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SECURITY INFORMATION

*Project 477 in Germany  
out of the  
early part of September*

MEMORANDUM FOR: DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

SUBJECT: Immigration of Aleksel KURGVEL

It is recommended that permanent residency in the United States be granted to Aleksel KURGVEL, an Estonian national and a former captain of the Estonian army, under the terms of Section 5 of Public Law 118 of 1949. This recommendation is based on the following factors:

1. Captain KURGVEL has been employed by CIA in Germany since September 1951, and has rendered outstanding service to this Agency through his participation in contemplated top secret missions for the penetration of the Baltic States (USSR). He has performed these duties competently, diligently, and patiently.
2. Captain KURGVEL's services for the U.S. interest are considered essential in the future training and dispatching of Estonian agents into the Estonian SSR, and for future training of agents for unconventional warfare under the hot war conditions. These services will be performed in the United States.
3. Because of Captain KURGVEL's knowledge of some CIA top secret operational plans into Estonian SSR, it is essential to our security that he be removed from Europe.
4. Inasmuch as Captain KURGVEL has been declared inadmissible to the United States under the Displaced Persons Act by a Board of Special Inquiry of the Immigration and Naturalization Service, his immigration is possible only under Section 5 of Public Law 118 of 1949.

Enclosures:

- A. Justification
- B. Background and Biography

C [ ]  
Chief, SR Division

DECLASSIFIED AND RELEASED BY  
CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY  
SOURCE METHOD EXEMPTION 3B2B  
NAZI WAR CRIMES DISCLOSURE ACT  
DATE 2006

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ENCLOSURE A

Justifications for Action

1. Captain KURGWEL was contracted by CIA in September 1951 as a principal Estonian agent trainer for OSO-OPC operations. He is considered by other Estonians as the best Estonian intelligence officer in technical and CE matters of recruitment, assessment, training and dispatch. Since he has had 23 years of experience in intelligence work, most of which has been spent in working against the USSR, it would be a time-consuming and financially a costly process to train and educate an American officer of similar qualifications for Estonian SSR operations.

2. Since September 1951 Captain KURGWEL has been working efficiently and diligently with the CIA in Germany, by his direct participation in contemplated top secret missions by OSO for American penetration of the Estonian SSR. His immigration into the U.S. is essential for the implementation of Estonian agent training in the United States.

3. Because of Captain KURGWEL's direct participation in spying, interrogations, assessments of agents, and general cooperation in Baltic operations, it is essential for security reasons that he be removed from Europe and made available to agent training units in the United States.

4. Although no firm commitments have been made to Captain KURGWEL that he would be permitted to immigrate into the United States for his services rendered to CIA, he is under firm conviction that this was at least an implied part of the bargain.

5. Captain KURGWEL and his family were declared inadmissible to the United States under Section 10 and 13 of the Displaced Persons Act of June 25, 1948, as amended, by a Board of Special Inquiry of the Immigration and Naturalization Service, convened at Westport, Germany, 31 July 1951. The case was appealed and at a second Board of Special Inquiry - convened in Munich, 7 September 1951 - Captain KURGWEL's family was granted permission to immigrate to the United States but KURGWEL's own status remained unchanged. Although KURGWEL was advised orally by the Immigration and Naturalization Service that he could apply for the regular Estonian quota in a year's time, the waiting period for regular quota is too long to permit KURGWEL to be utilized operationally in the United States by 1 January 1953. Consequently no other avenue is open except Section 8, Public Law 110.

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ENCLOSURE B

Background and Biography

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1. Captain KURGVEL is an Estonian General Staff Army officer with 23 years of experience in intelligence work, the major portion of which has been spent in working against the USSR.
2. He has had experience in information compilation and analysis, intelligence liaison, intelligence and GB interrogations, w/t training and management, recruitment and assessment of Estonian, Latvian and Russian agents and in instruction for the dispatch into Estonia and SSR of Estonian, Latvian and Russian agents. During the World War II he participated in the dispatch into Soviet occupied territory of 19 agent teams totalling about 70 agents, in addition to assessing and recruiting hundreds of agents.
3. He has an excellent area knowledge of Finland, Estonia and Latvia, and speaks, reads and writes fluent Estonian, Russian, German, fair English, and some French and Finnish.
4. He is dedicated to the defeat of Communism and the liberation of Estonia at the price of any necessary personal sacrifice, and believes that cooperation with the United States offers the best, if not the only, means of accomplishing this end.
5. He is capable of recruiting and training agents of non-Estonian nationality and would be willing to do so in order to be working towards the defeat of Communism.
6. In his capacity as liaison to foreign military attaches in Estonia he worked particularly closely with the Poles, Germans and Finns, although he was opposed to the policy of the German politicians. He is somewhat prejudiced against the British because of their lack of assistance to Estonian intelligence officers who had furnished the British information prior to war, and because of the British lack of activity following World War II.
7. He is extremely temperate in his habits, smoking little and drinking only on social occasions. He admits drinking heavily while working with the foreign N/A's in Tallinn 1934-35, as a social duty but derived little enjoyment from alcohol.
8. He has a well-above average intelligence and considerable initiative in fields with which he is familiar. He is systematic and sensible, hard working, conscientious and energetic. Since his association with CIA, he has on his own initiative studied radio techniques, prepared lectures for training, and compiled information on Estonia from overt sources in an elaborate card file. This work has occupied him from 10-12 hours per day seven days per week. His long waiting period to become active in agent training and dispatch

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would probably have led to his quitting long ago if it were not for his patience and fatalistic belief that more time is spent waiting than acting.

9. Because of his strong sense of honor, he does not present much of a security problem. He would pursue a course contrary to his higher authorities only with their full knowledge, unless he considers that course outside the limits of his commitments. However if the commitments between CIA and KURGWEL are stated firmly and specifically, KURGWEL can be expected to carry out his part strictly in accordance with the agreements made.

10. Captain KURGWEL had to escape from Estonia in 1940 after he refused to work for the Soviet Army Intelligence against the Western powers. However he refused to become a German citizen or to abandon the Estonian national interests even when working through and with the German intelligence organs, with the full knowledge of the German government and his superior officers, and openly defended his course of action at the German Intelligence Headquarters.

11. Captain KURGWEL continued to look for an opportunity to interest allies in his anti-Soviet activity throughout his post-war stay in Germany. His first attempt to contact Americans before the end of the war failed and, he fell into British hands, who first imprisoned him, and later wanted to keep him in reserve for possible future operations. Captain KURGWEL broke this contact himself after a half a year of inactivity.

12. Aside from efforts to get in touch with American Intelligence through Colonel W. E. SHEFF, U.S. Military Attache in Baghdad in 1949, Captain KURGWEL was not connected with any other intelligence agencies, except the British for whom he collected information on Estonia from debriefing of PW's for a few months in 1950.

13. Biographical Statement

- a. Captain Aleksel KURGWEL was born in the city of Kuresaare, on island Saaremaa, Estonia on 13 September, 1904. He has an equivalent of High School and 2 years of college liberal arts education, and is a graduate of Tallinn Military School and Military Academy.
- b. Employment - He worked for the Estonian Intelligence Service from May 1929 until July 1940, attached throughout this period to the General Staff. From 1934 to 1940 he was a director of Subdivision A of the Second Division. On 3 July 1940 Captain KURGWEL was removed from his position by the Soviets because of his refusal to work for Soviets as an agent for the Soviets, and escaped with the assistance of the German MA into Germany.

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From July 1940 to August 1944 Captain KURGVEL worked with the Abwehr of the German Wehrmacht and of the Finnish Army, enjoying the position of an Estonian volunteer in the Finnish Army, in Captain's rank. In August 1944 Captain KURGVEL was released, on his own request, from the Finnish army and from the German unit, and was immediately forced by the Germans to enlist in Tallinn, as an Estonian officer, in the capacity of Estonian Liaison Officer to the German Wehrmacht operating in Estonia. From October 1944 to 4 May 1945 he was attached to the German Wehrmacht Intelligence Service. On May 4, 1945 KURGVEL reported to the MI, and was held by the British until August 1946. From August 1946 to April 1947 Captain KURGVEL was in a DP camp. From September 1947 to September 1949 he was employed as an interpreter and deputy director of DP camps in Germany. From October 1949 to September 1951 he served as a clerk for IFO Documentation Center, Westorf, from where he joined CIA. Captain KURGVEL's military record shows that he was commissioned 2nd Lieutenant in 1926, 1st lieutenant in 1929, and Captain in 1934.

- c. Family Status - Captain KURGVEL is married to an Estonian national, Saisa Epler, who emigrated to the U.S. in January, 1952. His son Jaan KURGVEL, born 23 January 1931 in Tallinn, emigrated to the U.S. in September 1950, and is studying at Agricultural College of South Carolina. His younger son Rein KURGVEL, born May 1939 in Tallinn, emigrated to the U.S. with his mother in January, 1952. His father and mother died in Estonia; his two sisters died in an attempted escape from Estonia in 1944; the fate of his two sisters, who remained in Estonia, is unknown; while his fifth sister, who was successful in escaping from Estonia in 1944, is living in Sweden.
- d. Physical Conditions - According to the latest physical examination of 30 June, 1952 Captain KURGVEL was qualified for full duty.

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