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VIN/8561

WP

12 February 1954

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Grengulf 1 - Possible Distortion of Name-Check Information

1. On 10 December 1953 we gave Grengulf 1 requests for routine name-checks on two Austrians named in CIC Report L/29601, 16 November 1953, as active Communists in the Lins area. The sub-source of the information was ostensibly a member of the Austrian police. We submitted the requests to Grengulf 1 simply as a test -- to see how closely his replies would conform to the information contained in the CIC report, the substance of which, we assumed, would normally reach him through police channels. Our requests contained only basic identifying information on the persons we had selected, with no indication that we knew of their Communist affiliations.

2. Attached for comparison are extracts of the CIC information on which we based our selections, and Grengulf 1's replies to our requests. You will notice that Grengulf 1's reply in the case of Hans KERSCHBAUMER conforms in general outline to the CIC report, although there is some narrowness, and possibly outright inaccuracy, as to dates (e.g., according to the CIC report, KERSCHBAUMER left for the USSR in 1932; according to Grengulf 1, he left in 1952). However, in the case of Johann KEPLINGER the two reports directly contradict one another. The CIC report identifies KEPLINGER as a clandestine member of the KPOs, a possible liaison agent for the Party, "... an extremely dangerous and unscrupulous ... member." Grengulf 1, on the other hand, states that KEPLINGER has never been the subject of a derogatory report, and that his "conduct as a citizen is above reproach."

3. This reply is interesting not only because it contradicts the CIC report, but because it is presented in a rather unusual style. As a rule, Grengulf 1 does not go out of his way to say nice things about the subjects of his checks. If his political files contain no derogatory information, the fact is generally indicated in the brief phrase "sonst keine Vormerkung". This phrase usually appears in the second paragraph of his reply; the first paragraph is almost always devoted exclusively to Meldesatz information concerning the identification of the subject. Moreover, it is interesting to note that this reply is dated almost one month later than the reply on KERSCHBAUMER, although the two men reside in the same general area. (Grengulf 1

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often attributes delays in his replies to the fact that he has to send out to the provincial sicherheitsdirektionen for information). And finally, the reply refers to our "request of 23 December 1953", though our request was actually dated 10 December. This is very possibly a mechanical error, but if so, it is one I have not detected before in Grengulf 1's replies.

4. There are of course a number of conceivable explanations for all of this. It is possible that Grengulf 1 has not received the information contained in the CIC report, or that it has not yet reached the proper file. It is conceivable, too, that Grengulf 1 has the information but, mistrusting its authenticity, has decided not to release it. A third possibility is that Grengulf 1 or someone in his organization has decided to withhold the information for reasons of operational security -- just as we do. However, on the basis of the evidence cited above, I incline to the view that the reply contains a deliberate distortion, framed with a view to misleading us and having no connection with the operational security of Grengulf 1's apparatus. If this assumption is correct, responsibility could lie with (a) Grengulf 1 himself; (b) someone down the line in his apparatus; or (c) the Sicherheitsdirektion for Upper Austria.

5. Before reaching any definite conclusions, however, it is proposed that we ask for a confidential check on KEPFLINGER, to confirm that the derogatory information we know exists on him is available to police authorities. In addition, we shall submit a few more of these "test" requests to Grengulf 1, in an effort to establish some sort of pattern which might provide a firmer basis for judgment.

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Extract from CIC Report L/29601, 16 November 1953, on Hans ~~KERSCHBAUMER~~ X

Born 25 August 1901 in Lins; Austrian; resides in Lins, Koenigsweh 10, o/o CZEIKA; proprietor of a newspaper and tobacco store at the junction of Prunerstrasse and Ledererstrasse in Lins; married; agnostic;

A radical and fanatical member of the KPÖ. Known to have been active in the KPÖ as early as 1930. Resided in USSR from October 1932 to February 1938. Arrested by the Gestapo after the annexation of Austria and interned in Buchenwald Concentration Camp until the end of World War II. Is currently chairman of the KPÖ-sponsored KZ-Verband in Lins. Was director of the sales department of the Neue Zeit, KPÖ news organ for Upper Austria, from 1945 to 1948. Campaigned for election to the Upper Austrian provincial diet on the Communist slate in 1949. Indicted to public prosecutor, Upper Austria, for endangering public safety by inciting a group of rowdies to break up a meeting of the VdU, date unknown.

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☐ ☐ Reply to Name-check Request on Hans KERSCHBAUMER

In reply to your request concerning Hans KERSCHBAUMER of 10 December 1953, the following confidential information is submitted:

Johann KERSCHBAUMER, publisher, locksmith, business manager of the Neue Zeit; born 25 August 1901 in Lins; married to Stefanie (nee KREUZER, born 19 November 1920 in Lins); agnostic; resides in Lins, Koenigsweg #10.

According to his divorced wife, Frau Henriette KERSCHBAUMER (born GLEINER on 27 June 1904 in Lins), Johann KERSCHBAUMER departed for Russia in October 1952 and took up residence in Moscow.

No details are available on the length of his stay in Moscow or on his activities there.

In 1938 KERSCHBAUMER was jailed because of Communist activities and was sent to a concentration camp. He was freed only after the occupation of Austria by the Allies. He was last imprisoned in Buchenwald.

KERSCHBAUMER has belonged to the "KZ-Verband fuer politisch Verfolgte" in Lins and has performed official functions in this organization. It is rumored that he works for the Russians and possibly performs espionage for them.

His divorced wife, Henriette KERSCHBAUMER, is married to Ing. Eugen HAIL, born 30 March 1911 in Lins; agnostic; address: Urfahr, Riesenhofstrasse 4. HAIL is a member of the KPÖ and is known as a radical Communist.

8 January 1954

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Extract from CIC Report L/29601, 16 November 1953, on Johann ^XKEPFLINGER

Born 26 May 1916 in Lienz; married; Austrian; resides in Urfahr, Mitterellstrasse 6; agnostic; employed by Urfahr Municipal Administration as a clerk. Is a clandestine member of the KPOe. Believed by some sources to be liaison agent between Upper Austrian Provincial Committee of the KPOe and a KPOe-sponsored sabotage group in the United Austrian Iron and Steel Works. Allegedly attended specialized Communist training courses in Lower Austria and Czechoslovakia. Is considered an extremely dangerous and unscrupulous KPOe member.

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Reply to Name-check Request on Johann KEPPLINGER

In reply to your request of 28 December 1953:

Johann KEPPLINGER, employee; born 26 May 1916 in Lina; Austrian; married; agnostic; resides in Dorf, Vittorelli-strasse 6 as sub-tenant (permanent address is Josefstal #8, Gemeinde Tragwein, Bezirk Perg). There have been no unfavorable reports of either a political or moral nature on Subject. His conduct as a citizen is above reproach. He enjoys a good reputation.

Since 1 September 1946, Subject has been employed in the offices of the Upper Austrian provincial government. Since 3 April 1941, he has been married to Hedwig (nee MAURER). The couple have one child. The family lives at present in Josefstal #8, Gemeinde Tragwein. Subject's parents, Rupert and Maria KEPPLINGER, are dead.

6 February 1954

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