controlled Tephelos complex or that he was a complete dope, ROETTL refused to accept either alternative. Being a proud man, he argued at length against the accusation that he must have been a fool to be taken in by FONGER and at the same time maintained that he never in any way tumbled to the true affiliations of the FONGER-VERBER family although he was aware that the FONGERS resided in a Soviet sector of Vienna.

e. ROETTL stated that his only persons engaged in intelligence whom he disclosed with FONGER or FONGER's associates were as follows:

(1) Wilhelm KRICHBAUM. ROETTL stated that KRICHBAUM was a mutual acquaintance of FONGER and himself at Bamberg where KRICHBAUM in his capacity as former chief of the Secret Field Police was a witness. In the meetings with KRICHBAUM, which have been reported elsewhere, ROETTL claims that FONGER took the initiative in discussing Amt Gehlen. ROETTL further claims that FONGER knew of KRICHBAUM's association with Amt Gehlen from some source unknown to ROETTL. ROETTL stated that he knew that FONGER met KRICHBAUM on occasion when ROETTL was not present but stated that he did not know that was discussed at these meetings. He added that he did not believe that KRICHBAUM is a Soviet agent but made his statement in such a tone as to indicate that a good deal of suspicion does attach to KRICHBAUM. (This off-hand or indirect type of slander was characteristic of all ROETTL's remarks concerning previous colleagues except his remarks about Anton ZWILL.)

(2) Josef Adolf URBAN. ROETTL stated that Fonger on several occasions mentioned URBAN is engaged in intelligence activity for some Western powers. It should be noted that at the present time ROETTL and URBAN appear to be enemies and that it would be natural for ROETTL to attempt to discredit URBAN by stating that FONGER had mentioned his name and thereby implying that URBAN is an agent of FONGER.

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(3) 27 March 1953, no interrogation was conducted on this date.

(4) 28-29 March 1953, 1400 to 0200. This interrogation was conducted with the polygraph machine.

All interrogation after 25 March 1953 was recorded on tape. This tape is not being copied on the other tapes so that interested agencies will have a copy. A transcription is being made in Salzburg.

d. Research of Impounded Material. A team of document analysts from LIS was assigned to screen through the material impounded at HUSTIL'S home and office and to mark for holding that which was of interest to us. Simultaneously research was conducted on the impounded material to support the interrogation while it was going on. It was estimated that the impounded material amounted to 20,000 pages. On 28 March 1953 photographing of this material was begun.

e. Confinement.

(1) HUSTIL was confined between sessions of interrogation in comfortable quarters near Salzburg. He was furnished a typewriter and paper and was asked to prepare written reports in answer to certain questions given him.

(2) From 29 March 1953 HUSTIL was placed in solitary confinement in a less comfortable cell near Salzburg. He was given a typewriter and paper with instructions that he should write down anything which he thought might help him or us in a satisfactory disposal of his case. The confining authority was instructed that should he request an interview with any of his interrogators he was to record on paper anything that he wished to say and that this would be given consideration by the authorities.

3. Summary of Conclusions. The interrogator considers that, although a considerable amount of information was recorded during the process of interrogation, the interrogation nevertheless failed in its main aim. Conclusions, which will be the subject of future detailed reports, can be summarized as follows:

a. It was not possible for the interrogators to determine whether HUSTIL is a witting Soviet Agent. HUSTIL claims that he is not a Soviet agent and points vehemently to what he affects to consider a consistent record of anti-Soviet and anti-Communist activity.

b. It was not possible to determine whether HUSTIL was a witting member of the Topfals complex or whether he was aware that HUSTIL was under control of Soviet intelligence. He stated that he believed from the first POWERS statement to him that HUSTIL had been a Captain in the OSS before becoming an interrogator at Nurnberg. He further stated that at no time in his association with POWERS, which began in Nurnberg

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Indoctrination of Dr. Wilhelm NOETTL: NOETTL'S Reaction to the Arrest of Otto VEBER and Kurt GERTNER

1. Purpose of this Report. The purpose of the present report is to record the reaction of Dr. Wilhelm NOETTL and his immediate associates to the news that Otto VEBER and Kurt GERTNER had been arrested together with three other persons for espionage on behalf of the Soviet Union against the United States. NOETTL'S reaction is documented in correspondence between himself and his associates which was discovered in a search of his quarters and office conducted on 25 March 1953. The possibility should be borne in mind that NOETTL deliberately left this correspondence for us to capture in the hopes that the correspondence would establish his innocence of implication in Soviet espionage. It is also possible that the entire correspondence was fabricated to this end.

2. Letter NOETTL to SAUL, 16 January 1953. In a letter dated 16 January 1953 of which we possess a carbon copy NOETTL wrote to Ernst Weisbach von HEST. The first two and a half pages of his letter, which begins in German "Dear Harry" concerning itself with other matters. These include the possibility of NOETTL'S being hired by Art Golden, the business of the Abolunger Verlag, the espionage activities of Theodor von Albert, etc. The relevant passages can be translated as follows:

"What do you say about the old espionage case in Vienna? The odd thing about it is that I actually have known these people for years. I must therefore be a Soviet agent! Well, aside, I still can't understand. Why did these people never approach me? Only because of my absolutely hostile attitude towards the Party? But if they had been smart they would certainly have been able to approach me from some other direction. That is, no members of the Austrian Intelligence Service and thus through me have been able to set up an anti-Russian net in order later to liquidate it. The matter is quite obscure to me, especially this Party connection to a Consul in Washington that these people were sitting the whole time here. Why were they not sent to the United States, which would be the obvious opportunity to have former intelligence officers over there. And certainly such intelligence officers could also be recruited there. My curiosity is most curious. Is the Russian Intelligence Service in not even aware of this then I should be very happy. (In any case, I am sure that I never noticed anything about them which was in the line. I certainly got the impression that they might be working a double game for the old intelligence service but when I heard this was taken for the first time from the file from Theodor's friend in Salzburg (orchestrator name: ... von ... his Salzburg friend is a policeman and ... I could not believe it and thus a statement giving ... were working for the Russians.) I certainly ... get down into this matter because there would be a good deal of ... certain people. In any case, it would be a good idea to ... were discovered since the cover names make it ... with these people only occasionally, photographs and ...

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