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Hoettl 200

NEWS RELEASE

Dr. Wilhelm Hoettl, former SS officer who was prominent in German espionage in the Balkans during World War II, has been detained by U.S. authorities in Austria in connection with his association with Curt F. Ponger and Otto Verber, American citizens arrested last January in Vienna who are now awaiting trial in Washington, D.C. on charges of espionage for the Soviet Union. Hoettl first came in contact with Ponger at Surenberg during the War Crimes trials, where Hoettl appeared as a witness and Ponger was employed as an interrogator. After Ponger left government service in 1948, he moved to Vienna, where he collected money under the U.S. Bill of Rights for ostensible studies and simultaneously operated a photographic news agency in partnership with his brother-in-law Otto Verber. From 1948 until his arrest Ponger frequently visited Hoettl in Alt Aussee, Austria.

Hoettl is known to have travelled through Western Germany in the company of Ponger and Walter Lauber, a U.S. citizen who was questioned in connection with the arrest of Ponger and Verber, attempting to arrange contact with officials of the West German government.

Hoettl is the author of a book on wartime German espionage entitled Die geheime Front (The Secret Front). Curt Ponger acted as agent in arranging the publication of this book in Switzerland.

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