

VIA: AIR
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PATCH NO. EAVA- 2251

SECRET
CLASSIFICATION

TO : Chief, FE
Attn: []
FROM : Chief of Base, Vienna *gds*
SUBJECT: GENERAL— Operational/GROOVY
SPECIFIC— Preliminary Report on HOETTL Interrogation
Ref— VIEN 9793
Info: Salzburg
Pullach
Frankfurt

DATE: 3 April 1953

Mr. Tolson	Mr. Boardman	
Mr. Belmont	Mr. Ladd	
Mr. Nichols	Mr. Clegg	
Mr. Rosen	Mr. Glavin	
Mr. Tracy	Mr. Harbo	
Mr. Egan	Mr. Mohr	
Mr. Gurnea	Mr. Winterrowd	
Mr. Hendon	Tele. Room	
Mr. Pennington	Mr. Nease	
Miss Gandy		

1. Forwarded herewith are copies of a preliminary report on the interrogation of Dr. Wilhelm HOETTL which was conducted in Salzburg between 25 and 29 March 1953. The interrogation was begun by [] using the name [] (see traces) who was assisted on the evening of 26 March by Mr. Frank Dierickx of Grueler, who used the name William Bishop (see traces). [] and [] interrogated on 28/29 March and throughout the interrogation [] lurked in the wings providing invaluable advice and bringing order into the chaos of documentary material that had been impounded at the time of HOETTL's arrest.

2. Copies of the attachment are being passed to Grueler, and for this reason no special stress has been laid in the report on Zipper personalities or on persons closely associated with Grossbahn.

3. At this writing [] is inclined to offer odds of ten to nine, or perhaps twenty to nineteen, that HOETTL is not under Soviet control and was unaware that PONGER and VERBER were Soviet agents. His function in the affair may have been to act as unwitting red herring, so that if PONGER's travel in Western Austria and Germany should come to the attention of an anti-Soviet service, attention would be diverted into the channels of everybody's normal curiosity about HOETTL's activity. It is also conceivable that PONGER, who made a persistent attempt to build HOETTL into Zipper, was merely setting up an approach which was to be made at some later date, possibly by somebody else, after HOETTL had begun to function as a Zipperite. None of the interrogators believes that HOETTL revealed as little information about Zipper and other anti-Soviet activities as he claims, but at present writing we have been unable to get concrete evidence of disclosures beyond those admitted by HOETTL and reported by Wilhelm KRICHBAUM.

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4. Further reports of this interrogation will be forwarded to the addressees under EAVA dispatches, which will include additional comment from the Kubark point of view.

W/P

Enclosure:

Interrogation of Dr. Wilhelm HOETTL:
Preliminary Report, in trip.

2 April 1953

Distribution:

- 3 EE ✓
- 1 Fran (w/o encl.)
- 2 Salz
- 1 Pull
- 1 []
- 1 Gratias (w/o encl.)
- 1 []
- 1 EE (630)
- 1 WTL

1 April 1953

Interrogation of Dr. Wilhelm HOETTL: Preliminary Report

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

- a. To determine whether HOETTL is an active Soviet agent.
- b. To determine the extent of HOETTL's involvement, witting or unwitting, in the Tophole 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 HOETTL's present and past activities and connections.

2. Circumstances.

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

b. Search. At the time of HOETTL's arrest a search was carried out with proper warrants of his home in Altanssee and of the office of the Nibelungerverlag in Linz. During this search a large quantity of material was impounded and subsequently brought to Salzburg. This material consisted of HOETTL'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 pounds in British bank notes (issues 1935 through 1937) and a false passport issued ostensibly in Liechtenstein during the war, which bore HOETTL's picture and a false name.

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

(1) 25 March 1953, 1400 through 1830

(2) 26 March 1953, 1000 through 1800, 1930 through 2300 (Note: This night session covered particularly HOETTL's association with PONGER and VERBER and was based on a brief prepared in G-2 operations from correspondence between PONGER and HOETTL which had been given to RINGER on a previous occasion.)

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

(4) 28-29 March 1953, 1400 to 0500. This interrogation was conducted with the polygraph machine.

All interrogation after 25 March 1953 was recorded on tape. This tape is now being copied on to 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 MIS was assigned to screen through the material impounded at HOETTL'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) HOETTL 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 HOETTL 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 aims. 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 HOETTL is a witting Soviet agent. HOETTL 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 HOETTL was a witting member of the Tophole complex or whether he was aware that Kurt PONGER was under control of Soviet intelligence. He stated that he believed from the first PONGER's statement to him that PONGER had been a Captain in the OSS before becoming an interrogator at Nurnberg. He further stated that at no time in his association with PONGER, which began in Nurnberg

and continued infrequently through October 1952, did PONGER indicate leftist inclinations or display curiosity about HOETTL's clandestine activities. HOETTL claims that he first thought PONGER to be a Vienna representative of Amt Gehlen and that later he concluded from PONGER's conversations and interests that he had some loose connection with the Israeli Intelligence Service. He states, however, that he never considered at any time that PONGER was an active member of any intelligence service. According to HOETTL, PONGER appeared to be the least intelligent member of the group whom HOETTL met. Concerning LAUBER, HOETTL says that this man was reticent and quiet and seemed to have no particular interests in common with the others except photography. Concerning Vera PONGER, whom HOETTL met on one occasion for a period of 1½ 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 PONGER and VERBER were alleged to be Soviet agents he assumed that VERBER was the leader of the team but that Vera PONGER played an important and possibly dominant role. When faced in the interrogation with the two alternatives: that he was a witting member of the Soviet-controlled Tophole complex or that he was a complete dupe, HOETTL 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 PONGER and at the same time maintained that he never in any way tumbled to the true affiliations of the VERBER-PONGER family although he was aware that the PONGERS resided in a Soviet sector of Vienna.

c. HOETTL stated that the only persons engaged in intelligence whom he discussed with PONGER or PONGER's associates were as follows:

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

(2) Josef Adolf URBAN. HOETTL stated that PONGER on several occasions mentioned URBAN's name to HOETTL and indicated that he was aware that URBAN is engaged in intelligence activity for some Western power or powers. It should be noted that at the present time HOETTL and URBAN appear to be enemies and that it would be natural for HOETTL to attempt to discredit URBAN by stating that PONGER had mentioned his name and thereby implying that URBAN is an agent of PONGER.

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(3) OFCZAREK, HOETTL recounted the meeting with OFCZAREK which occurred at the Wälsberg Customs Station on the Austro-German border in essentially the same terms as this meeting was reported elsewhere by KRICHRAUM. According to HOETTL, after OFCZAREK's car had departed, he and KRICHRAUM mentioned the name SCHAEFER and PONGER who had just come out of the customs office said, "Oh, you mean OFCZAREK," and then made some remark about OFCZAREK's being engaged in espionage activity because he was passed quickly through customs by the guards.

(4) Hildegard BEETZ. HOETTL stated that in a restaurant in Dusseldorf during the October trip through Germany he encountered Hildegard BEETZ who was having lunch with a party of eight or ten at a large table in the restaurant. PONGER was not present. HOETTL approached BEETZ and spoke with her for several minutes. During this time, BEETZ stated that she had recently married and that she did not wish to resume any of her previous intelligence associations. When asked about the present whereabouts of one Captain FLEX, whom HOETTL had known as an American interrogating officer, BEETZ stated that she believed FLEX to be in Berlin. HOETTL admitted that he subsequently mentioned BEETZ's name to PONGER and that PONGER appeared to know something about her.

A large number of names (50-75) were mentioned during the interrogation by HOETTL or by the interrogators. In each case that a name was mentioned the interrogator asked whether the name had been discussed with PONGER. In each case, HOETTL said either that it had not been discussed or that if it had, he did not remember. None of the names which he admitted might have been discussed were connected with the Tophole case insofar as the interrogator knows. In any event on such names as BOEHM, Karl HAAS, specific members of the Gehlen group and specific members of the group of Amt Blank, HOETTL stated that no mention was ever made and no curiosity ever displayed by PONGER. HOETTL admitted that he may have discussed such names as KERNMAYR, a personal enemy, and that General Erwin LAHOUSEN may have come up because LAHOUSEN was known to be a source of material for HOETTL's books. In summary, HOETTL claimed that he did not blow to Soviet intelligence anybody who is engaged in sensitive activity against the Soviets who was not already known to PONGER. Concerning Amt Gehlen, HOETTL stated that he always had the impression that PONGER knew more than he himself did and he added that both Gehlen and HEINZ were discussed only as organizations and never as personalities. He admitted that PONGER urged him repeatedly to become a member of Amt Gehlen, saying that undoubtedly Amt Gehlen was the future German Intelligence Service and giving as his arguments the fact that the Americans had spent millions of dollars building up Amt Gehlen and would never permit another group to become important in German Intelligence. When asked whether he knew that PONGER had attempted to make a connection between HOETTL and American intelligence in the spring of 1950, HOETTL affected complete surprise and stated that he had no idea that this had happened and no idea why PONGER should have made such an attempt.

d. In the course of the interrogation, considerable valuable information was developed on HOETTL's past and current activities. This information supported as it is by the documents impounded in the search of HOETTL's quarters and office will be written up as time permits and disseminated to interested customers. The impounded material includes diagrams of the organization which HOETTL was attempting to set up for HEINZ and which he later attempted to sell to Amt Gehlen. These diagrams include source lists of principal agents and of agents. It is interesting that these source lists include only the names of notorious fabricators or of professional middlemen. There are no names on the list of persons who honestly collect intelligence, and all of the persons listed are, like HOETTL himself, primarily operations officers and arrangers. HOETTL admitted that with the exception of several special cases he had never himself handled an agent directly, either under the Nazi system or during the period following the war. He also admitted quite freely that he did not know the techniques of espionage at the collecting level and that he never considered himself to be a technician in this field, having always been concerned with the larger picture and with organizing operations at the top level.

e. The interrogators have the impression that HOETTL is definitely concealing information on a number of points. He showed sensitivity in the polygraph examination to all questions pertaining to the concealment or destruction of documents and, although he stated that he had not destroyed his files nor had he hidden other portions of his files outside of his house, the interrogators are convinced that some destruction or concealment has taken place. Technically HOETTL is not physiologically testable by polygraph. He has low blood pressure and a circulatory defect which makes the recording of changes in his pulse rate and blood pressure almost meaningless. It was characteristic of his reactions on the polygraph machine that the strongest response was made to a question in which we absolutely knew that he was not lying. It is also characteristic that he reacted in some respect to every question and that his breathing showed throughout a feeling of tension. From these observations, which will be reported technically by another interrogator, and from direct observation during the course of the interrogation, the interrogators are convinced that HOETTL is lying about or concealing some piece of information which to HOETTL is extremely important. This piece of information may be connected with his knowledge of the relations between Anton BOEHM and Otto BOLLISCHWING. The interrogators have various theories about what HOETTL is concealing but the theories are all unsupported by concrete evidence. It is possible that he is a Soviet agent in contact with the Soviet-controlled Tophole complex, either through PONGER or through somebody else. It is possible that he is a Soviet agent who nevertheless was unaware of PONGER's affiliation. It is possible that he is not a Soviet agent but is involved in some intrigue involving the future German Intelligence Service and present German intelligence groups which he cannot afford to reveal to Americans. This last theory is partly supported by a number of curious circumstances surrounding the recent behavior by members of the Gehlen group and by members of other U.S.-sponsored intelligence operations which employ former German intelligence officers.

Finally, it is possible that HOETTL is sincere in his statements that he expects Mr. Allan Welch Dulles to take personal cognizance of his case and that he is under the impression that his present interrogators are hostile to Mr. Dulles. This fourth theory would explain his reactions to interrogation, but the theory cannot be accepted unless we assume that HOETTL is naive about the present organization of American intelligence. Such naivete is unlikely. In any event, the fourth theory will be tested in the next interrogation.

4. Future Plans.

a. Further Interrogation. HOETTL is at present in solitary confinement, where it is planned that he will remain until 3 April 1953 when he will be reinterrogated. The decision to release him is being delayed until his reaction to solitary confinement can be learned.

b. Reports. It is planned to follow this preliminary report with a series of more detailed reports.

(1) HOETTL's reactions to the arrest of VERBER and PONGER. HOETTL's immediate reactions when he learned through the press of the arrest of VERBER and PONGER are recorded in part in correspondence between himself and his chief assistant, Baron Heinrich von MAST, as well as in his report to Rupert HANDEL and his report to Rolf E. RINGER. A separate report will be prepared covering this material.

(2) Personalities. The large number of personalities which have been mentioned during the course of the interrogation will be listed in a separate report with HOETTL's comments on each personality summarized. This report will be of some value in the Tophole investigation and will be of considerable value in the continuing counter-intelligence study of HOETTL's activities.

(3) Assessment of HOETTL. A report summarizing the assessment of HOETTL as a personality will be prepared. This assessment will include impressions formed by the interrogators, facts established concerning HOETTL's intelligence activity and capability, and results of study of documents impounded.

(4) HOETTL's Correspondence with PONGER. A special report on the correspondence between the Central European Press and HOETTL is being prepared which will include the correspondence itself as well as HOETTL's responses to the intensive interrogation on this subject conducted during the evening hours of 26 March 1953.

(5) Impounded Material. The material impounded during the search of HOETTL's house and office is being photographed and copies of these photographs will be made available for incorporation into appropriate files. In the course of time, research will be done on this material both in Austria and in Washington, and it is probable that a series of reports will issue from this research.

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c. Press Action. Press releases have been prepared in the event that public curiosity concerning HOETTL's arrest brings pressure to bear on American authorities in Austria. If the Department of Justice concurs, it is our present desire to issue at some time in the future a press release which will implicate HOETTL directly with Kurt PONGER. The purpose of this press release is to insure that HOETTL is discredited once and for all with German Intelligence Services, and thereby to prevent his continued harassment of the United States by the processing through various channels of fabricated intelligence.