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SUBJECT: The National League - An Impotent Communist Front of Ex-Nazis.

SUMMARY

1. The National Democratic Union
2. Organization of the National League
3. A Neutralist Program
4. Nazi Tendencies
5. Communist Policy Results in a Split
6. A Limited Existence
7. The Oesterreichische Beobachter

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CONCLUSION

The Communists, with Soviet support, have attempted three times to penetrate right wing elements in Austria and use them for their own ends. Support of Josef HEGER's element within the VdU failed when he was ousted from the party immediately after his election to the Nationalrat in 1949. Attempts to establish Heger as leader of an independent party and subsequently to support Dr. SLAVIK's neutralist National League were too transparent and failed to attract re-enfranchised former Nazis or other right wing elements. Slavik has joined Heger in political oblivion, but infrequent meetings of the National League are still held, and its biweekly newspaper Oesterreichische Beobachter will probably appear as long as the Soviets pay the bills.

note 7/1/50

The Communist defeat in the national elections of 1949 and the emergence of the VdU as an important political force to the right of the People's Party led to new organizational activity within the Communist Party. Two tiny groups of Austrian nationalists, one led by Josef Heger and the other by Dr. Adolf Slavik, offered possibilities for penetration and the establishment of a front group to siphon voters away from the VdU.

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1. THE NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC UNION

Both organizations were organized about the same time. Heger submitted the statutes of his organization, the National Democratic Union, to the Ministry of Interior on December 29, 1949, but was not able to organize a public meeting until February 20, 1951. His rival, Dr. Slavik, beat him by three weeks, holding the first meeting of his Nationale Liga - Verband Schaffender Oesterreicher (National League - Association of Creative Austrians) on January 30.

Many political observers could see little to choose between the two neutralist, if not pro-Soviet, groups which were trying to recruit former Nazis and make inroads on the VdU. Heger, however, insisted that his party, in contrast to the National League which was a Russian-sponsored organization, was purely Austrian in spirit. The initial opinion of US Army Intelligence was that Heger's group would prove to be more significant, although neither group would achieve any sizable following.

Heger had two assets which assured him of some attention. Immediately after his election to the Nationalrat on the VdU ticket, he had been ousted from the party for fraudulent claims to the title of engineer and high military rank and decorations. Heger also had a large supply of cash which press and intelligence reports indicated came from the Soviets. Some reports indicated that this allowance was 45,000 schillings a month and was later increased to 80,000 to 100,000.

Heger was able to pay three months' rent in advance and a middlemen's fee totalling 6,000 schillings on February 4 for a four room office suite in the third district (British sector). He also rented the main hall of the Vienna Konzerthaus for his opening meeting on February 20 at the cost of 1800 schillings. Large posters announcing the meeting appeared all over Vienna and the announced publication of a paper "Oesterreichische Nationale Zeitung" (remarkably similar to the Vienna Soviet paper's title Oesterreichische Zeitung) and brochures was bound to entail even larger outlays.

The opening meeting on February 20 was not very impressive. About six hundred people attended, most of them former middle class Nazis. The first speaker was Heinz SIEGERT, a former VdU official and now Heger's propaganda chief. He was followed by Heger who read a speech which was constantly interrupted by hecklers, some of whom were ejected only to return. He elicited little applause during the recital of his program which promised benefits to every major group but especially disenfranchised and penalized former Nazis. Only when he referred to

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Allied bombings and dismantlings or made a sentimental appeal for honoring the war dead did he arouse any enthusiasm. After completing his forty-five minute diatribe, Heger walked out ignoring the persistent shouts for a discussion period.

Although there were no visible ties between Heger's group and the Communist party, numerous conferences between Heger, the Soviet High Commissioner, (General SVIRIDOV, and his Political Advisor, KOPTELOV were reported. Heger was even alleged to have obtained Soviet approval of a secret ten point platform which included: (1) An attempt to split the VdU; (2) advocacy of a radical social program; (3) the use of radical tactics to instigate and promote strikes; (4) opposition to US influence and the MARSHALL Plan; (5) denunciations of Allied dismantling in Germany and Western intelligence activities in Germany and Austria. In return, the Soviets would wink at the recruiting of former Nazis. Furthermore, it was known that Heger had passed through a Soviet indoctrination camp after his capture on the Russian front and it was widely believed that his previous membership in the VdU had been as a Soviet penetration agent.

Despite the initial burst of publicity with which the National Democratic Union was launched, its paper never appeared, and by November 1950 it had sunk into oblivion. Apparently the Soviets stopped their subsidy and switched their support to Slavik's National League.

2. ORGANIZATION OF THE NATIONAL LEAGUE

IN AUSTRIA, AUSTRIA ADVOCATED
The National League developed out of the belief of (Dr.) Herbert TAVS, a former prominent Nazi and member of the National Committee during the SCHUSNIGG regime, that the only course for former nationalists was to align themselves with the Soviets in Austria. He cited the opportunities which the Soviets had given former nationalists in the East German SED. Dr. Adolf Slavik, Tavs' cellmate for eleven months at the Federal Penitentiary in Stein, Lower Austria, where they were both serving sentences for Nazi activities, became Tavs' first convert.

RESPONSIBLE FOR FOUNDING THE NATIONAL LEAGUE
Dr. Slavik was born into a Catholic middle class family on March 24, 1918. He attended Vienna schools and received a Doctor of Laws degree from the University of Vienna in 1940. He was an early member of the Hitler Youth, joining the organization in July 1932. He was an active youth leader during the illegal period and joined the Nazi Party in 1936. He served in the SS from 1938 to 1945, with a brief period out as an attorney at the Land Court of Vienna. In the SS, Slavik achieved a rank equivalent to a first lieutenant. After being released

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from an American prisoner-of-war camp, he joined the Socialist Party but his membership was annulled when his Nazi background was discovered. On June 16, 1948, Slavik was sentenced to two years at hard labor under the Denazification Law and sent to the Federal Penitentiary at Stein.

Following his release in May 1949 under a Presidential amnesty, Slavik first tried to join DOBRETSBERGER's Democratic Union, whose neutralist views coincided with Tavs' program. Slavik was quickly rejected probably because of Dobretsberger's basic opposition to Fascism and his rejection of the original Democratic Union platform of attracting re-enfranchised Nazis.

Slavik then turned his attention to Herbert KRAUS' VdU, or League of Independents. He reportedly met with Erich KERN-MAYER and Wilhelm HOETTEL, two former German intelligence agents and leaders of the extreme right wing of the VdU. Significantly, Slavik spent the rest of his time studying Russian in a school in the Soviet sector of Vienna.

~~FORMER CHAIRMAN OF THE NATIONAL LEAGUE - A COMMUNIST FRONT~~

By January, Slavik had succeeded in obtaining a handful of adherents and police approval to organize. Two hundred ex-Nazis, Ergocrats (a tiny political party), and some Communist students attended the organization meeting on January 30 in ~~VIENNA~~ a gasthaus in the VIIIth district. Walter ~~IGL~~, an ex-Nazi, ex-Ergocrat, and son of the leader of the Socialist Party in the XIVth district but no relation to Leopold ~~IGL~~, was elected Chairman. He was soon succeeded on May 26 by Deputy Chairman Josef Wenzel ~~KRUPICKA~~, a former member of the SA. Krupicka worked on Field Marshal PAULUS' Free Germany committee in the Soviet Union after passing through a Soviet indoctrination ~~VIENNA~~ (Antifa) camp. After his return to Austria, he worked in a USIA plant and became a Communist but was subsequently disillusioned.

~~FORMER CHAIRMAN OF THE NATIONAL LEAGUE - A COMMUNIST FRONT~~

Krupicka did not last long in office either. He was replaced by Ferdinand ~~Haidner~~, the leader of the VdU in Lower Austria from 1949 to 1950, who was ousted for negotiating with Slavik. The other officers were Dr. Ferber ~~WETTINGER~~ of ~~Gras, Austria~~, Deputy Chairman, and Walter ~~TRUGER~~, Vienna, Executive Secretary. Slavik himself was barred from holding office by his classification as an "implicated Nazi". No attempt was made to conceal his complete domination of the organization, although it was reliably reported that as late as December 1950, Tavs continued to direct the organization by correspondence illegally smuggled in and out of the Stein Penitentiary.

The National League was careful to conduct most of its meetings on an invitational basis only thus circumventing the

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requirement of police notification and avoiding disruption or heckling by opponents. Secret instructions stressed that public meetings should only be held after careful organization and assurance that the meetings could be protected against outside interference.

Slavik was also anxious to concentrate on discussion meetings and develop a dedicated cadre rather than recruit mass support. By mid-September 1950, an inside source reported that there were only 500 actual members and perhaps two or three thousand supporters not holding actual membership. These figures coincided with Austrian police estimates. Moreover, new members were required to pass through a year's candidate status before they were accepted as full members. During this apprenticeship period, they were subjected to thorough indoctrination. A series of philosophical tracts entitled the Activist was also issued by the League to help in this work. These membership policies probably account for many of the persistent rumors that the Soviets had assigned the task of assembling former SS members to be the nucleus for People's Police units like those formed in East Germany. The possibility of some such ulterior motive behind Soviet support of the National League cannot be ruled out, however.

2. A NEUTRALIST PROGRAM

The National League's program was authoritatively summarized in a pamphlet entitled "What Does the National League Want?" in October 1950. The main points include: (1) Opposition to the Government parties; (2) absolute neutrality of Austria as a pre-condition to the State Treaty and economic recovery; (3) opposition to the Marshall plan and increased East-West trade; (4) better relations with "our eastern neighbors and the Soviet Union" and opposition to the one-sided pro-western orientation of the Government parties; (5) repeal of denazification laws and amendment of the War Crimes Law; (6) an economic program calling for extensive planning in industry and agriculture, including the creation of state-subsidized farm machine cooperatives. Except for the demand for repeal of Nazi legislation, the platform coincided almost exactly with that of the Democratic Union.^{1/}

American and Austrian observers alike inevitably linked the two organizations labeling them "the bridge builders" or "crypto-Communists". After a brief flurry of concern in Austrian Government circles in May 1950, the National League was rejected as totally unimportant. The newspapers continued the attack for

^{1/}For the most recent platform of the National League, see enclosure no. 1.

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some time denouncing Slavik as a "national bolshevist" and "commu-Nazi".

Although rumors of Soviet control or support of the League were current, both Slavik's former secretary and Ernst Georg PERSY, a League official of some importance, denied such affiliations when questioned by CIC. Persy implied that the League's policy might contribute to Soviet aims and conceded that delegations were usually sent to Communist-sponsored Peace Council meetings. The League also cooperated with the Communists in collecting signatures for the Stockholm Peace Declaration and supported on a very limited scale the unsuccessful Communist-sponsored general strike attempt in September and October 1950.

4. NAZI TENDENCIES

Despite the National League's willingness to cooperate in Communist-sponsored activities, it also had definite Nazi or neo-Nazi overtones. The Soviet Union joined the three western powers in the Allied Council decision to impose a two-month ban on the Oesterreichische Beobachter in December 1950 for publishing neo-Nazi and Pan-German articles. The newspaper reappeared during the period of the ban under the name Oesterreichische National-Zeitung. The western elements protested that this was a violation of the Allied Council decision and that the new paper also failed to abide by the regulations against neo-Nazi publications. The Soviets disagreed, however, and the newspaper was allowed to continue publication.

In May 1950, the League also established its youth organization, the Nationale Jugend (National Youth), patterned on the Hitler Youth movement in which Dr. Slavik had been an active leader. Even the uniforms and the flag, a white arrow on a black field, imitated the Hitler Youth. Boys wore gray shirts, black neckties and black shorts, and girls wore white blouses and black skirts. The paper of the youth movement was appropriately called "Storm Youth".

In December 1951 a factional fight between Dr. Slavik and the League's embryo youth organization, Nationale Jugend, broke out. Following the disagreement between the two groups, Slavik allegedly denounced two youth leaders, Helmut KRISKA and Lothar WINTER, to the authorities for neo-Nazi activities. They were subsequently arrested in May 1952, convicted and served eight months in jail. Their testimony in turn implicated Slavik who was arrested in early June but released on September 2 when proceedings against him were quashed for lack of evidence.

Regardless of whether Slavik actually denounced the leaders, the allegation was widely believed within the movement as well.

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as outside. Many of the members became disillusioned and the waning prestige of both Dr. Slavik and the National League declined further

5. COMMUNIST POLICY RESULTS IN A SPLIT

New evidence of collaboration with the Communists were Slavik's instructions to members to cast blank ballots in the 1951 Presidential election. This action could only benefit the Communists. As the 1952 fall election campaign got under way, the National League attempted to form a coalition with Dr. Herbert KRAUS' VdU. A formal coalition proposal was even printed in the November 15, 1952 issue of the Oesterreichischer Beobachter. Kraus rejected the offer out of hand considering it a Soviet-Communist effort to penetrate the VdU.

This pro-Communist course met with opposition within the ranks of the League. By late 1952, a number of dissident leaders were convinced that despite repeated denials by Slavik and Truger, the National League and its newspaper were supported almost entirely by a monthly contribution of 42,000 schillings from USIA firms. This sum was barely adequate to cover printing costs of the Oesterreichischer Beobachter since only 2,000 copies of the press run of 20,000 were sold.

Apparently aware that he would never be able to carry the membership of the National League with him into the Communist electoral coalition, Dr. Slavik, after much hesitation, finally announced on January 3, 1953, that the League would not enter the People's Opposition. He also stated that the lack of funds, possibly the result of his failure to deliver the League to the People's Opposition, would prevent the organization from running its own list of candidates. Instead, he called on the members to cast blank ballots in the February elections. This suggestion brought a storm of protest after which several of the prominent Vienna leaders, including Deputy Chairman Dr. Wettinger, announced their resignation and walked out of the meeting.

6. A LIMITED EXISTENCE

The National League was not expected to survive these factional fights but it managed to stagger through the February 1953 elections and even held its second national convention on May 30, 1953. At the convention, Slavik claimed the League had a total of 4,200 adherents distributed as follows: Vienna, 1500; Lower Austria, 700; Styria and Upper Austria together, 500; Carinthia, 500; Tyrol and Vorarlberg together, 500; Salzburg, 400; and Burgenland, 100. The youth organization also claimed 250 members in all of Austria, but mostly concentrated in Vienna.

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These figures are undoubtedly inflated, but, before the outbreak of factional disputes in mid-1952, the National League was able to attract about 1200 participants to its big public meetings in Vienna. A list of the Executive Committee elected at the May 1952 meeting and other known personnel appointments since that time will be found in enclosure no. 2.

Although the National League continues to hold a few meetings, the only real sign of activity is the bi-weekly appearance of the Oesterreichischer Beobachter.

7. OESTERREICHISCHER BEOBACHTER

The National League began publication of a four-page bulletin, the Oesterreichischer Beobachter, an obvious imitation of the Voelkischer Beobachter, the main organ of the Nazi Party, in March 1950. The paper appeared irregularly until August when the party apparently received substantial financial aid. From then on the Beobachter appeared regularly twice a month as a six-page paper.

The main themes of the vitriolic paper were: (1) Anti-American articles, especially denunciations of wartime bombing; (2) requests for revocation of denazification and restitution laws; (3) articles on the satellites, particularly East Germany; (4) attacks on the VdU; (5) attacks on Government and party corruption, and, above all, (6) refutations that the National League was a Communist or Soviet front organization.

The tone of the paper has become milder in recent years probably as a result of its two-month ban by the Allied High Commission. The paper still follows the current Communist line on economic issues such as unemployment, liberalization, and East-West trade. The neutralism is still very prominent, but the propaganda line is not so blatantly evident as in other Austrian Communist papers.

CONCLUSION

The Communists, with Soviet support, have attempted three times to penetrate right wing elements in Austria and use them for their own ends. Support of Josef Heger's element within the VdU failed when he was ousted from the party immediately after his election to the Nationalrat in 1949. Attempts to establish Heger as leader of an independent party and subsequently to support Dr. Slavik's neutralist National League were too transparent and failed to attract re-enfranchised former Nazis or other right wing elements. Slavik has joined Heger in political oblivion,

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but infrequent meetings of the National League are still held, and its biweekly newspaper Oesterreichischer Beobachter will probably appear as long as the Soviets pay the bills.

Richard H. Davis

Richard H. Davis
Chargé d'Affaires ad interim

Enclosures:

1. English translation of platform of the National League.
2. List of Officers of the National League.

Sources:

1. A-26, April 1, 1953, Biographical Report on Dr. Adolf Slavik by M. R. Barnebey.
2. UBRN Weekly Intelligence Summaries.
3. CIC Agent reports.
4. CAS.
5. Files of Embassy Biographic Unit.
6. Legal Division.

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ENGLISH TRANSLATION OF PLATFORM OF THE
NATIONAL LEAGUE - OCTOBER 8, 1952.

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1. We demand the establishment of a socialist community, the only order which is able to safeguard the elementary, vital interests of our nation. We demand that the individual interest be subordinated to the community interest and that all endeavors which are selfish or detrimental to the common interest be eliminated. We thus profess a Democracy which really serves the national interest.

2. We demand absolute equality of rights between our people and all other nations. We demand that the national characteristics and the sovereignty of all peoples be respected; we demand unrestricted national autonomy and fight for a peaceful co-existence of nations. We disapprove of any national chauvinism as well as of the attempts to acquire world supremacy on the part of some great powers, these being fundamental causes of war. We strive for a socialistic order of the nations.

3. We profess German national ways and affirm the independence of Austria as a state.

We regard the restoration of German unity as an essential prerequisite to the recovery of Europe.

4. We demand the neutrality of Austria and a policy of true agreement also with the Eastern countries.

5. We demand equal rights and equal duties for all citizens. We demand the abrogation of the NS Laws and a law against any fascist activity to take their place.

6. We demand immediate naturalization of all Volksdeutsche willing to work, but eviction of all alien parasites.

7. We demand the duty and the right to work for every citizen according to his ability and proficiency.

We demand fair wages on the basis of performance and its value to the community. We demand institution of an old age pension which will be due every citizen and an adequate welfare program for war and labor victims.

8. We demand equal rights, socially and economically, for women and generous state support for newly married couples.

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9. We oppose the supremacy of international Plutocracy and demand a planned economy which will serve only the national interests of our national economy.

10. We demand an export trade policy to serve the interests of our nation. We demand good economic relations with all countries, but first of all the resumption of extensive trade relations with the Eastern countries, the historical trade partners of our national economy.

11. We acknowledge and demand the protection of sound private property, but demand:

- a. Nationalization of all key industries as well as all money, credit, and insurance institutions;
- b. Conversion of all large industries to joint stock companies, with the people holding at least 51% of the stock;
- c. Prohibition of all capitalistic concerns, trusts, and combines.

12. We demand elimination of commission business, which serves no function, and promotion of productive craft and the rising professional generation. We demand fair fiscal laws.

13. We regard the farming class as a source of national life. We demand a land reform to suit national needs and the prevention of any real estate speculation. We demand planning and promotion of agricultural production, expansion of professional training programs, acknowledgment of agricultural work as skilled work, and creation of new farms on non-agricultural arable land.

14. We demand mobilization of all mental and psychical resources of our nation. Therefore, we demand uniform organization and subordination of our entire school and popular education system under the authority of the national community.

15. We demand maximum furtherance and generous expansion of science and research. Furthermore, we demand gratuitous formal and professional training for all children of our nation, a particularly effective promotion of talent, and the creation of adequate chances of advancement.

16. We demand state furtherance of all institutions which serve the psychical and physical health of our nation, in particular of arts and sports.

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We demand elimination of all disintegrating influences from the life of our nation and, in particular, of our youth.

We demand freedom of conscience and, although acknowledging the freedom of religious activity, separation of Church and State.

Owner, publisher: "National League", Vienna IV, Wohllebengasse 1/7
Responsible for the contents: Walther Truger, Vienna IV,
Wohllebengasse 1/7
Printed by: Eduard Bauer's Widow & Co., Vienna XVIII, Gersthofen
Strasse 14.

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OFFICERS OF THE NATIONAL LEAGUE ELECTED MAY 31, 1953 2P

Ferdinand Haidner - Chairman, Baden AUSTRIA
Walther Trugser - Deputy Chairman, General Secretary and
Propaganda Director, Vienna AUSTRIA
Josef Schaberl - Secretary, Alms AUSTRIA
Hermann Michelitsch, Treasurer, Vienna AUSTRIA

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Lower Austria - Franz Bind, (Stockeran AUSTRIA)
Styria - Kurt Fleischer, (Graz AUSTRIA)
Vienna - Hermine Holzreiter, Social Director, Vienna AUSTRIA
Carinthia - Kurt Markos, (Kruppendorf AUSTRIA)
Vienna - Walter Nedwedeck, Vienna, Youth Director
Upper Austria - Konrad Hunoutz, Alms AUSTRIA
Salzburg - Josef Schweitzer, (Salzburg AUSTRIA)

(Dr.) Adolf Slavik, Organisational Director - ~~ACKNOWLEDGEMENT MATERIAL AVAILABLE~~
Traute Nedwedeck, Federal Secretary and Treasurer
Heinrich Beck, Director of Wounded Veterans
Ernst Wachalovsky, Press Director
(Dr.) North, Auditor
Zangerl, Auditor
Wilhelm Zimmer, Auditor, Vienna AUSTRIA
Stefan Holzreiter, Auditor, Vienna AUSTRIA

Subsequent Personnel Changes:

Upper Austria - Business Manager, Ludwig Winkelbauer
(ex-YDU)
Press and Propaganda Chief, Alois
Maubisser
Vienna - Business Manager, Hermann Michelitsch
(formerly leader in Graz)
Burgenland - Arpad Jamblich
Graz - Franz Sacherer
Salzburg - Helmut Josef Breiffuss

YOUTH LEADERS

Walter Nedwedeck, Federal youth leader
Guenther Schuetler, Vienna leader
Franz Fuchs, Land Styria leader
Helmut Winter, Land Upper Austria leader
Josef Zangerl, Land Tyrol leader
Heinrich Wernl, Land Carinthia leader
Traute Nedwedeck, Federal girls' leader

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EX F Lore KLEIN, Land Upper Austria girls' leader
Eduard WONDRAČEK, Vienna functionary } Austria

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