

EAVA-2271

In recognition of Willi Hoerr

two times that PONGER visited in Aussee, he did not sleep either in Alt Aussee or Bad Aussee but in Grundlsee, which he explained to me by saying that he was making a photo study of a wood carver who worked there. It might be eventually interesting in this connection that since approximately last summer a man has been working in the gypsum works in Grundlsee who is known as a leading functionary of the KPOe, although not publicly so known, and who is reported to have had his training in Russia. This man's name is LINECK (phonetic) and he lives in that part of Alt Aussee known as Wim. However, PONGER never asked me about this man and I was interested in him only because I have the opinion that the Russians are preparing the Totes Gebirge as a stronghold for partisan warfare. I have a number of indications of this. It seems peculiar to me that the LINECK mentioned above, who allegedly had a prosperous vegetable business, should suddenly take a job in a gypsum works in Grundlsee as a common laborer.

"Otherwise, PONGER did not indicate any interest to me in persons in the Aussee area although he frequently asked about Dr. MAE. I never spoke of MAE but always advised PONGER simply to visit him if he wished information. Whether PONGER visited him or not I do not know.

"Concerning other persons, the only name which came up was that of the former Colonel of the Secret Field Police, KRIECHBAUM (sic). PONGER knew that I knew this man and that I also knew him during my confinement. PONGER had also met KRIECHBAUM in Nurnberg and remained from that time on in contact with him. In the summer of 1951 when PONGER visited me in Aussee he told me that he had seen KRIECHBAUM and that KRIECHBAUM would be very happy to see me again. If I wished, PONGER said he could arrange a meeting. I should write KRIECHBAUM a letter since that would be according to protocol, and say that I would be very happy to see him again and PONGER would then arrange a meeting between us. KRIECHBAUM chose as a date the 18th of August, as well as I can reconstruct from the letter of PONGER's that I have, but whether we actually met on that day I no longer exactly remember. It was certainly in the month of August. PONGER brought KRIECHBAUM from Reichenhall to Salzburg and there I also got into the car. As well as I can remember it was KRIECHBAUM's car, and we then drove to Fuschl where we drank coffee in a restaurant by the lake. The conversation was confined to the exchange of reminiscences and only at the end of the conversation did KRIECHBAUM tell me that in intelligence circles my friendship with Erich KERNMAYR was disapproved of. I was able to explain to KRIECHBAUM that KERNMAYR had indeed been a former colleague of mine when I was working for CIC in Austria but that since that time we had separated, since KERNMAYR was completely impossible in my opinion. KRIECHBAUM indicated that he was completely satisfied with this explanation but did not indicate that he had any definite plan connected with me. PONGER, on the other hand, told me on the return journey (he brought me as far as St. Gilgen) that this conversation would have good results since KRIECHBAUM was a leading man of the Schneider firm (translator note: Amt Gehlen). (He had told me in a communication dated 5 August that KRIECHBAUM would make some definite proposition to me at the meeting on the 18th of August, but :

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Interrogation of Willi HOETTL

he never told me either in writing or later by words what he meant. I could only guess that it had something to do with cooperation in the Schneider firm. This activity as middle-man in 1951 and again a year later brought me to the conjecture that PONGER might perhaps be a colleague of the Schneider group in Vienna with a mission from KRIECHBAUM, who had the reputation of being a first-rate specialist in Southeast matters. In any event, I never asked him about this and later observations brought me to a different conclusion. I guess that at that time and earlier PONGER was doing some sort of business with KRIECHBAUM concerning which I will write more later.

"In September 1952, PONGER visited me again in Alt Aussee. He was there only about an hour (that is at my house) on which occasion he asked me whether I might care to make a visit to Germany with him and with his brother-in-law in October. A proposition which he had first suggested a year before this. (We had occasionally talked in such a way that I indicated that I occasionally had business to do in Germany but that I had to postpone the trip because the German railroads were so expensive. PONGER at that time had suggested that I go with him in his car when he went to Germany. Whether he actually went to Germany in 1951 I cannot remember.) PONGER also suggested that it would be very nice at this time to speak again with KRIECHBAUM, since now the question of a German Intelligence Service was becoming acute and until the establishment of the German Intelligence Service I had held my plans in abeyance. I had actually on several previous occasions told PONGER this after he had several times urged me to take up contact with KRIECHBAUM and to place my capabilities in the intelligence field at the disposal of the Schneider firm. On this occasion it would be possible for us therefore to speak to KRIECHBAUM and he would arrange the itinerary in such a way that it fitted most conveniently my interests. He suggested a meeting with KRIECHBAUM in KRIECHBAUM's residence in Reichenhall on the weekend of the 11th to 12th October but I refused this since I had something else to do that weekend. On the 13th of October, I travelled to Salzburg where Walter LAUBER fetched me from the train. PONGER had introduced me to LAUBER several days before in Ischl. At that time I had been in Ischl and PONGER had called my wife in Alt Aussee who told him that eventually he could find me in the railroad station restaurant. He came there and I went outside with him briefly where he introduced me to LAUBER in order that I would recognize him in the event that he could not personally pick me up in Salzburg. On the 13th of October, LAUBER came with his Volkswagon and drove me to Reichenhall where PONGER had put up in the Hotel Deutsches Haus or Deutscher Hof. PONGER had already spoken with KRIECHBAUM but KRIECHBAUM was no longer in Reichenhall, having arranged to meet us in Munich. We met KRIECHBAUM in the restaurant near the bus stop by the Hotel Schottenhammel (afternoon of 13 October). The conversation was again purely theoretical as it had been a year before and KRIECHBAUM indicated that the situation in the German Intelligence Service was still completely unclear, saying that the Americans naturally would never let a man like Dr. Schneider (translator note: Gehlen) be dismissed and that this man would play an important role in the future, etc. Nothing concrete was discussed at this meeting. KRIECHBAUM gave the impression of being very sick and stated that for several months he had been desperately

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ill. Several days before my journey, I had learned through a criminal police officer attached to the State Police in Salzburg by the name of ANGERER, not directly but through cut-outs, that Curt PONGER was suspected in Vienna of working for the Soviet Intelligence Service. (It was in another connection that the name of PONGER had come up.) I had consequently passed to ANGERER a written memorandum stating that I knew a certain Curt PONGER and telling what I know about this man. This journey with PONGER seemed therefore much more interesting, since I hoped to get the opportunity to be able to make conclusions about PONGER. I had the greatest doubt that PONGER could be a Soviet agent, since his entire activity during the past year, at least as far as I could see, indicated otherwise. The man had been a Captain with OSS, was then an official in Nurnberg where in the last stages of the trials that parlor-pink note of 1945-46 had ended among Americans. He then got the concessions of American agencies in Austria and he had then arranged that my book, Die Geheime Front, a work most offensive to Russia and to Communism which had been forbidden in the Soviet Zone and which had been subject of hostile attention by various Soviet commands, should appear in Switzerland. On this journey, PONGER behaved in a completely unsuspecting fashion, he showed no interest in what I was doing, and we practically never saw each other except at certain meals. It was admittedly unusual that he should have something to discuss with KRIECHBAUM which he did not wish to speak of in my presence, and he arranged with KRIECHBAUM that he could telegraph from some point along the way to arrange a further meeting between the two. Whether this meeting occurred I do not know. I travelled with PONGER and LAUBER on the 15th of October to Nurnberg, I immediately took the train on to Dusseldorf where I had business and there did not meet PONGER and LAUBER again until the 18th of October when I met them in Bonn. When they arrived I had completed all my business and consequently went ahead by train to Stuttgart, where on the 20th I met PONGER and VERBER again. I arranged for them to visit the Porsche works, since they wished to make a photographic study for the United States, and on the same day we went on to Munich, where after spending the night we proceeded to Aussee. PONGER and LAUBER intended to go only as far as Salzburg but I persuaded them to bring me to Aussee and they spent the night in Grundlsee. On the following morning, they wished to try to make some pictures of spawning fish (at that time the spawning period of a local fish was beginning). Since that time I have seen neither PONGER nor the others and have received no letters with the exception of the Christmas card mentioned above.

"After becoming aware of the arrest of PONGER and VERBER, I decided to inform the office of Dr. Schneider and hereby set down as an aide memoir information which substantiates my oral report. This material is to be used only with my explicit permission—that is, without my specific permission it cannot be forwarded to any office. (Translator note: When questioned on this statement, HOETTL admitted that he specifically meant it could not be forwarded to an American office. He stated, however, that his main reason for this was to ensure security, since he was not aware of the extent to which disseminations were made inside Gehlen's organization and he actually hoped to restrict dissemination to General Gehlen himself and thereby to the really responsible American officer.)

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"Incidentally I should like to add some notes on all of the above matter which might be interesting to you or to some other connections. In all my conversations with [redacted], as far as I can remember, the names of former intelligence people never occurred with the exception of those already mentioned and two others which I wish to discuss here. The first is one Dr. [redacted] and he is said to employ the cover name Dr. SCHASSER. I mentioned this name to [redacted], as I believe, during the conversation described above between [redacted], [redacted] and myself on the 13th of October in Munich. (How the conversation came around to [redacted]/[redacted] I no longer remember.) I was astounded when suddenly [redacted] uttered the name [redacted] whom I knew from my student days. As far as I can remember on this occasion [redacted] stated that [redacted] was very angry with [redacted] because he continued to work against the agreement that had been reached between [redacted] in Austria and Schneider. Curiously enough, on the return journey from Munich we met [redacted] in his car at the German-Austrian border. I had already finished my business with customs while [redacted] and [redacted] were still engaged in conversation concerning books on which they had to pay customs and on which [redacted] did not wish to pay the duty. [redacted] came out from the customs shed and made some statement that it was not particularly skillful when somebody like [redacted] was passed through the customs so rapidly that any blind man could see that the man had been accredited officially in some manner to the border police. Whether [redacted] or [redacted] had spoken with [redacted] during the customs inspection is not known to me but I doubt it, since otherwise [redacted] would not have been finished so quickly. I also do not know whether [redacted] knows [redacted] personally. Concerning Dr. [redacted], I should like to state that exactly as in the case of Colonel [redacted] any suspicion that he is working for the Russians via [redacted] seems impossible. (From other quarters such rumors about [redacted] in Austria have repeatedly come to my attention; these originate with his acquaintance with Dr. Kurt WESSLEY, who allegedly is active for the Russian or Hungarian intelligence service. Concerning this a good deal is said but I personally do not believe that [redacted], who had employed WESSLEY in his intelligence group and allegedly still employs him, knows anything about WESSLEY. It could possibly be explained by a certain good nature on the part of [redacted] as in the case of Dr. KNOLL, the son of his colleague Professor Kurt KNOLL. This younger KNOLL is a Communist Party Front Shop Steward in Vost and is reported to send [redacted] information through his father concerning this business. The senior KNOLL appears to be absolutely reliable but apparently cannot, for obvious reasons, separate himself from his son.)

"The second name which seems interesting in an intelligence connection is that of the former SS Obersturmbahalfuehrer Josef URBAN. Concerning this man [redacted] had astoundingly good information. He told me two years ago that URBAN was an agent of the American, British and French Intelligence Services as well as of the intelligence service of the Austrian State Police, but that this had not hindered him from becoming intelligence chief of the Neo-Nazi group of SOUCEK. A remark of [redacted]'s made a long time ago made it appear to me at that time that URBAN also had connections with the Israeli

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