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US-led stay behind networks in Austria

A tale from the Cold War: shady deals, dubious loyalties,
and underground arms caches.

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“A pensar male degli altri si fa peccato, ma spesso ci si indovina.”¹
(Thinking ill of others is a sin, but it often turns out good guesses.)

¹ One of the most famous aphorisms credited to Giulio Andreotti, [undated], cited from ilsole24ore.com. [Link](#).

Acknowledgments

First and foremost, I want to express my sincere gratitude to the supervisor of this project, Prof. Oliver Rathkolb who, aside from assisting me throughout the research process, also granted me access to his private archive of copied source-material. Almost a third of all primary sources on which this thesis is founded upon, were thereby sponsored by prof. Rathkolb.

I likewise want to thank General Horst Pleiner, for granting me the possibility to conduct and record an interesting interview of over an hour, thereby enriching the research with his expert perspective.

Abstract

After dealing with a handful of editorial notes in chapter one, in chapter two, the thesis moves on to a description of the technical and methodological elements of the research itself, such as the terminology used, a critique of the main sources and an overview of the current state of research in this particular field. The third chapter constitutes a summary of the context and the establishment, development, and uproar caused by the revelation of the Italian *Gladio* network in the early Nineties. In chapter four, the narrative shifts to Austria in early 1996, when the vast majority of the CIA's underground arms and explosives caches came to light, as well as the relevant statements which were made at the time. Chapters five, six and seven constitute the core of this research. Chapter five provides a *thick* description of the rather complex context in which the Austrian stay behind networks were established, by referencing some of the massive scholarly literature, the narrative splits it into four interconnected layers: geostrategic, political, socioeconomic, and intelligence-related. Chapter six deals with the late Forties and two primary examples of networks led by former Nazis which allegedly had the potential to develop into fully-fledged paramilitary units. Chapter seven presents the evaluated sources on the CIA-led units of the Fifties: besides the Escape and Evasion (henceforth E&E) line and the dedicated radio transmissions unit ICEBERG, these also included both of the paramilitary stay behind units, code-named GRLAUNCH and GRDAGGER. The eighth chapter focuses on the interconnection which has been documented between South Tirol's rich history of terrorism on the one hand, and multiple elements of both the Austrian and Italian stay behind networks on the other. Finally, the ninth chapter presents a summary of the conclusions reached, thereby providing an overview of both the results yielded by this research and the questions that remain unanswered.

Deutsche Zusammenfassung (German abstract)

Nach einigen Anmerkungen zum Aufbau der Arbeit in Kapitel Eins enthält Kapitel Zwei Material und Methoden der Untersuchung, die verwendete Terminologie, Quellenkritik, sowie eine Besprechung des Forschungsstandes. In Kapitel Drei erfolgt ein Überblick über Entstehung und Entwicklung des italienischen Gladio Netzwerkes, sowie den politischen Aufruhr, der durch dessen Aufdeckung in den frühen neunziger Jahren verursacht wurde. Das vierte Kapitel befasst sich mit den 1996 geborgenen Sprengstoff- und Waffendepots, deren geographische Aufteilung (Positionierung) und deren Funktionstüchtigkeit (Konservierungszustand), sowie mit einigen relevanten Kommentaren, die zum damaligen Zeitpunkt abgegeben wurden. In Kapitel Fünf erfolgt ein Umriss des komplexen Kontexts der Entstehung des österreichischen *Stay Behind* Netzwerkes und, unter Bezugnahme auf wesentliche wissenschaftliche Veröffentlichungen wird der Bogen über vier miteinander vernetzte Ebenen, die geostrategische, politische, sozioökonomische und geheimdienstliche, gespannt. Kapitel Sechs behandelt die späten vierziger Jahre und jene zwei Netzwerke, die von früheren Nazis geführt worden sind, sowie deren mutmaßliches Potenzial zur Entwicklung voll ausgebildeter *Stay Behind* Einheiten. Anhand der ausgewerteten Quellen werden in Kapitel Sieben die von der CIA ab den fünfziger Jahren geführten Netzwerke vorgestellt: neben der Escape & Evasion line und der Fernmeldetruppe ICEBERG gehörten auch die paramilitärischen Netzwerke GRDAGGER und GRLAUNCH dazu. Kapitel Acht behandelt die dokumentierten Querverbindungen zwischen der terroristischen Geschichte Südtirols und einiger Elemente der Österreichischen sowie der Italienischen Stay Behind Netzwerke. Abschliessend werden in Kapitel Neun eine Zusammenfassung der Schlussfolgerungen präsentiert und dadurch in einem Überblick die Ergebnisse dieser Untersuchung aber auch die noch offenen Fragestellungen aufgezeigt.

List of acronyms

AbwA	Abwehramt (Austrian intelligence agency, since 1981)
ACC	Allied Clandestine/Coordination Committee
Adm.	Admiral
AFL	American Federation of Labor
API	Associazione Protezione Italiani (Italian terrorist group)
ARB	Austrian Rear Base (CIA)
art.	Article
AS	Austrian Schilling
BAS	Befreiungs-Ausschuss Südtirol (South Tyrolean Liberation Committee)
BND	Bundesnachrichtendienst (German federal intelligence agency)
BRD	Bundesrepublik Deutschland (West-Germany)
CAG	Centro Addestramento Guastatori (Gladio's base of Capo Maragiù)
CESIS	Comitato Esecutivo per i Servizi d'Informazione e di Sicurezza (Italian intelligence coordination committee)
CGIL	Confederazione Generale Italiana dei Lavoratori (major Italian labor union)
CIC	Counterintelligence Corps
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CIO	Congress of Industrial Organizations
CLN	Comitato di Liberazione Nazionale (provisional Italian liberation committee during WWII)
Col.	Colonel
COMINFORM	Communist Information Bureau
CPC	Clandestine Planning Committee (until 1958) Coordination and Planning Committee (since 1958)
DC	Democrazia Cristiana (major Italian right-of-center party)
DGER	Direction Générale d'Études et des Recherches (French intelligence agency)
Doc.	Document
E&E	Escape & Evasion
ECA	Economic Cooperation Administration
ed.	Editor(s) / Edited by
ed. r.	Editorial remark
EEC	European Economic Community
ERP	European Recovery Program
et al.	Et alii
etc.	Et cetera
EUCOM	US Army European Command
FIAT	Fabbrica Italiana Automobili Torino
FOIA	Freedom Of Information Act
FPÖ	Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs (major Austrian right-wing party, since 1955)
GBH	Gewerkschaft der Bau- und Holzarbeiter (Austrian construction and wood workers' union)
GdF	Guardia di Finanza (Italian fiscal police)
Gen.	General
GNw	Gruppe Nachrichtenwesen (Austrian military intelligence agency, since 1954)
GOS	Gruppo Operativo Speciale (Gladio asset)
HnaA	Heeres-Nachrichtenamt (Austrian intelligence agency, since 1981)
HQ	Headquarters
ibid.	Ibidem
IPICR	Italian Parliamentary Investigation Commission's Report
ISB	Information Services Branch
JCS	Joint Chiefs of Staff
JSPC	Joint Strategic Plans Committee
KGB	Комитет государственной безопасности (Committee for State Security, USSR)

KPÖ	Kommunistische Partei Österreichs (Austrian communist party)
Lt. Col.	Lieutenant Colonel
MI6	Military Intelligence, Section 6
MIA	Movimento Italiani Alto Adige (Italian terrorist group)
MOB	Munich Operations Base (CIA)
MP(s)	Member(s) of Parliament
MSI	Movimento Sociale Italiano (Italian right-wing party)
MVD	Министерство внутренних дел (Ministry of Internal Affairs, USSR)
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
n.	Number
NSC	National Security Council
ÖBH	Österreichisches Bundesheer (Austrian armed forces)
ÖGB	Österreichischer Gewerkschaftsbund (Austrian trade union federation)
ÖMV	Österreichische Mineralölverwaltung (major Austrian oil corporation)
OPC	Office of Policy Coordination
ORG	Organization Gehlen
OSS	Office of Strategic Services
ÖVP	Österreichischer Volkspartei (major Austrian right-of-center party)
ÖWSGV	Österreichischer Wander-, Sport- und Gelleigkeitsverein (one of Franz Olah's cover organizations)
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PCI	Partito Comunista Italiano (Italian communist party)
POEN	Provisorischen Österreichischen Nationalkomitee (provisional Austrian liberation committee during WWII)
PSI	Partito Socialista Italiano (Italian socialist party)
RAI	Radiotelevisione Italiana S.p.A. (Italian public broadcasting corporation)
SACEUR	Supreme Allied Commander Europe
SAD	Sezione Studi ed Addestramento (subdivision of SIFAR, SID, and SISMI)
SAS	Special Air Service (British special forces)
SHAPE	Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe (NATO)
SID	Servizio Informazioni Difesa (Italian military intelligence 1966-77)
SIFAR	Servizio Informazioni Forze Armate (Italian military intelligence 1949-66)
SISDE	Servizio Informazioni per la Sicurezza Democratica (Italian civilian intelligence 1977-07)
SISMI	Servizio Informazioni per la Sicurezza Militare (Italian military intelligence 1977-07)
SOB	Salzburg Operations Base (CIA)
SOE	Special Operations Executive
SPÖ	Sozialistische Partei Österreichs (major Austrian left-of-center party, until 1991)
SPÖ	Sodialdemokratische Partei Österreichs (major Austrian left-of-center party, since 1991)
StaPo	Staatspolizei (Austrian civilian intelligence Agency, until 2002)
StaSi	Staatssicheheitsdients (East-German intelligence agency)
SVP	Südtiroler Volkspartei (major regional party in South Tirol, right-of-center)
Ufficio R	Ufficio affari Riservati (Italian civilian intelligence agency, 1949-69)
Ufficio R (SIFAR)	Ufficio Ricerche (Branch of SIFAR, involved in the construction of the CAG)
USFA	United States Forces in Austria
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
VdU	Verein der Unabhängige (major Austrian right-wing party, 1949-55)
VOB	Vienna Operations Base
Vol.	Volume
WUDO	Western Union Defense Organization
WWII	World War 2 (1939-45)

Relevant CIA code-names / cryptonyms²

Austrian Military Intelligence Service	GREENSOAP
Austrian paramilitary network (main)	GRDAGGER
Austrian paramilitary network (minor)	GRLAUNCH
Austrian State Police (StaPo)	GREENGROCER; GRENGULF
Austrian stay behind network	GRCROOND
<u>Bolschwing</u> , Otto	GROSSBAHN; UNREST; USAGE
Central Intelligence Agency	KUBARK
CIA Paramilitary Operations Staff	KUHOOK
CIA Psychological and Paramilitary Operations Staff	KUGOWN
Clandestine Coordinating and Planning Committee (SHAPE)	HBDEBATE; JBLIMBERS
Counterintelligence Corps (CIC)	BGHABIT; DYMACULE; LNWILT; ODOPAL
Die Presse (major Austrian daily)	GRSPINAL-2
EUCOM G2 (intelligence division)	PBRAMPART
<u>Gehlen</u> , Reinhard	Dr. SCHNEIDER; UTILITY
<u>Kainz</u> , Walter	GREENSOAP-10
<u>Molden</u> , Fritz	GRSPINAL-1
<u>Olah</u> , Franz	GRDAGGER-1
Organization Gehlen (ORG)	CATIDE; ODEUM; OFFSPRING; RUSTY; ZIPPER
<u>Peterlungen</u> , Oswald (StaPo)	GREENGULF-1
<u>Schulmeister</u> , Otto	GRANOLITE-10; GRCAMERA-1
US Department of State	ODACID
US Embassy, Vienna	GROWER

² For a comprehensive list of the code-names and cryptonyms see: [no author]; June 2007; Research Aid: Cryptonyms and Terms in Declassified CIA files. [Link](#).

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1 Editorial notes

The basis of this research comprises source material in three different languages: English, German, and Italian. In the absence of specific indications stating otherwise, all direct citations from both German and Italian sources have been translated by the author, who bears sole and full responsibility for their accuracy. In order to simplify the detection of translation mistakes, inconsistencies, etc. special care has been taken in all those instances where citations either comprise at least an entire sentence, or where they bear critical significance. In most of these cases, the original wording is present in the respective footnotes.

The term *South Tirol* has been chosen due to the fact that while the German term *Südtirol* may be anglicized, the Italian term *Alto Adige* may not.

For the purpose of limiting the total length of this document, all references to scholarly literature made in the footnotes have been abbreviated to a minimum: surname or last name, year of publication, first 2-5 words of the title, and the page number(s)³. A similar method was employed with the main source for both the Gladio and South Tirol chapters, which is the Italian parliamentary commission established for the purpose of investigating terrorism as well as identifying of the perpetrators of the many serious bloodbaths which ravaged the country from the late 1960s until the late 1980s⁴. This institution has produced a number of documents which are now available online and which are cited throughout this research. In order not to encumber the respective footnotes, all references to the commission's reports have also been abbreviated through the use of an *ad hoc* acronym: Italian Parliamentary Investigation Commission's Report (IPICR).

For the purpose of making all acronyms used in this document as comprehensible as possible, not only are they explained when first mentioned, but a comprehensive list (with the respective meanings) has been included as well, and is located at the very beginning. All footnotes which reference online sources have been hyperlinked to the sources themselves; however, the full Uniform Resource Locations (URLs) of all websites have been transcribed and are listed in full in the online sources section. All cited URLs were last tested on the 22nd of October 2017.

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2 Introduction, methodology and major sources

It may be argued that history is the result of the collective interplay between both intended and unintended consequences of individual actions⁶. However, it may just as well be argued that, as human beings, historians are not able to produce “objective accounts” of history, at least not in its commonly accepted definition. A

3 With this abbreviated information, it is possible to track the precise work in the list of references located towards the end of this document. Aside from containing all usual and pertinent information on each of the quoted contributions, each title which is originally in either German or Italian has been translated into English and reported in full thereafter.

4 The full original name is: Commissione Parlamentare d'inchiesta sul terrorismo in Italia e sulla mancata individuazione dei responsabili delle stragi (Parliamentary investigation Commission on terrorism in Italy and on the failed identification of the bloodbath's perpetrators).

5 For an overview of the terms and conditions of the Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike license, see [creativecommons.org, Link](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/3.0/at/); for the actual license (in German), see Ibid, [Link](#).

6 This is an adaptation of a concept expressed in a lecture by prof. Thomas Fröschl, whom I thank for the insight.

logical consequence of this realization is that all editorial and methodological decisions are deeply influenced by the author's own point of view, and that they might also appear incomprehensible or even suspicious to others. This chapter will therefore not only reveal all of these decisions, but will also supply arguments in their support, hopefully giving the readers the tools needed to evaluate the results of the research presented thereafter.

Prelude: a Europe-wide phenomenon

Despite the fact that Italian Prime Minister Giulio Andreotti is justly credited with having revealed to the world the existence of the stay behind networks in late 1990, he was by no means either the first cabinet member or the first head of government to speak out on the issue. After taking the historic decision to withdraw France from the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (henceforth NATO), French President Charles De Gaulle publicly revealed the existence of secret additional protocols to the 1949 NATO treaty in 1966, allegedly aimed at protecting right-wing extremists connected to the intelligence apparatus⁷. In 1969, Franz Olah was tried for embezzlement of trade union funds and, besides revealing several other interesting tales, this event also led to the surfacing of the first hints of his paramilitary activities⁸. In 1978, following the discovery of significant Norwegian stay behind units, the defense minister of the time, Rolf Hansen, was forced to admit the existence of such a network to the Parliament in Oslo, and that it was scattered across the national territory⁹. Following mounting public pressure, the Italian Parliament instituted the aforementioned investigation commission in 1988, which was originally tasked with bringing some degree of clarity to what was by then already commonly referred to as the *strategy of tension*. Initially, the commission's work proceeded only with great difficulty, plagued by denials of access to documents and uncooperative witnesses. In retrospect, this might be explained by the fact that the Cold War was still being waged, resulting in the utmost resistance by Italy's political and intelligence establishment, due to the pivotal role that virtually all of the major terrorist attacks have had in Italy's overall political development¹⁰. However, not only did Andreotti's revelations in the



Charles De Gaulle, July 4th 1963, Berlin.
Original credit: Das Bundesarchiv. Source:
wikipedia.org. [Link](#).

- 7 See Ganser 2005, NATO's secret armies, p. 28-9. While it neither confirmed nor denied the specific protocol denounced in 1966 by De Gaulle, the Italian Parliamentary investigation did eventually document the existence of two other secret NATO protocols. According to the commission's report, these were signed in London in June and August of 1952, and were aimed at regulating the status of NATO's personnel and facilities within host (member-)countries, de facto endowing them with wide-ranging immunity. See IPICR 1991, Doc. XXIII, n. 36, p. 14. [Link](#).
- 8 For a systematic description of the Austria's stay behind networks, of which Franz Olah's group constituted only one of the US' paramilitary units, see chapters six and seven.
- 9 See Ganser 2005, NATO's secret armies, p. 187-8.
- 10 It may well be argued that the 1964 canceled coup d'état led by Gen. Giovanni De Lorenzo – then commander-in-chief of the Carabinieri and former director of Italy's military intelligence – and the 1978 kidnapping and assassination of Aldo Moro – a former prime minister and leader of the Democrazia Cristiana (Italian Christian democratic party, henceforth DC) – constitute primary examples of events which deeply influenced the overall course of Italy's political history. For more information and context on

second half of 1990 significantly improve the environment in which the commission operated, but they also sparked an unprecedented amount of media coverage, including in the US, to a certain extent.

On August 3rd, just one day after Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait, Andreotti stated in the first of his three parliamentary speeches on the issue that according to the information he had received from the Defense staff, certain “activities modeled on NATO, which had been implemented for the hypothesis of an attack and occupation of Italy, or at least of some of its regions” did indeed exist. However, “such activities continued until 1972, at which point it was decided that they were no longer needed.”¹¹ Thanks to what may appropriately be termed a media stunt, Andreotti then managed to shift most of the public's attention towards the network's international connections, as well as to the similar organizations that existed throughout Western Europe¹². As noted by Ganser, since by mid-October most of the public's attention in the US and several other NATO countries was already focused on Saddam¹³, this did not turn out to be too difficult a task. On October 24th, the same day that the final ten-page report was handed in, Andreotti further stated that each former head of government had been duly informed about Gladio's existence, causing some embarrassment among the various former prime mini-

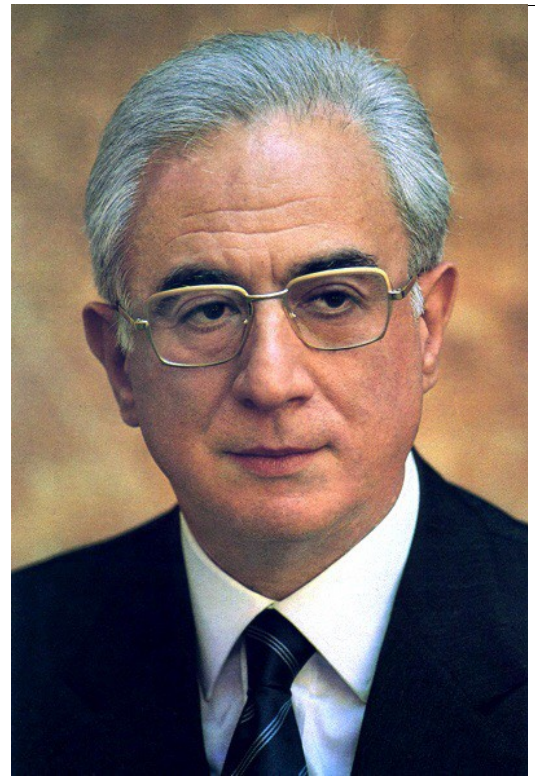


Giulio Andreotti, 1978. Original credit: National Archives, Washington D.C. Source: wikipedia.de. [Link](#).

both events, see the following chapter.

- 11 Original: “Si tratta di quelle attività che, sul modello NATO, erano state messe in atto per l'ipotesi di un attacco e di un'occupazione dell'Italia o di alcune regioni italiane. Sulla base di quanto mi è stato riferito dai servizi, tali attività sono proseguite fino al 1972, dopodiché si è ritenuto che non ve ne fosse più bisogno.” Giulio Andreotti, August 3rd 1990, cited from IPICR, Doc. XXIII 1991, n. 36, p. 11. [Link](#).
- 12 This was accomplished first by delivering to the commission a twelve-page report, only to inform them just three days later that he immediately needed to review the report and correct some mistakes. As one might expect, this move did spark some suspicions among members of the commission. However, although it was ultimately decided to return the report, copies of the twelve-page version were immediately made. A few days later, Andreotti resubmitted his Gladio report, only this time, some sections were missing and it had now become a ten-page report. Almost all of the missing sections related to the international connections and other stay behind networks, causing the immediate focus to largely shift towards them. This sequence of events is supported by an article by Francesco La Licata, “Dossier fantasma sulla super-NATO. Il documento rimbalza fra Andreotti e Gualtieri presidente della commissione stragi” (The ghost dossier on super NATO. The document ricochets between Andreotti and Gualtieri, the president of the commission on bloodbaths), published on the second page of *La Stampa* (major Italian daily) on October 24th, see [archiviolastampa.it](#), ([Link](#)), and by the fact that, as early as November 14th, the major Italian communist newspaper *L'Unità* had already published both versions of the report in full. See Ganser 2005, NATO's secret armies, p. 11-2 and 260, footnote 23.
- 13 Saddam Hussein's forces entered Kuwait on August 2nd, followed by immediate calls among neighboring and western nations to withdraw. On October 10th, Nayirah al-Sabah's wholly false testimony in front of the congressional Human Rights Caucus, which was televised across the world, enraged American and western public opinion to the point that at least part of the populations endorsed the Second Gulf War. On November 29th the UN security council passed resolution 678, issuing an ultimatum to Iraq's leadership to withdraw by January 15th 1991, which Saddam Hussein refused. The ultimatum had furthermore authorized Kuwait's allies to force Saddam's retreat using “all means necessary”. On January 17th, a large coalition of US allies started a heavy bombardment campaign, followed on February 24th by the deployment of ground troops. Aside from Kuwait and the US, the coalition also included Afghanistan, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Belgium, Canada, Czechoslovakia, Egypt, France, Germany, Great Britain, Honduras, Italy, Israel, the Netherlands, Niger, Oman, Qatar, Romania, Saudi Arabia, South Korea, Syria and the United Arab Emirates. Kuwait City was reached in three days, and the cessation of hostilities and Saddam's official acceptance of the ceasefire on March 3rd followed. During the ten days of war, the total coalition casualties amounted to 370, while as many as 100,000 Iraqi troops died. See *ibid*, p. 61 and 261, footnote 1. For more on Nayirah al-Sabah's testimony see Ganser's lecture of March 15th 2017 on [youtube.com](#) (1.17.45-1.21.15, in German). [Link](#).

sters who were still politically active at the time¹⁴. This was particularly true among his DC party colleagues, such as Arnaldo Forlani – then President of the Senate – and even Francesco Cossiga, the incumbent head of state. In stark contrast to the reactions exhibited by all other politicians involved, both DC and otherwise, Cossiga stood by his involvement, subsequently declaring that he was “proud and happy” to have contributed to the establishment of the Gladio network, as well as for “the fact that we have kept the secret for 45 years”.¹⁵ On November 8th 1990, one day prior to the first anniversary of the fall of the Iron Curtain, Andreotti delivered his third and most famous speech on the subject. After a rather long introduction covering all of the dangers facing postwar Europe and Italy, he stated that the origins of Gladio could be traced back to at least 1951, although even that date did not turn out to be entirely accurate. He furthermore made frequent reference to both NATO and its Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe (henceforth SHAPE), explicitly inscribing the entire phenomenon within Italy's western alignment. He stated that, throughout its existence, the Gladio network had directly employed only 622 persons, most of whom were originally stationed across Italy's north-western region.



Francesco Cossiga, undated. Original credit: Presidenza della Repubblica (Presidency of the Italian Republic). Source: wikipedia.it. [Link](#).

“The signing of the agreement of understanding between the Servizio Informazioni delle Forze Armate [SIFAR – Italian military intelligence agency until 1966, ed. r.] and the American intelligence agency [the CIA, ed. r.] dates back to the end of 1956, the year in which – it's worth recalling – the Cold War between the two blocks reached a renovated intensity. The agreement called for organic collaboration in view of joint operations on Italian soil, should it ever be occupied by the enemy. Of course, this (agreement) did not constitute an isolated case. As a matter of fact, by the end of the Forties, all Western European countries potentially exposed to a Soviet attack had been endowed with what the technical jargon refers to as a «Stay Behind», that is, a clandestine network of officials and supplies, ready to be deployed in case of territorial invasions by enemy forces. [...] The Italian clandestine organization, which – as you know – was given the code name «Gladio», was subjected to the directives issued by the [Atlantic] Alliance, aimed at regulating its wartime use, but which also led to Gladio's progressive integration into the Alliance's own military planning. [...] In short, we are hereby talking of counteractive measures, which most European nations had included in their respective plans of territorial defense.¹⁶”

14 See Ganser 2006, *The ghost of Machiavelli*, p. 120.

15 Francesco Cossiga, November 1990, cited as is from Ganser 2005, *NATO's secret armies*, p. 14. See also Ganser 2006, *The ghost of Machiavelli*, p. 120 and footnote 28. The ensuing scandal eventually terminated Cossiga's long political career, forcing him to step down three months ahead of schedule, in April 1992. Compare with Glücksthal 1996, *Gladio oder die Rache Moros*, p. 44.

16 Original: “Alla fine del 1956, anno in cui – è bene ricordarlo – la situazione di guerra fredda tra i blocchi tornò ad essere particolarmente acuta, risale la sottoscrizione di un'intesa tra il Servizio Informazioni delle Forze Armate ed il Servizio Informazioni americano per una collaborazione organica in vista di operazioni in comune in territorio italiano se occupato dal nemico. Quest'intesa non costituiva certo un episodio isolato. Verso la fine degli anni quaranta, infatti, era stata creata in tutti i paesi dell'Europa occidentale, che avrebbero potuto essere probabili obiettivi di un attacco sovietico, quella che nel gergo del mestiere veniva chiamata «Stay Behind», una rete riservata di dirigenti e di rifornimenti già preparata e pronta ad entrare in azione qualora forze nemiche avessero occupato militarmente il territorio. [...] Così la struttura riservata italiana che assunse, come sapete, la denominazione in codice di «Gladio», conflui progressivamente, per effetto delle direttive disposte in sede di Alleanza e volte a

Through these revelations, not only did Andreotti institutionalize both of the key terms (*Gladio*¹⁷ specifically for Italy and *stay behind* in general), but he also caused a ripple effect across the continent, eventually leading to the establishment of parliamentary investigation commissions also in Switzerland and Belgium, as well as effectively jump-starting the research efforts aimed at this issue. As pointed out by Ganser, stay behind networks of varying scopes and dimensions were uncovered in each European NATO (member) state, including the UK, as well as the four “neutral” countries: Sweden, Switzerland, Finland and Austria¹⁸. However, for the sake of accuracy, this list includes Turkey – which may be said to be an Asian state – but excludes Iceland and, to a certain extent, Ireland¹⁹.

Qualifying the scope of the investigation

Towards the end of the Cold War, specifically during the early 1980s, a growing number of historians came to the realization that a number of historically significant issues and topics were suitable to investigation within the nation-state framework. They had two main arguments: firstly, the geographical spread and development of issues such as germs, climatic phenomena, technology, trade and migration are only influenced by the current location of political borders to a very small extent (if at all, as in the case of the first three examples)²⁰. Secondly, at least for such issues that transcend political borders, to insist on the deployment of historical perspectives centered upon the nation-state framework, as well as on the associated methodologies, carries the risk of seriously distorting both the agency of the actors involved, and the resulting narrative. The issue of agency of the individual officers and decision-makers seems to me to be of particular significance in the field of intelligence studies. Far too often, both news agencies and researchers merely assume that, because a certain agent and/or agency did or said something, it can automatically be interpreted as the consensus policy of the entire government they represent, all the way to the head of government. Not only has the reach of intelligence operations steadily continued to expand since the early Cold War, but also the associated degree of secrecy has allowed this expansion to take place mostly without any real oversight by the democratically elected representatives. Case and point: not only did the Gladio network have no legal basis whatsoever, but also two of the three successive Italian military intelligence agencies which established and directed it even operated without an actual law stipulating either their purpose or their means, not to mention their supervision²¹.

disciplinare l'impiego in caso di guerra, in un'organizzazione strettamente collegata alla pianificazione militare dell'Alleanza stessa. [...] Si trattava, insomma, di attività di contrasto che erano contemplate nei piani generali di difesa del territorio previsti dalla maggior parte delle nazioni europee.” Giulio Andreotti, November 8th 1990, cited from the minutes of the 449th session of 10th legislature of the Italian Senate (p. 32-8, here 32-3) from senato.it, [Link](#).

17 According to the commission's report, the name was actually chosen in a meeting on October 18th 1956 between SIFAR (Giulio F. Sandri and Mario Accasto) and CIA (Bob Porter and John Edwards) officers. See IPICR, Doc. XXIII 1992, n. 51, p. 16. [Link](#).

18 See Ganser 2005, NATO's secret armies, p. 245.

19 Ganser excluded Iceland from his research a priori, due to its complete lack of armed forces, while virtually all references to Ireland are made in the context of the British stay behind network, which among other things seems to have used live operations against the Irish Republican Army as part of their joint training programs with the Special Air Service (henceforth SAS). See *ibid*, p. XV and p. 45.

20 One of the most popular examples of such research was published by Jared Diamond (1997): “Guns, Germs, and Steel – The Fates of Human Societies”, Norton Publisher, New York.

21 That is to say that both the Servizio Informazioni Forze Armate (Military intelligence service 1949-1966, henceforth SIFAR) and its immediate successor the Servizio Informazioni Difesa (Defense intelligence service 1966-1977, henceforth SID) were not subject to the rule of law, since there literally was no law regulating either their existence or operations. According to the report, while the “circolare” (office memo) which established the SIFAR was at least circulated throughout the political and security

Of course, this does not mean that intelligence agencies *never* act on direct orders from the political leaders of their government, or that *all* individual agents are somehow *rogue*. However, when compared to all other groups of public employees and structures of political authority, intelligence agencies and agents have been endowed with by far the greatest degree of “operational autonomy”, which is in fact so great that nobody is really able to precisely define where it starts and where it really ends. Furthermore, on those rare occasions where intelligence personnel actually get caught red-handed doing something they shouldn't, this is usually immediately followed by an official press release, in which the agency in question denies either knowledge of the issue at hand or any involvement “by the agency”. Since it has been proven that such a configuration may be true on the level of an individual agent, the same can potentially be argued for the relationship between an intelligence agency (or at least significant sections thereof) and its respective government²². In short, both the chosen topic of covert operations and the rejection of a monolithic and permanently organic view of nation-state governments have led the author to pursue the issue through the lens of Global History.

In accordance with the basic principles of Global History, the original plan for this research was to fully contextualize the case of the Austrian stay behind networks by first summarizing both the Italian and the German cases. Aside from my personal linguistic faculties, which allowed me to access original material from all three cases, the reasoning behind the plan was founded upon the argument that, for individually different reasons, the two best terms of comparison for the overall geopolitical situation of postwar Austria were Italy and Western Germany. However, due to the unexpectedly large quantity of primary sources now available online, the thesis' formal constraints forced me to make a choice between the two aforementioned countries. The decision was difficult: while factors like common language, common history and closer ties between the stay behind groups themselves clearly favored the inclusion of the German example, the significant role played by Italian politics in the very foundation of the CIA and the National Security Council²³ (henceforth NSC), clearly spoke in favor of the Italian case. Another major factor in choosing the latter was the planned chapter on South Tirol, which definitely required a larger degree of contextualization of the Italian case. Furthermore, from a strict military perspective, throughout the Cold War, Western Germany and Austria weren't even part of the same wartime planning unit. As confirmed by Gen. Pleiner in his recent interview with the author, both the Italian and Austrian territories fell under the military purview of the Allied Forces Southern Europe (hence-

establishments, the one that established the SID in 1966 didn't even circulate, since it was a “circolare segreta interna” (internal secret memo). The first law on the issue of intelligence was therefore approved by the Italian Parliament as late as 1977. However, when compared with the previous “reforms”, the only actual difference this law made was that it split the agency in two parts: the Servizio Informazioni per la Sicurezza Militare (military security intelligence service, henceforth SISMI) on the one hand, and the Servizio Informazioni per la Sicurezza Democratica (civilian security intelligence service, henceforth SISDE) on the other. See IPICR 1992, Doc. XXIII, n. 51, p. 34. [Link](#).

- 22 One of the most recent examples of such a situation took place in the aftermath of the Third Gulf War. As it became readily apparent that Iraq's Ba'athist regime did not have the alleged weapons of mass destruction, the CIA and the Bush administration started the “blame game”, both attempting to avoid responsibility. Such examples leave open some very serious questions regarding the actual chain of authority in such delicate situations: who exactly is being told what is to be done? Compare with the CIA's response on its official website to the question: “Who decides when CIA should participate in covert actions, and why?”, see [cia.gov](#), [Link](#) and Ganser 2006, *The CIA in Western Europe*, p. 762
- 23 Not only have several renowned authors (such as Del Piero and Ganser) explicitly drawn a connection between Italy's first national elections of 1948 and the creation of the CIA, but this is unmistakably supported by the very first documents produced by the NSC, all of which focused on blocking the Partito Comunista Italiano (Italian communist party, henceforth PCI) from legally taking over power in the country, i.e. through elections. The Italian parliamentary commission fundamentally concurred and even emphasized this point. See Del Piero 2001, *The United States and "Psychological Warfare"*, p. 1306, footnote 5 / Ganser 2006, *The ghost of Machiavelli*, p. 115-6 and IPICR 1992, Doc. XXIII, n. 51, p. 15-6. [Link](#).

forth, AFSOUTH)'s command²⁴. On top of all of these reasons, the German stay behind network(s) is(are) the subject of recent, extensive research conducted by Tomas Lecorte.²⁵

Among many other things, Gen. Pleiner also confirmed that not only the US, but also all three other occupation powers planned for stay behind units in Austria. However, while in the case of the US's networks, there is already abundant source-material available, in all other cases the current state of sources does not allow us to actually follow the course of the units' development. In the context of the German stay behind networks, Lecorte argued that, in light of the gigantic disproportion in the means at the disposal of France, the UK and the US, it stands to reason that the stay behind operations of the first two must have been several times smaller than those conducted by the latter.²⁶ Pretty much the same can be said about the case of the stay behind networks in Austria, where next to no primary sources are available on either French²⁷ or British stay behind operations. The few exceptions relate to the UK's stay behind units and constitute either Austrian or US documents dating back to the first half of the 1960s²⁸. The latest of the UK's caches to be discovered was uncovered during the demolition and reconstruction process of one of the so-called *Schrebergarten* (small private leisure gardens, usually unsuited for actual housing purposes), as late as June 24th 2014, in Lainz (Vienna)²⁹. Despite their ability to emplace their own stay behind units, this did not make as much sense from the Soviet perspective, particularly due to the massive discrepancy in the numbers of western and eastern ground troops in favor of the USSR. Pleiner stated that, apart from a few small arms depots associated with the Soviet industries located in Eastern Austria, he did not know of any other depots or any other stay-behind units³⁰.

The terminology and structure of the narrative

In rejection of the term (secret / stay behind) *army*, popularized by Swiss scholar Daniele Ganser³¹, in this

24 See Pleiner 2017, p. A8 of the Annex.

25 See the section on source critique as well as Lecorte 2015, Gauner, Nazis und Agenten. [Link](#). See also Ganser 2005, NATO's secret armies, p. 189-211.

26 See Lecorte 2015, Gauner, Nazis und Agenten, p. 9. [Link](#).

27 The fact that France operated its own stay behind networks, both in Western Germany and Austria, was confirmed in passing by the Italian Parliamentary commission. Furthermore, according to their report on Gladio, individual branches of these networks stretched all the way to East Germany and Poland. See IPICR 1992, Doc. XXIII, n. 51, p. 14. [Link](#). For an overview of the available information on French stay behind planning for Austria, see Koppensteiner 2000, Béthouarts Alpenfestung, p. 293-237.

28 During this period, a few fortuitous discoveries by the Austrian authorities led to the localization and recovery of over thirty individual arms and explosives caches, which had been emplaced by the UK, presumably during the occupation period itself, which lasted until 1955. For an overview of the information available on the subject, see Blasi/Etschmann 2005, Überlegungen zu den britischen Waffenlager, p. 139-54.

29 Underneath the foundation of the demolished garden hut a depot containing arms and explosives was uncovered. The cache contained at least a dozen kilograms of explosives, several submachine guns and pistols and some eight munitions containers, as well as detonators, fuses, magazines and some medical supplies; all in all some 230kg of equipment. As stated by Riegler, since most of the weaponry and material was of the same types used during World War II (henceforth WWII), it stands to reason that it was emplaced even prior to the Korean War, in the late 1940s. Surprisingly, while the weapons were in very bad shape – and no precise description of the explosives' status was given – the munition, which was double packed in both wood and metal containers, could actually have still been used. For more information, context, and even pictures of the discovery, see Thomas Riegler; February 5th 2016, Ein Waffenlager im Schrebergarten, cited from oesterreichterrorismus.blogspot.co.at. [Link](#).

30 According to Pleiner, the most probable asset which the Soviets could have emplaced were small depots earmarked for their Special Forces. See Pleiner 2017, p. A10 of the Annex.

31 Daniele Ganser is a key researcher of covert warfare, who almost single-handedly managed to establish the study of the European stay behind networks as an actual field of academic research. For more information on Ganser's contribution see the following section.

research such organizations are rather referred to as *units* and/or *networks*, due to the more accurate nature of both denotative and connotative meanings. A *stay behind unit* is defined as a functionally homogeneous covert paramilitary group, funded, led and, to a certain extent, overseen by one or more intelligence agencies, and whose primary mission is to weather a military invasion, only to then take part in the various duties of the underground resistance and guerrilla warfare. The main difference between stay behind groups and other military units is that, while the latter's purpose is ostensibly to defend the nation, i.e. to openly fight an invasion, the former usually go to great lengths to stay as hidden as possible from the battlefields, in order to maintain their cover. The ability of stay behind personnel to avoid detection both prior to and during enemy occupation is generally referred to as *stayability*. As long as they are led by the same intelligence agency and/or agencies, and despite the fact that they may very well differ significantly from one another, a group of stay behind units is collectively referred to as a *network*. This definition has been based on the following arguments: since almost all of the stay behind networks operating across Western Europe have been funded and led by the CIA, at least to a certain extent, normally in conjunction with the 6th Section of British Military Intelligence (henceforth MI6), insisting on the distinction between the individual “national” networks can at times be misleading. Such cases are illustrated quite well by the examples of the E&E lines and the radio transmission system, both of which were part of the stated core functions of stay behind networks, and which were supposed to cover most of Europe and beyond. The other two primary tasks included intelligence gathering and *covert operations*³².

““[C]overt operations” are understood to be all activities (except as noted herein) which are conducted or sponsored by this Government against hostile foreign states or groups or in support of friendly foreign states or groups but are so planned and executed that any US Government responsibility for them is not evident to unauthorized persons and that if uncovered the US Government can plausibly disclaim any responsibility for them. Specifically, such operations shall include any covert activities related to: propaganda, economic warfare, anti-sabotage, demolition and evacuation measures, subversion against hostile states, including resistance to underground movements guerrillas and refugee liberation groups, and support of indigenous anti-communist elements in threatened countries of the free world. Such operations shall not include armed conflict by recognized military forces, espionage, counter-espionage, and cover and deception for military operations³³.”

In the context of an individual network, a terminological distinction is made between *officers* – individuals regularly employed either by the armed forces or by an intelligence agency, usually acting as instructors or “handlers” of specific stay behind groups – and the network's *agents*. In contrast to the Italian Gladio case, where the majority of both officers and agents are Italian nationals, in the Austrian case the difference between the two is best expressed by the different nationality: while almost all network agents are Austrians, the intelligence and military officers are mostly American. The author furthermore defines a *false flag attack* as a covert operation, the perpetrators of which actively attempt to lay the blame on their political enemies, be it directly,

32 For more information on this topic see chapters 3, 4, and 7. Compare with Gen. Pleiner's description in the Annex, p. A1-2 and with Ganser 2005, NATO's secret armies, p. 1-2.

33 Copy of: National Security Council; June 18th 1948; Directive 10/2. From prof. Rathkolb's private archive. Of course, for the purpose of this research, the definition applies to the covert operations of any organization and/or government. However, this remarkable document may well be argued to have constituted the NSC's license to commit war crimes, that is, to breach the UN Charter (specifically Art. 2 Sec. 3 and 4) and – since Congress had already ratified the Charter – even US law.

or through some sort of associate(s) or proxy, or a combination of the two.

In his 2012 essay entitled “Between Rome, Vienna and Langley: the history of the South Tyrolean terrorist attacks of the 1960s and the role of Italian and American intelligence around the *Befreiungsausschuss Südtirol* [South Tyrolean liberation committee, henceforth BAS]”, South Tyrolean researcher and author Christoph Franceschini argued in favor of the use of the German term *Attentäter* when referring to the BAS’s members³⁴. Despite the several arguments in support of the use of such a term, its lack of an appropriate English translation forced me to deploy a different term. In recognition of the fact that such key terms pose a serious threat to the balanced framework pursued in this research, all references to individuals who actively participated in either the planning, preparation or execution of the BAS's attacks will be made with the term *member*.

Regretfully, the Austrian stay behind network was not endowed with a short and meaningful code-name like its Italian counterpart, but rather with the unpronounceable *GRCROOND*. Due to the obvious uselessness of this term, the author was left with no other choice than to stick to the more general *Austrian stay behind network*, as well as to deploy the names of the specific units whenever possible.

Not only is the Italian Gladio network not the main topic of this research, but several of the references made in that chapter are needed to give more context to several other parts of the narrative. Mainly due to these two reasons, the chapter on Gladio has been placed at the very start of the narrative, right after this one. As an exception to the generally chronological sequence of most other chapters, chapter four is dedicated to the mid-1990s, and in particular to the scandal that broke out over the CIA's 68 arms and explosives caches buried in central Austria. Due to the very small amount of scholarly attention which was given to the stay behind networks in Austria prior to 1996³⁵, it seems appropriate to introduce the main topic of the research through the period in which most of the agency's underground caches were uncovered. The chapter includes not only an overview of the recovered equipment, its position and state of preservation, but also some of the statements, which the few surviving witnesses made at the time. As already mentioned, the disposition of the remaining chapters follows the basic principle of a chronological narrative, which does not require any further explanation.

Within the described parameters, this research focuses on the following six main questions and/or areas:

- ⤴ Which stay behind networks did US intelligence establish and/or foster and/or fund in Austria?
- ⤴ Which government officials, intelligence agencies, and/or other institutions contributed to the networks' establishment?
- ⤴ To which extent are the individual networks intertwined into a larger network of networks?

34 Original: “Zwischen Rom, Wien und Langley. Die Geschichte der Südtirol-Attentate in den 60er Jahren und die Rolle der italienischen und amerikanischen Nachrichtendienste rund um den "Befreiungsausschuss Südtirol"”, see the section of offline secondary references, under Franceschini 2012, Zwischen Rom, Wien und Langley. The closest translation of the term *Attentäter* is *attacker*, but is usually not referred to personal assaults, as is usually the case in English, but rather to the *perpetrators of assassinations or terrorist attacks* See in particular p. 431-2.

35 Virtually all the attention was then aimed at Franz Olah, and at what back then was usually referred to as his *Sonderprojekt* (special project). While this attention was certainly not misplaced, since Olah did indeed turn out to be the US' main stay behind unit, most of those scholars based their research almost exclusively on Austrian sources. For such an examples see Svoboda 1990, Franz Olah: Eine Spurensicherung; as well as Konrad/Lechner 1992, ““Millionenverwechslung” - Franz Olah, Die Kronezeitung, Geheimdienste”.

- ▲ What links existed between either Austrian or Italian stay behind planning and the episodes of terrorism in South Tirol? Were there any specific connections to the BAS?

Past and present state of scholarly research

As one might expect, following the uproar caused by Andreotti's revelations, most of the initial research on stay behind networks was conducted either *in* Italy or *about* the Italian network. Early and important contributions were published by Philip Willan, Franco Ferraresi, Mario Coglitore and Giuseppe De Luti³⁶. Despite the fact that interest in the issue soon spread to other countries, particularly to Germany, Belgium, Holland, Turkey and, to a lesser extent, the Scandinavian nations, systematic research on the Austrian stay behind units and network only really started after 1996, following the publication of Paul Quinn-Judge's article in the *Boston Globe*³⁷. In 1992, Arnold Kopeczek completed his dissertation, which, despite not explicitly dealing with stay behind networks, contributed highly valuable insights into the intelligence networks of Robert Jan Verbelen and Wilhelm Höttl³⁸. In 1995, Franz Olah published his memoirs, in which he downplayed the US's role in his paramilitary unit, famously stating that he "didn't receive orders from anyone"³⁹. The first local publication on the subject of stay behind groups was a special issue of the Austrian political magazine *Zoom*, which featured a dozen essays mainly focusing on the networks in Austria, Italy, Germany and Turkey.⁴⁰ In the following year, Oliver Rathkolb published his own dissertation in the form of a book. This study evaluated virtually all of the then-available sources on the military and security relationship between Vienna and Washington, stretching across the Eisenhower and Kennedy administrations⁴¹.

Following a symposium held at the Austrian museum of military history, specifically focusing on the evaluation of the arms and equipment recovered from the CIA's caches, the participating speakers published a booklet in 1998 titled "Sorry guys, no gold!", which constitutes the first Austrian publication entirely focused on Austrian stay behind groups.⁴² Two further valuable resources were published between 2000 and 2005, both of which featured several individually important essays on the topic of the Austria stay behind network⁴³. As in

36 See Philip Willan 1991, "Puppetmasters: The political use of terrorism in Italy", Constable Publisher, London / Mario Coglitore; Sandro Scarso (eds.) 1992, "La notte dei Gladiatori. Omissioni e silenzi della Repubblica" (The night of the Gladiators. The Republic's silences and omissions), Calusca Publisher, Padova / Franco Ferraresi 1993 "A secret structure codenamed Gladio", in: S. Hellman & G. Pasquino (eds.) *Italian Politics: A Review*, Vol. 7, Pinter Publisher, London, p. 29-48 / Giuseppe De Luti³⁶ 1996, "Il lato oscuro del potere. Associazioni politiche e strutture paramilitari segrete dal 1946 a oggi" (The dark side of power. Political societies and secret paramilitary structures from 1946 until today), Editori Riuniti Publisher, Rome.

37 Paul Quinn-Judge, January 20th 1996, "US caches in Austria stir diplomatic concerns Austria unaware supplies were stashed by CIA" in: *Boston Globe*. See abstract at secure.pqarchiver.com. [Link](#).

38 See Kopeczek 1992, *Fallbeispiele des Kalten Krieges*, phil. Diss., Vienna.

39 Original: "Ich empfang von niemanden Befehle" Olah, Franz (1995): "Die Erinnerungen" (The memoirs), Amalthea Publisher, Vienna, here p. 146.

40 See *Zoom – Zeitschrift für Politik und Gesellschaft* (Magazine for Politics and Society) Vol. 4-5 (1996): "Es muss nicht immer Gladio sein" (It doesn't always have to be Gladio).

41 See Rathkolb 1997, "Washington ruft Wien: US-Großmachtpolitik und Österreich, 1953-1963" (Washington calls Vienna. The US' superpower-policies and Austria, 1953-1963), Böhlau Publisher, Vienna-Cologne-Weimar. Even though this book touches only briefly on the specifics of the Austrian stay behind networks, the sheer amount of context regarding all levels of US decision-making made it a valuable resource for this research.

42 This booklet contains precious contributions on technical, legal and military details of the content recovered from the CIA's caches. See Rauchensteiner Manfred/Ham Claudia (ed.) 1998, "Sorry guys, no gold!", published by the Heeresgeschichtliches Museum (museum of military history) of Vienna.

43 See Beer 2000, *Rund um den "Dritten Mann"*, p. 73-98 / Carfano 2000, *Deconstructing U.S. Army Intelligence*, p. 55-72 /

most other European countries, the actual popularization of the field set in after the 2005 publication of Ganser's seminal work "NATO's secret armies". The book was in fact so popular that it has since been translated into some ten different languages, which, for a rather "fringe" field of historical research like this one, amounts to a very large degree of recognition. Since then, Ganser has published a number of essays, most of which focus on the Italian case, although he also wrote one in 2009 specifically aimed at Austria's stay behind networks⁴⁴. However, the Swiss scholar has also attracted a certain amount of criticism, which pointed at the flaws of his research, especially with regards to his overall narrative. For example, according to American researcher Lawrence S. Kaplan:

"Ganser marshals impressive information to base his case against Gladio. But there are problems with his sources that he could not solve, despite the range and depth of his research. A major one concerns NATO itself, which plays a Delphic role in this account despite its prominence in the title of the book. [...] Connecting the dots between terrorist organizations in NATO countries and a master plan centred in NATO's military headquarters requires a stretch of facts that Ganser cannot manage. He can go no further than citing secondary sources implicating NATO in the conspiracy."⁴⁵

Since then, the only author who has put serious effort and research into this topic is Thomas Riegler. In the past five years, Riegler has contributed a number of valuable essays and articles, both on Austrian stay behind networks and on the connections existing with the BAS⁴⁶. Aside from Riegler, the other two main authors who have published important resources on South Tirol's violent history are Christoph Franceschini and Hans Karl Peterlini⁴⁷. Despite the popularity of the general topic of espionage and intelligence, even among students of history and political science, throughout the research conducted by the author, only two master theses were found to contain at least some reference to the Austrian networks, both of which were written at the Karl-Franzens university of Graz. In 2010, Wolfgang Lackner wrote a very lengthy thesis of a more geographical nature, centering upon Vienna's role in the Cold War, described as that of a "revolving door" for the international intelligence community⁴⁸. Lackner did tackle some of the crucial characters of this research, particularly Franz Olah and Fritz Molden, but he did so in passing, without even mentioning the existence of the related arms caches, not to mention the rest of the relevant information. The second thesis was written in 2015 by Sandra Seidl, consisting of a sweeping but general overview of selected US and Soviet intelligence activities which took place in Austria during the Cold War. In contrast to Lackner, Seidl did at least scratch the surface of the stay behind phenomenon, for example by using the Italian Gladio network as her only example of uncovered CIA operations, or by summarizing some of the information concerning the Austrian underground

Jeřábek 2000, Zur Tätigkeit von "Partisanen", p. 137-70 / Blasi 2005, Die Anfänge des militärischen Nachrichtendienstes, p. 123-38 / Ortner 2005, Die amerikanischen Waffendepots, p. 155-70 / Schmidl 2005, Österreich in Europa, p. 11-26.

44 See Ganser 2009, Secret Warfare in Neutral Austria during the Cold War, p. 3-19.

45 Kaplan 2006, Review of "NATO's secret armies" (Daniele Ganser), p. 686.

46 See Riegler 2013, "Wir setzen uns rein...", p. 166-80 / Riegler 2015, "Die Rössner-Soucek-Verschörung", p. 44-75 / Riegler 2016, Strukturen für den geheimen Krieg, p. 665-80. See more of his research at oesterreichterrorismus.blogspot.com / salto.bz and thomas-riegler.net.

47 See Franceschini 2003, Spielwiese der Geheimdienste, p. 161-86 / Franceschini 2012, Zwischen Rom, Wien und Langley, p. 431-52 / Franceschini 2016, Bruno Kreisky und die Attentäter, p. 123-51 and Peterlini 2003, Die Achse am Brenner, p. 229-63 / Peterlini 2011, Feuernacht. Südtirols Bombenjahre.

48 See Wolfgang Lackner (unpublished), "Wien als Drehscheibe internationaler Geheim- und Nachrichtendienste im Kalten Krieg" (Vienna as a revolving door for international secret and intelligence services during the Cold War), phil. MA thesis 2010, Graz.

depots. However, aside from being almost entirely based on secondary or even mainstream-media sources, the actual subject of the stay behind units is only touched upon very briefly.⁴⁹

The rather poor state of current research which has just been depicted seems to more than justify the current endeavor, particularly in light of the large amount of new source material now available online, one of the topics of the following section.

Source critique

“Especially for those historians venturing into intelligence related topics, the sources constitute the actual problem. Due to the overall secrecy shrouding intelligence agencies, official sources usually are either completely absent, or only scarcely available (for instance, not even Austrian intelligence agencies do routinely deposit source material at [publicly accessible, ed. r.] archives). [...] Despite the fact, that altruism usually isn't the underlying motivation [of leaks and controlled releases], for historians it really is a "stroke of luck" [...] when authentic material thereby finds its way to the outside world. Due to the huge difficulties inherent to this field, even seriously conducted research efforts are prone to inaccuracies, gaps, and misinterpretations.⁵⁰”

The narrative on the main topic of this contribution – the stay behind networks established and/or fostered in Austria by agencies of the United States government during the Cold War – is based on the evaluation of approximately one hundred primary sources. Some 30% of them were generously provided by the supervisor of this project, Prof. Oliver Rathkolb, who had made copies of the originals several years back. This section of the source material is made up of a dozen Austrian government documents dating back to the postwar occupation, as well as some twenty declassified NSC or CIA directives and reports.

The remaining larger share of the primary material on which this research is founded was acquired by the author exclusively by searching through the World Wide Web. These sources comprise almost exclusively internal CIA or Counterintelligence Corps (henceforth CIC) documents, spanning most of the Cold War period. While a handful of them were declassified thanks to the Freedom of Information Act (henceforth FOIA⁵¹), the online publication of the overwhelming majority of all these primary sources (and many more) was primarily the result of the Nazi War Crimes and Japanese Imperial Records Disclosure Acts, which were passed in 1998.

49 See Sandra Seidl (unpublished), “No Such Agency? – Zu den historischen Wurzeln ausländischer Geheimdienstaktivitäten in Österreich 1945-1955” (No Such Agency? – On the historical roots of foreign intelligence activities in Austria 1945-1955), phil. MA thesis 2015, Graz.

50 Original: “Gerade die Quellen sind für Historiker, der sich mit nachrichtendienstlichen Themen beschäftigen, das eigentliche Problem. Auf Grund des geheimen Charakters von Nachrichtendiensten sind amtliche Quellen in der Regel nicht oder höchstens spärlich erhalten (auch in Österreich findet beispielweise keine regelmäßige Abgabe von Material an Archive statt). [...] Ein "Glücksfall" für den Historiker ist es da schon, wenn authentisches Material eines Dienstes den Weg zu einem extern Empfänger [...] findet, auch wenn dies oft nicht aus allzu hehren Motiven geschehen mag. Durch diese enorm diffizile Quellenlage kann es daher in diesem Forschungsbereich, auch wenn er seriös betrieben wird, leicht zu Ungenauigkeiten, Lücken und Fehlinterpretationen kommen.” Blasi 2005, Die Anfänge des militärischen Nachrichtendienstes, p. 123-4.

51 The Freedom of Information Act is a somewhat unique tool in the western hemisphere, which enables anyone, not just US-citizens, to petition directly the American government (or one of its many agencies and departments) for the release of documentation regarding all possible sorts of issues. However, not all researchers get the sources they requested, as has happened time and again, particularly regarding covert operations. According to two of the major authors who have researched stay behind networks in Austria (Rathkolb and Daniele Ganser), each of them submitted independent FOIA requests, and both failed to obtain the individual release of documentation pertaining to the issue. See Ganser 2009, Secret Warfare in Neutral Austria, p. 8-9.

As their names clearly indicate, these pieces of legislation specifically sought to declassify most of the internal documents pertaining to either Japanese or Nazi war crimes, including those documented in the CIA's own files. While it took several years for both the internet technology to develop and the documents to be digitized, a veritable treasure trove has been made available online from 2005 to 2017, and the process is still continuing. As noted by Lecorte in the context of stay behind networks in Germany, “while it is understandable to criticize the US's past and present foreign intelligence policies, one fact just has to be acknowledged: through both the Freedom of Information Act and the [two 1998 acts] the US brought more transparency to their intelligence agencies than good old Europe.”⁵²

According to the CIA's own website: “As a result of this landmark effort, more than 8.5 million pages of records have been opened to the public under the Nazi War Crimes Disclosure Act [...] and the Japanese Imperial Government Disclosure Act [...]. These records include operational files of the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) totaling 1.2 million pages, and 114,200 pages of CIA material.”⁵³ Of those, as of the summer of 2017, only some 56,000 documents (roughly some 200,000 pages) were already accessible. Furthermore, in January 2017, the CIA published all of the records contained in its CREST archive on its website; before then, the only way to physically access this database was located at NARA II in College Park, Maryland. This archive consists of all documents which, when not explicitly selected for exemption, are automatically declassified after 25 years, meaning that by 2017 all non-exempted CIA documents dating to before 1992 were published all at once. According to the pertinent section of the official website, over 11 million pages can be found within this database alone.⁵⁴

Of the CREST-files, as of the summer of 2017, over 940,000 individual documents were already accessible. It may therefore be conclusively argued that the sheer quantity of documents available online today surpasses most researchers' wildest dreams – or nightmares, just a few short years ago. Despite the many parts which remained redacted, since all of the mentioned documents have been released in pdf format, an unprecedented amount of data has been made available for scholarly research throughout the world, or at least to a certain extent⁵⁵. Due to their relatively recent release, next to no research has been conducted on them up to the summer of 2017, with two notable exceptions. For the Austrian case, the most important one is undoubtedly Thomas Riegler, who is practically the only author who has continued to address this subject in the last few years, and who has progressively integrated a number of relevant sources in his research. On the other hand, the most systematic evaluation of at least a portion of these documents was done by Lecorte, who in 2015 published the results of his research on the stay behind networks in Germany⁵⁶. However, the fact that so many documents have been published should not automatically lead to the belief that ALL existing documents have been released.

52 See Lecorte 2015, Gauner, Nazis und Agenten, p. 7. [Link](#).

53 CIA's official website, section on the Nazi War Crimes and Japanese Imperial Records Disclosure Acts. See [cia.gov](#). [Link](#).

54 CIA's official website, section on the CREST: 25-Year Program Archive. See [cia.gov](#). [Link](#).

55 Not all of the copies which have been digitized were of good quality to begin with. Furthermore, while in some cases the quality of the digitization process is sufficient to enable full text searches of individual documents, this does not apply in all cases. It remains unclear how large the proportion of digitally searchable documents actually is.

56 See Riegler 2015, “Die Rössner-Soucek-Verschörung”, p. 44-75 / Riegler 2016, Strukturen für den geheimen Krieg, p. 665-80; as well as Riegler's numerous contributions in the section of online secondary sources of the list of references ([thomas-riegler.net](#) / [salto.bz](#) und [oesterreichterrorismus.blogspot.com](#)). As for Tomas Lecorte's work, see the already cited 2015, Gauner, Nazis und Agenten. [Link](#).

Quite the contrary is in fact the case, if only due to the slow process of transferring the files onto servers accessible from the web. But of course there can also be “national security reasons” why some documents will not be released.

In his 2015 publication, Lecorte went on to spell out with quite some elegance some of the founding concepts of historical research when dealing with primary source material in an intelligence-related context:

“We should take care not to mistake the authenticity of the documents for the objective truthfulness of the information contained inside them. Particularly facsimile documents may quickly lead to the assumption of their objectivity, merely based on the authentic exterior form of the sources. Yet even files and documents are just subjective collections, which more often than not contain mistakes and/or false information. Sometimes, this false information contributed to the failure of some of the operations, causing a certain degree of hassle to the CIA itself.⁵⁷”

Aside from some of the secondary literature mentioned above, in both chapters three and eight – the ones concerning Gladio and South Tirol respectively – most of the narrative is founded upon the reports issued by the Italian parliamentary committee which investigated both Gladio and the so-called “Years of Lead”. This commission was originally established in 1988, under the chairmanship of Senator Libero Gualtieri, but its charter was extended until 2001, eventually producing thousands of pages of documentation on many issues. A portion of these files are already available online, including the reports on Gladio and on terrorism in South Tirol⁵⁸. In contrast to single-author documents, the reports issued by committees such as this one, a body consisting of two dozen members of Parliament (henceforth MPs), represent a group narrative of some of the darkest and most sensitive moments in Italian postwar history. Aside from the final reports, the commission produced a large number of either individual or group reports on specific subjects or time frames. In virtually all cases, such documents have only been used in this study to provide exact dates, names, places, and number of victims in the major bombings.

However, despite the overall quality of these reports, the commission itself often lamented the restrictions which the executive imposed on their access to both documents and witnesses. Therefore, as is the case for any and all sources, the committee's reports do not fully account for all aspects of either the Gladio network, or the terrorist attacks which took place in South Tirol, particularly during the 1960s and the 1980s. Furthermore, the degree of partiality expected from Italian MPs, particularly regarding the involvement of Austrian officials with the BAS, has been offset by and integrated into the perspective of the two main South Tyrolean scholars of this specific field: Christoph Franceschini and Hans Karl Peterlini.

In conclusion, all sources – whether primary or secondary – have been subjected to critical evaluation and, where possible, the cross-checking of the information presented, either by verifying the sources quoted by the scholars, or through other sources.

57 Original: “Die *Echtheit* der CIA-Dokumente darf auch nicht dazu verleiten, ihre *objektive* Richtigkeit voraus zusetzen. Gerade faksimilierte Akten verleiten dazu, aus der Echtheit der Form vorschnell auf die Objektivität des Inhalts zu schließen. Doch auch Akten sind nur eine Sammlung subjektiver, nicht selten halb oder ganz falscher Informationen. Manche dieser falschen Informationen trugen zum Scheitern der Projekte bei und bereiteten der CIA selbst Ärger.” Lecorte 2015, Gauner, Nazis und Agenten, p. 9-10. [Link](#).

58 See IPICR, Doc. XXIII, n. 36 (1991) [Link](#), n. 51 (1992) [Link](#) and n. 52 (1992) [Link](#).

3 Gladio: an Italian stay behind network

“There hasn't been one single trial, either for massacres or for attacks against the constitutional order, that is, some of the bloodiest deeds that have ever plagued this country, which eventually hasn't also led to the sentencing of men of our own military intelligence, for the aid and cover they granted to the perpetrators.⁵⁹”

The aforementioned statement was formulated in the context of what is commonly referred to as the *anni di piombo* (Years of Lead), as well as the prevailing “justification” behind almost all of the bloodiest massacres: *the strategy of tensions*. This strategy was developed on the basis of two fundamental assumptions: firstly, that major terror attacks would lead to an electoral shift to the right, and secondly that the use of *false flag attacks* would help speed it up. During this time frame, which – according to most definitions – stretched from the late Sixties to the late Eighties, seemingly countless acts of violence were perpetrated by a number of organizations on both sides of the right-left dichotomy. Well, as a matter of fact, someone did actually make a count. Using the research conducted by Italian author Sergio Zavoli, the “Associazione Italiana Vittime del Terrorismo” (Italian Association for the Victims of Terrorism) concludes that, between 1969 and 1988, 14,615 “politically motivated attacks” were perpetrated, leading to 428 deaths and well over 1,000 injured and permanently maimed survivors⁶⁰.

As stated by Daniele Ganser, “due to their limited military and strategic skills and experience [the Red Brigades and other similarly violent left-wing organizations] were [eventually, ed. r.] rounded up, arrested, tried and imprisoned.” On the other hand, most of the protagonists of the right-wing terror attacks consistently managed to avoid capture and/or final sentencing. This discrepancy may be said to be the result of two main factors: firstly, as opposed to left-wingers, right-wing extremists are more likely to conform better to strict principles such as military hierarchies, discipline and secrecy, which itself already constitutes a considerable advantage. Secondly, once pursued by the law, many of the members of right-wing groups involved were directly or indirectly aided by the Italian intelligence in either their escape and/or legal defense⁶¹. A number of these intelligence officers were directly involved with the Gladio network, some even in high-level positions. However, pinpointing the evidence and relating court sentences in such instances did prove to be extremely difficult and time-consuming, particularly because virtually all of the major massacres⁶² were followed by at least one mistrial. Regrettably, given the thesis' length and time requirements, these otherwise relevant aspects of the research have been omitted. However, because some readers might reject outright even the possibility, that there could be documentary evidence that top-ranking officers of military and intelligence organizations could have anything to do with the strategy of tensions or with false flag attacks, at least one well-documented exam-

59 Original: “Non vi è un solo processo in Italia per stragi o per fatti di eversione dell'ordinamento costituzionale, che non abbia visto la condanna di uomini del nostro servizio segreto militare per episodi di copertura degli autori dei più sanguinosi misfatti che hanno colpito il Paese.” This statement was apparently unable to achieve an arithmetic majority within the commission, but was nevertheless included in a 250-page separate report, signed by almost all of the commissions members from left-of-center parties. The list includes Representatives: Bielli, Grimaldi, Attili, Cappella and Ruzzante, as well as Senators Bertoni, Cioni, Pardini and Staniscia. Cited from IPICR 2001, Doc. XXIII, n. 64, Vol. I, Tome 2, p. 266, [Link](#). Compare with Peterlini 2003, *Die Achse am Brenner*, p. 229.

60 This calculation includes all kinds of terrorism-related victims, even those in which Italians suffered from attacks on foreign soil. However, such cases constitute a negligibly small percentage of the total. See [vittimeterrorismo.it](#), [Link](#).

61 Compare with Ganser 2005, *NATO's secret armies*, p. 63.

62 For a detailed account of the major massacres see Schaerf/De Lutis/Silj/Carlucci/Bellucci/Argentini 1992, *Venti anni di violenza*.

ple has to be cited. This case revolves around a US military official who, by forwarding a proposal involving staged attacks against American targets on American soil, went from being Washington's top general to the highest ranking officer in Europe.

Following the CIA's failed *Bay of Pigs* invasion of Cuba in 1961, the Kennedy administration tasked the military's top brass with the development of an alternative plan, aimed at achieving precisely what the CIA had failed to deliver: the overthrow of Fidel Castro's administration. In a March 1962 memo, Gen. Lyman L. Lemnitzer – then the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (henceforth JCS), approved and forwarded a plan which later became known as *Operation Northwoods*. Among several other things, it explicitly called for: 1) “that the [primary] responsibility” for the following “both overt and covert military operations be assigned [to] the Joint Chiefs of Staff⁶³”; 2) that a “series of well-coordinated incidents will be planned to take place in and around Guantanamo to give genuine appearance of being done by hostile Cuban forces⁶⁴”; 3) a “»Remember the Maine« incident” which “could be arranged in several forms⁶⁵”; 4) the development of a “Communist Cuban terror campaign in the Miami area, in other Florida cities and even in Washington⁶⁶”; 5) the use “of MIG type aircraft by US pilots” which “could provide additional provocation⁶⁷”; 6) “an incident which will demonstrate convincingly that a Cuban aircraft has attacked and shot down a chartered civil airliner enroute from the United States” over or near Cuba⁶⁸. To say the least, the Kennedy administration was not pleased with the proposals forwarded by Lemnitzer. Since the content of the plan was to remain secret until 1998, and since the president could not really just sack his top general without any apparent reason, it was decided to transfer him somewhere else. And so Kennedy denied him a second term as JCS chairman, and chose him to fill the shoes of Gen. Lauris Norstad, NATO's Supreme Allied Commander Europe (henceforth SACEUR)⁶⁹.



Gen. Lyman L. Lemnitzer (left) and President John F. Kennedy, July 25th 1962, cropped version. Original credit: White House. Source: jfklibrary.org. [Link](#).

Once concocted, plans of this kind never really disappear. In fact, they mostly get adapted to other

63 Lyman L. Lemnitzer, March 13th 1962, Memo to the defense secretary: “Justification for US military intervention in Cuba (TS)”, (p. 1) [Link](#).

64 This included anything up to “Sink a ship near harbor entrance. Conduct funerals of mock victims”. Ibid., (p. 6-7), [Link](#).

65 The most spectacular of the proposed forms involved the sinking of a US drone vessel near Havana or Santiago “as a spectacular result of Cuban attack from the air or sea or both. The presence of Cuban planes and ships merely investigating the intent of the vessel could be fairly compelling evidence that the ship was taken under attack.” Ibid., (p. 8), [Link](#).

66 “Exploding a few plastic explosives bombs in carefully chosen spots, the arrest of Cuban agents and the release of prepared documents substantiating Cuban involvement also would be helpful”. Ibid., (p. 8-9), [Link](#).

67 “Harassment of civil air, attacks on surface shipping and destroying of US military drone aircraft”. Ibid., (p.9), [Link](#).

68 One of the proposed versions suggests declaring that the passengers on board were “a group of college students off on holiday”. Ibid., (p. 10), [Link](#). The point of such proposals is to provoke the largest possible emotional reaction from public opinion, which the warmongers and profiteers can then use for their own ends. Babies, pregnant women, nuns, college students etc.

69 See Daniele Ganser 2016, cited from globalresearch.ca. [Link](#). This sequence of events is further supported by an article by David Ruppe, published on May 1st 2001; “U.S. Military wanted to provoke war with Cuba“ on abcnews.com, [Link](#). More information on Gen. Lemnitzer's involvement with Gladio in the section on the networks connection to NATO.

contexts, later periods and different targets. It may be compared to toothpaste: once it is out of the tube, it is nearly impossible to push it back. As soon as attention has been averted, the ability of the officers and agents' involved to act independently increases, as does their access to available plans and resources. Such a conspiracy theory could be used to explain a number of documentable links between US officers and decision-makers on the one hand, and several politically important events on the other, not just in Italy or Austria, but throughout the world. More often than not, such links have either been denied, otherwise rejected, or interpreted as the result of an organically integrated anticommunist strategy.

Following the table aimed at providing an overview of the different stay behind networks and related intelligence units/offices/divisions, the next section of the narrative dives straight into the Italian postwar context, thereby focusing attention on both personal and structural continuities with the WWII period.

Period	Acronym	Name	Explanation/functions
Italian Intelligence			
1949-1966	SIFAR	Servizio Informazioni Forze Armate	First postwar military intelligence agency
1966-1977	SID	Servizio Informazioni Difesa	Second military intelligence agency
1977-2008	SISMI	Servizio Informazioni per la Sicurezza Militare	Result of the separation of military intelligence (SISMI) and “democratic” intelligence (SISDE)
1956-1991	SAD	Studi ed Addestramento	Office of military intelligence responsible for Gladio, migrated through all aforementioned military intelligence agencies
Paramilitary networks/organizations			
1944-1946	none	Friuli-Osoppo partisan brigades	Active on the North-East contrasting pro-Yugoslav communist brigades
1946-1950	none	3°Corpo Volontari della Libertà	It inherited members, weapons and targets from the Osoppo-Friuli Brigades
1950-1956	none	Organizzazione O	Same as above – Disbanded in 1956
1957-1974	none	Stella Alpina	Paramilitary unit under SIFAR, incorporated into Gladio in 1959, mostly staffed by former members of Organizzazione O
1956-1991	CAG	Centro Addestramento Guastatori	Training and depository facility in Sardinia
1956-1991	none	„Gladio“	Italian stay behind network

Overview and short explanation of the main (Italian) units, offices, divisions, and agencies mentioned throughout this chapter.

1945-48: Context and continuities

“Within the US' overall strategy aimed at strengthening the Western block, Italy constituted an important pawn, which in turn led to the imperative that the country should not «fall under communist dominion». Should this come to happen, it was considered appropriate to organize efficient and rapidly deployable countermeasures in advance. It is precisely out of this context that the National Security Council (NSC)'s multiple policy and military initiatives were born.⁷⁰”

70 Original: “L'Italia rappresentava, politicamente, una pedina importante nella strategia americana di rafforzamento del blocco antisovietico; perciò era importante che il Paese non «cadesse sotto la dominazione comunista» e, nel caso ciò fosse avvenuto, era opportuno aver già predisposto misure da attuare con urgenza ed efficacia. Da qui nacquero le ripetute direttive emanate dal National Security Council (NSC), riguardanti sia le iniziative politiche che quelle militari.” IPICR 1992, Doc. XXIII, n. 51, p. 41, footnote 1. [Link](#).

According to most of the commission's left-of-center members, it was Alcide De Gasperi⁷¹ who, prior to the end of WWII, explicitly requested that the US keep their troops in the country, even after the cessation of hostilities. “On its own, this doesn't constitute an illegitimate request, were it not for the fact that, in submitting it, the Christian-Democratic leader explicitly highlighted the necessity of keeping his good name out of it: a sign of how, from the very onset, secrecy and cover became the keys to this long operation.”⁷² According to Rathkolb's narrative, the NSC may be considered as the 1947 successor of the State-War-Navy-Coordinating Committee. In it, the top policy-makers of the State, Defense, and Finance Departments, as well as officials of the intelligence community, have since been able to contribute to the formation of the proposals eventually submitted to the president. In contrast to the Austrian case, which was first discussed specifically in NSC directive 38, all of its very first documents relate to Italy's political and military situation.⁷³



Alcide De Gasperi, 1953. Original credit: unknown. Source: wikipedia.org. [Link](#).

In late 1947, NSC Directive 4-A ordered the CIA⁷⁴ – established just a few months earlier and still largely staffed by former Office of Strategic Services (henceforth OSS) officers – to embark on a wide array of covert activities, explicitly aimed at preventing a communist victory in the Italian national polls of April 1948. Responsibility over the operations was given to Frank Wisner, the head of the inconspicuously named *Office of Policy Coordination*⁷⁵ (henceforth OPC). In accordance with the 4-A directive, the DC received somewhere in the region of \$10 million from US sources, and the OPC conducted coordinated smear campaigns against hundreds of specific PCI candidates. According to Ganser, of the well over two hundred parliamentary seats individually targeted by the OPC, the DC was able to win 198. President Truman, who interpreted the electoral results as a triumphant success of OPC's covert operations, replaced the geographically limited 4-A with the 10/2 directive, expanding the reach of the CIA's covert operations to the entire globe.⁷⁶

71 De Gasperi was Italy's first republican prime minister, and is widely considered one of the founding fathers of both the DC and the European Union. It is therefore unsurprising that all the right-of-center commissioners (most of whom were former DC) have refused to integrate this critique of De Gasperi's actions into the final text of the reports.

72 Original: “Non sarebbe di per se' una richiesta illegittima, salvo che il leader democristiano, nel chiedere ciò, espressamente sottolinea la necessità che il suo nome non venga menzionato in alcun caso, segno di come la segretezza e la copertura diventino fin da subito le parole chiave di questa lunga operazione.” Representatives: Bielli, Grimaldi, Attili, Cappella and Ruzzante, as well as Senators Bertoni, Cioni, Pardini and Staniscia. Cited from IPICR 2001, Doc. XXIII, n. 64, Vol. I, Tome 2, p. 77, [Link](#).

73 See Rathkolb 1988, *Von der Besatzung zur Neutralität*, p. 372-3 and 382.

74 As noted by Siegfried Beer, even though the US already had several other intelligence agencies, primary attention has to be devoted to the CIA, since from its very inception it was also tasked with coordinating the efforts of all other such agencies. See Beer 2000, *Rund um den “Dritten Mann”*, p. 77-8. For a rather detailed overview of the development which the US intelligence apparatus underwent prior to the establishment of the CIA in 1947, see Ganser 2005, *NATO's secret armies*, p. 52-4.

75 According to Beer, during the late 1940s and early 1950s the OPC became the fastest growing section of the entire US intelligence apparatus, expanding from 302 employees and a \$5 million annual budget in 1949 to 5,000 staff members and \$200 million in yearly funds in 1953. See Beer 2000, *Rund um den “Dritten Mann”*, p. 95.

76 See Ganser 2006, *The CIA in Western Europe*, p. 764-5 and his 2015 interview at [globalresearch.ca](#). [Link](#). Compare with Del Piero 2001, *The United States and “Psychological Warfare”*, p. 1306. For the sake of accuracy, the specific amount of either funding or seats targeted could not be otherwise verified. See also copy of: National Security Council; June 18th 1948; Directive

“Washington knew that Moscow was providing large sums of money to the PCI, while Moscow also knew that Washington was providing financial support to the [DC]. Therefore, when Italian communists, like Gianni Cervetti, confirmed after the end of the Cold War that the PCI had received ample funds from the Soviet Union, they highlighted at the same time that the Christian Democrats had had the same relationship with Washington.”⁷⁷

In the early 1990s, following the revelation of the Gladio network, the then-President Francesco Cossiga stated that he had been part of a (DC) party-linked paramilitary militia “with Stens [submachine guns, ed. r.] and hand-grenades”, which in the spring of 1948 – at the time of the first national elections – stood ready to intervene. While he did not say how many members this militia had, he did state that their weapons had been supplied by the Carabinieri (the Italian military police)⁷⁸.

Just like in Austria and Germany, a substantial degree of personal continuity existed between Italy's fledgling postwar security apparatus on the one hand, and the police and intelligence officials of the Fascist regimes on the other. In fact, starting in the last months of the war itself, a large number of former fascist officers were integrated into what ultimately became the postwar security establishment. This process was primarily overseen by De Gasperi, Italy's prime minister until 1953, and Mario Scelba – interior minister from 1947 to 1953 and briefly prime minister from 1954 to 1955⁷⁹. Furthermore, this early period was characterized by a certain continuity even among some executives in the private sector, such as FIAT's CEO Vittorio Valletta, who later closely collaborated with the SIFAR, particularly with Col. Renzo Rocca.⁸⁰ However, specifically relating to the Gladio network, it may be argued that the most important continuities existed with the north-eastern partisan resistance units, particularly with the (non-communist) Osoppo-Friuli brigades.

Following the cessation of hostilities, the Italian military proceeded to disarm all partisan units but, as early as 1946, the “Osoppo” was rearmed and recommissioned “as a sort of *corpo franco*”, technically named “3. Corpo Volontari della Libertà”⁸¹. The initial arguments on which this move was founded related to the skir-

10/2. From Prof. Rathkolb's private archive. This is the same document from which the author has drawn this study's very definition of *covert operations*. See chapter two.

77 Ganser 2006, The ghost of Machiavelli, p. 114. This was further corroborated by an article by Fabio Squillante, published in La Stampa (major Italian daily) on October 19th 1991 (p. 7) “Il PCUS dopo il '77 rifinanziò il PCI” (The Soviet communist party restarted financing the PCI after 1977), see archiviolaStampa.it, [Link](#).

78 Francesco Cossiga (1992), cited from Francesco Santini, January 12th 1992 on the front page of La Stampa, “Il 18 Aprile '48 ero armato contro i comunisti” (On April 18th 1948 I stood ready and armed against the communists), see archiviolaStampa.it, [Link](#). Compare with Ganser 2005, NATO's secret armies, p. 66.

79 Compare with *ibid*, p. 64 and Azzellini 2003, Gladio in Italien, p. 26. One of the most exemplary of such cases is constituted by the X^a MAS (10th marine assault flotilla), one of the elite units of the Fascist regime, which chose to fight on the side of Germany and Mussolini even after the 1943 armistice. While officially disbanded soon after the war, a significant share of its specialist personnel found more than one way to reenter into Italy's military service, some of them even ending up becoming Gladio agents. See IPICR 1992, Doc. XXIII, n. 51, p. 43, footnote 9. [Link](#). On the other hand, Junio Valerio Borghese, the X^a MAS' historic commander, went on to become one of the early leaders of the *Movimento Sociale Italiano* (MSI), Italy's largest neofascist parliamentary movement. See CIA Directorate for Intelligence; May 26th 1983; Terrorism Review p. 11-5 (here p. 13-4). [Link](#).

80 In November 1944, as the war-time head of FIAT, the CLN (Italy's National Liberation Committee, the central committee of Italian resistance towards the end of WWII) investigated Valletta and accused him of collaboration with the fascist regime. This led to his exoneration from FIAT management the following March, which however only lasted until the summer of 1946, due to mounting pressures on the authorities, who were apparently unable to find a suitable replacement. At the age of 77, Valletta died one year after leaving FIAT, in August 1967. See Azzellini 2003, Gladio in Italien, p. 27-8. More information on Col. Rocca in the following section.

81 Because of the fact that the term “corpo franco” is used in passing, and therefore out of context, the exact meaning of this rather curious wording remains unclear. Possible translations include: off-duty, unbound, and bold. The technical name on the other hand translates as “3rd Corps of Freedom Volunteers”.

mishes which pro-Yugoslav communist partisans of the Garibaldi-Natisone brigades on the one hand, and the Osoppo-Friuli on the other, had continued to engage in both before and after the official ceasefire of mid-1945⁸². Despite the 1948 improvement in the relations between Tito – then Yugoslavia's head of state – and the West, immediately followed by a diplomatic falling-out between Belgrade and Moscow, the Italian government did not disarm the Osoppo units. In fact, on April 6th 1950, the “3. Corpo Volontari della Libertà”, including many of its members and the entire leadership, was transformed into the secretive military *Organization O*. Since this unit now counted over 4,000 members, Italy's defense staff endowed its leaders (Luigi Olivieri, Prospero del Din, and Antonio Specogno) with enough weaponry to outfit fifteen regular battalions⁸³. However, this must also be viewed within the context of the first successful Soviet nuclear experiment of 1949 which, in combination with the outbreak of the Korean War in 1950, led to a rapid rise in overall Cold War tensions.

“Fears that Soviet possession of the atomic bomb could combine with Moscow's conventional superiority to establish a "window of vulnerability" in Europe led Washington to promote the rearmament of European allies. This militarization of containment accentuated Washington's willingness to make use of unorthodox tools.”⁸⁴

According to the commission's report, sources dating back to as early as 1957 define *Stella Alpina* (Alpine Star) – one of the oldest core networks of Gladio until the mid-Seventies – as “almost entirely” staffed by members of *Organization O*, which had only been formally disbanded on October 4th 1956⁸⁵. The only real difference between *Organization O* and *Stella Alpina* seems to have been that, while the former was under the purview of the Defense staff, the latter – like all Gladio units – fell under the jurisdiction of military intelligence. The commission concluded that the prime minister was the only official possible capable of both establishing such secretive networks, and of completely bypassing parliamentary authority in the process. The rearmament and activation of both the “3. Corpo Volontari della Libertà”, and *Organization O* are thereby explicitly identified as the results of De Gasperi's actions.⁸⁶ Furthermore, while not mentioned by the commission, it stands to reason that US officers would not have supported any other Italian official in such an endeavor, due to the risk of exposure to the press. Were such a conspiracy to be leaked (or otherwise uncovered), it could have led to an outright rejection of US foreign policy by the incumbent prime minister, possibly leading to an early alliance between De Gasperi and the Parliamentary left.

82 Similarly, towards the end of the war, British troops were stationed both in the south-eastern sector of Austria and in the Trieste area. The entire region – constituting the borderland between Italy, Austria and Yugoslavia – was embroiled in several territorial disputes involving Yugoslav claims to portions of both Austrian and Italian soil. According to Blasi/Etschmann, the situation was so tense that even as late as May 1945 it still wasn't clear whether a direct confrontation would break out between Titoist partisans and British forces. Even though no military escalation followed, several repressive actions – targeting both the Italian and Austrian populations living on the other side of the border – did further fuel the tensions. See Blasi/Etschmann 2005, *Überlegungen zu den Britischen Waffenlager*, p. 141.

83 See IPICR 1991, Doc. XXIII, n. 36. p. 32-3. [Link](#). See also IPICR 1992, Doc. XXIII, n. 51, p. 17-9 and p. 42, footnote 4. [Link](#).

84 Del Piero 2001, *The United States and “Psychological Warfare”*, p. 1311. Compare with Rathkolb 1988, *Von der Besatzung zur Neutralität*, p. 385-6 and Riegler 2016, *Strukturen für den geheimen Krieg*, p. 666.

85 See IPICR 1991, Doc. XXIII, n. 36. p. 33. [Link](#).

86 See *ibid*, p. 51. [Link](#).

1949-62: The SIFAR-CIA relationship

Following the 1948 elections, the new De Gasperi administration was pressured to implement a wide range of institutional reforms which, according to some officials of the Truman administration, were so desperately necessary to modernize the country. These reforms included heavy investments in the European Recovery Program (henceforth ERP)'s funds, the execution of land reforms in certain southern areas and the implementation of strategies aimed at increasing the productivity of the industrial sector. However, these expectations were soon frustrated by the Italian government's lack of interest in changes that they saw as far too radical. Nevertheless, soon after Italy became a member of NATO in 1949, James J. Angleton himself contributed to the reestablishment of the Italian intelligence services – which had been formally disbanded after WWII. Historian Mario Del Piero argued that this fact constitutes proof of “how the logic of the Cold War helped Italy to reassume its sovereignty after the defeat of World War II and the ensuing punitive peace.”⁸⁷ Yet a CIA working paper dated June 21st 1949 clearly states that some – if not all – of the intelligence services of the individual branches of the Italian armed forces had been “penetrated” by both the UK's and the US's agencies well before the creation of the SIFAR⁸⁸. A crucial part of the Washington's covert efforts in Italy was aimed at the – largely communist controlled – labor movement, and in particular at the splintering of the large *Confederazione Generale Italiana dei Lavoratori* (henceforth CGIL), Italy's unitary labor union. In America, these efforts were coordinated by the *American Federation of Labor* (henceforth AFL)'s unofficial director for foreign affairs Jay Lovestone, supervised by Irving Brown in Europe, and funded by the OPC⁸⁹. By mid 1949, both of the non-communist strands which had contributed to the original foundation of the unitary labor union – the socialist-reformists and Christian-democrats – had already seceded from the CGIL and established their own unions. However, the policy seemed to achieve conflicting results, as promptly highlighted by the 1951 round of local elections, in which the PCI saw its electoral share increase from 33 to 38%⁹⁰.

The Italian parliamentary commission traced the origins of the Gladio network back to a proposal dated October 8th 1951, made by the then-head of SIFAR Gen. Umberto Broccoli to the Chief of the Defense Staff, Gen. Elfisio Marras. Broccoli proposed the creation of a “intelligence-operational organization on the territory threatened by enemy occupation⁹¹”. The memo then went on to explain that the “resistance network” should be able to be immediately activated, in order to gather intelligence, sabotage the occupying forces' infrastructure and provide both support and lines of escape to the soldiers left behind enemy lines. A certain urgency was imposed by the two following assumptions: the necessary preparations were both costly and lengthy, and – since there was a risk that the US might precede the Italian officials in the matter – it was preferable to create a “national” network⁹². While the training of the initially selected officers was supposed to take place in Great Britain, the memo also underlined the necessity of limiting the scope of the relationship with British intelli-

87 See Del Piero 2001, *The United States and “Psychological Warfare”*, p. 1307-9.

88 See CIA Western Europe Branch; June 21st 1949; Working paper – Branch weekly (p. 7). [Link](#).

89 As early as 1952, Irving Brown admitted to have played a leading role in the break-up of the general strikes attempts in France (1947) and in Italy (1948), as well as having co-financed the splits in the communist-dominated trade unions of both countries. See Konrad/Lechner 1992, “Millionenverwehlung”, p. 39.

90 See Del Piero 2001, *The United States and “Psychological Warfare”*, p. 1310-1.

91 Original: “Organizzazione informativa-operativa nel territorio nazionale suscettibile di occupazione nemica”. Cited from IPICR 1992, Doc. XXIII, n. 51, p. 14. [Link](#).

92 See *ibid.* [Link](#).

gence, since it was cheaper to establish a stable and solid bond with the US intelligence apparatus⁹³. Col. Santini was supposed to take command of the entire network, which was to be organized in six branches: intelligence, sabotage, propaganda, communications, coding and E&E. Within a year, a maximum of 200 agents – who were to be chosen mainly based on their *stayability* – were supposed to be already trained and ready for the D-Day looming over the horizon⁹⁴. In May 1952, a second round of local elections confirmed the PCI's growth already measured the year before, as well as the rise of right-wing groups such as the monarchists and the Movimento Sociale Italiano (Italian neofascist party, henceforth MSI).⁹⁵

“According to two memorandums dated April 12th and 21st of 1952 by the US Secretary of Defense, the Pentagon's Psychological Strategy Board approved a 'psychological operational plan for the reduction of communist power in France and Italy' [...]. The objectives of the plan were to reduce the communist party's power in both countries by targeting its material resources, its international ties, its influence over the French and Italian governments, its attractiveness to both French and Italian citizens and, in particular, its influence over the unions. These objectives were to be pursued until [the respective communist parties] would cease to represent a threat to the security of France and Italy and to US objectives. In a subsequent memorandum, dated May 14th 1952, the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS), aside from communicating their approval, they also recommended that the plan be subjected to extraordinary security measures, by limiting a complete operational access and knowledge to just the US ambassadors in Italy and France, since [the plan, ed. r.] might appear as a restriction of national sovereignty and as an interference into the internal administration of the French and Italian governments⁹⁶.”

By 1952/53 the process of integrating Wisner's OPC into the CIA had been completed. The consolidation within US intelligence was not mirrored by its Soviet counterpart, since Stalin's death and the related Beria crisis had caused the almost complete rotation of MVD (Soviet Union's Interior ministry) personnel in Vienna⁹⁷ and probably elsewhere as well. These capabilities then came in very handy to the Eisenhower administration,

93 According to Ganser's narrative, Her Majesty's Government had set a precondition on the training of Italian officers: military procurement contracts to the kingdom's arms manufacturers worth some 500 million Lira. Recognizing their inability to foot such a bill, Italian officials then tried to deceive the British, by first sending their men to train in the UK, while secretly establishing agreements for the future with the CIA. As expected, the MI6 rapidly caught wind of the whole affair. Ganser suggests, however, that they completed the training courses which had already started at Fort Monckton, only to then sharply criticize the Italian military establishment, as well as warning them of the ensuing dependence on the US. As with the Italian case, MI6 and the CIA ended up “fighting” each other for influence over several of the other European stay-behind networks, such as in Belgium and Norway. See Ganser 2005, NATO's secret armies, p. 45-8 and 66-7.

94 See IPICR 1992, Doc. XXIII, n. 51, p. 14-5. [Link](#).

95 See Del Piero 2001, The United States and “Psychological Warfare”, p. 1318.

96 Original: “Sulla base di due memorandum del 12 aprile 1952 e del 21 aprile 1952 del Segretario alla Difesa statunitense, il Servizio di strategia psicologica dello stesso Ministero approvò un «piano operazioni psicologiche per la riduzione del potere comunista in Francia e Italia», [...]. Gli obiettivi del piano erano la riduzione della forza del partito comunista nei due paesi, delle sue risorse materiali, dei suoi collegamenti internazionali, della sua influenza sui Governi francese e italiano e, in particolare, sui sindacati, nonché dell'attrazione da esso esercitata sui cittadini francesi e italiani, affinché il partito comunista cessasse di rappresentare una minaccia per la sicurezza della Francia e dell'Italia e per gli obiettivi degli Stati Uniti. In un successivo memorandum del 14 maggio 1952 il Comitato dei capi di Stato Maggiore (JCS), comunicando la propria approvazione, raccomandava che il piano fosse fatto oggetto di misure di sicurezza straordinarie, limitandone la conoscenza ai soli ambasciatori americani in Italia e in Francia, poiché avrebbe potuto apparire limitativo della sovranità nazionale e come un'ingerenza nella amministrazione interna dei Governi francese e italiano.” Cited from IPICR 1992, Doc. XXIII, n. 51, p. 41, [Link](#). For a comprehensive account of this plan (Operation *Demagnetize*), as well as of its 1953 revision (*Clydesdale*), both of which were overseen by the US ambassador in Rome, see Del Piero 2001, The United States and “Psychological Warfare”, p. 1310-25. Compare with Peterlini 2003, Die Achse am Brenner, p. 231 and Azzellini 2003, Gladio in Italien, p. 24.

97 In fact, this time-frame also coincides with the period in which the CIA concluded the consolidation of the US intelligence networks in Austria as well. See Beer 2000, Rund um den “Dritten Mann”, p. 98.

which didn't shy away from deploying its arsenal of covert operations, as clearly demonstrated by the 1953 CIA-sponsored overthrow of Iranian Prime Minister Mossadeq, and by the 1954 CIA-led coup against President Arbenz in Guatemala⁹⁸. Nevertheless, the DC's downward trend continued. In the 1953 general election, the PCI maintained its 35% electoral share, while the MSI and the monarchists gained 7% and 6% respectively, thereby ending the DC's majority, as well as De Gasperi's political career⁹⁹.

“The lack of planning and coordination, however, allowed for the development of autonomous initiatives on the part of various American actors operating in Italy (State Department, Defense Department, ECA, CIA, trade unions). The result was a lack of supervision and the operative autonomy of the different groups, which continued in the following years and represented a paradigmatic expression of the more general pluralism of United States foreign policy.¹⁰⁰”

In April 1954, Washington approved a significant shift away from its previous position on Italy, rejecting the previous concept of equality between right-wing and left-wing extremism. NSC directive 5411/2 states that an “extreme rightist government”, despite being “almost certainly authoritarian, probably ultra-nationalist and opposed to European unity,” is considered to be “far less dangerous than a Communist regime.” Furthermore, in response to a preceding request submitted by the JCS, the directive also states that: “in the event the Communists achieve control of the Italian government by apparently legal means [that is, through elections, ed. r.], the United States, in concert with its principal NATO allies, should take appropriate action, possibly extending to the use of military power, to assist Italian elements seeking to overthrow the Communist regime in Italy.¹⁰¹”

Following a generous financial contribution by the CIA¹⁰², the construction of Gladio's central command base started in 1954 and lasted for about two years. On purpose, the *Centro Addestramento Guastatori* (saboteurs' training center, henceforth CAG) was constructed in a remote area called Cape Maraggiu, south of Alghero, practically only accessible by air or by sea. Years later, it hosted different training modules, which ranged from two weeks to six months of specific training. The courses took place between April and October, and were used by both military and civilian personnel¹⁰³.

Meanwhile, arguably as a result of the significant defeat of the DC and other smaller centrist parties in the 1953 national elections, two years later, the CIA convinced the US ambassador to Italy of the time, Claire Boothe Luce, to pressure the Italian government to select a more aggressively anti-communist director for the

98 See Ostermann 1998, Geheimdienstlichen Aktionen, p. 50.

99 See Del Piero 2001, The United States and “Psychological Warfare”, p. 1320.

100 Ibid, p. 1311.

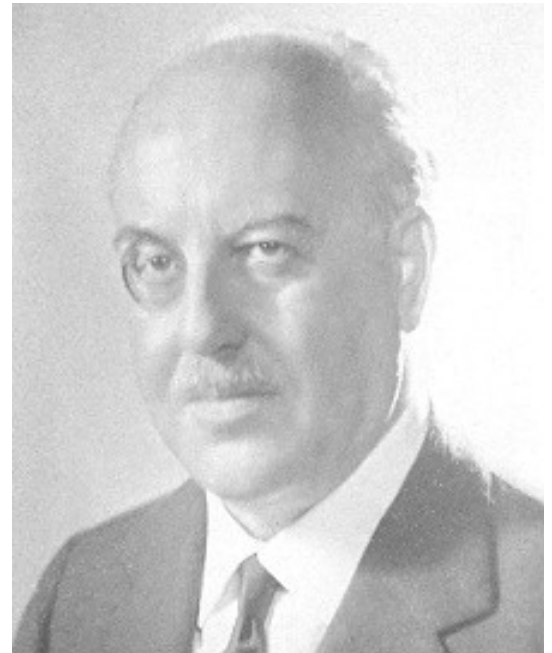
101 NSC directive 5411/2, approved in April 1954; cited from Del Piero 2001, The United States and “Psychological Warfare”, p. 1327.

102 According to Ganser, this contribution amounted to some 300 million Lira. See Ganser 2005, NATO's secret armies, p. 68.

103 The land on which the facility was built was acquired by the SIFAR through a limited liability corporation (Torre Marina s.r.l.) created explicitly for this purpose. While the president of the company was Gen. Musco, then-chief of SIFAR, the other stockholders were Col. Santini, former head of the Italian air force's intelligence service and former air force attache in Washington, and Col. Fetta-rappa Sandri, head of the “Ufficio R” within the SIFAR. The defense minister of the time, Taviani, provided special authorizations, exempting these three officers from the prohibition to own shares and incorporate companies which otherwise applies to all officers of the Italian armed forces. The construction of the base, financed by the CIA and overseen by Col. Santini, was an explicit element of the bilateral agreement between Italian and US intelligence services. It was during this initial period that the CIA delivered to Col. Santini the Argo-16 light aircraft (an old *Dakota* type), which the latter then used to address some of the remote base's many logistical needs. See IPICR 1992, Doc. XXIII, n. 51, p. 16 and p. 41, footnote 2. [Link](#) and IPICR 1991, Doc. XXIII, n. 36, p. 27. [Link](#).

SIFAR. The person that they ended up selecting and proposing as their first choice was Gen. Giovanni De Lorenzo who, in January 1956, actually took over the SIFAR¹⁰⁴. On the basis of one of his first orders, dated September 24th, and in view of the imminent start of Gladio's operational phase, the office for *Studi ed Addestramento* (studies and training, henceforth SAD) was established on October 1st 1956¹⁰⁵. In the same year, following the disbandment of Organization O, its arsenal was retrieved and deposited in Udine, under the purview of the 7th Alpini regiment¹⁰⁶. Furthermore, also during this same period, the federation of several of Italy's smaller right-wing groups led to the formation of what eventually became known as “Ordine Nuovo” (New Order), a large but compartmentalized militant organization¹⁰⁷.

On November 26th 1956 the SIFAR and the CIA signed what they initially termed a “restatement” of the first agreement signed in 1951, but which the SIFAR documents later identified simply as “the agreement”. While not mentioning any individual commitments by either party, the agreement assigned to Italian authorities the responsibility of supplying all the necessary bases, men and ground support, and to the US the task of supplying most of the funding and the weaponry¹⁰⁸. The restated agreement also established the *Gladio Committee*, a joint US-Italian commission tasked with the overall planing and development of the “Italian branch of the stay-behind network”. This committee, which was initially composed of 8 Italian and 3 American officials, met at irregular intervals between 1956 and 1973. While many meetings were held during the first two years, they almost ceased altogether in 1964, which correlates with SIFAR's joining of NATO's Allied Clandestine Committee (later renamed Allied Coordination Committee, henceforth ACC). After that, the regular meetings were replaced by “sporadic informal gatherings¹⁰⁹”.



Giovanni De Lorenzo, around 1968. Original credit: Italian Parliament. Source: wikipedia.de. [Link](#).

The considerable delay in efforts to recruit “external personnel” (that is, not yet associated with the

104 See Ganser 2005, NATO's secret armies, p. 68. Compare with Azzellini 2003, Gladio in Italien, p. 27. For more information on Ambassador Luce see Roland D. Landa, February 7th 2017, CIA covert aid to Italy, on nsarchive.gwu.edu, [Link](#).

105 According to the commission's report, SAD's main mission was to act as a structural liaison with the US intelligence apparatus. Despite having been formally established within the SIFAR's *Ufficio R* (section tasked with foreign espionage), the SAD office was endowed with full autonomy since its head – then Col. Caudillo – reported directly to the director. See IPICR 1991, Doc. XXIII, n. 36, p. 51. [Link](#).

106 Following the establishment of *Stella Marina* in 1957, under the command of Aldo Specogno, the equipment deposited in Udine was earmarked as its “scorte speciali di copertura” (special covert supplies). For the stated purpose of verifying its readiness, in 1958, one of its sub-units was activated on the occasion of the inauguration of a monument in honor of the “Divisione Julia”: 85% of its 130 members showed up just as expected. By that time *Stella Marina* already comprised over 400 recruited members, a number that was initially expected to increase by another 2,000 units. See *ibid*, p. 31-2 and 36-7, [Link](#) and IPICR 1992, Doc. XXIII, n. 51, p. 19. [Link](#).

107 For an overview of the prolific Italian right-wing scene, up to and including Ordine Nuovo and the MSI, see CIA Directorate for Intelligence; May 26th 1983; Terrorism Review (p. 11-5). [Link](#).

108 See IPICR 1991, Doc. XXIII, n. 36. p. 28. [Link](#).

109 IPICR 1992, Doc. XXIII, n. 51, p. 17. [Link](#). The report also mentions that, up until late 1958, SIFAR representatives pushed for the integration of their pre-existing covert unit called *Stella Alpina*, but ultimately failed to convince their US partners, at least within the framework of these early meetings. In particular, the drive was focused on providing Specogno with a suitable commanding position within Gladio. For more information on the ACC, see the section on the connection to NATO.

military) for the Gladio network – which only started in mid-1959 – resulted in a dispute with US officers. Until then, only internal staff had been selected as the network's future training officials. While most of the documentation evaluated by the parliamentary commission only made references to the two possible roles of *members* and *capi-nuclei* (group leaders), one document dated June 5th 1959 and titled “recruitment program” also called for the establishment of “area organizers”. In sharp contrast to the stayability-oriented profiles of the other two roles, *area organizers* were to be “high profile” personalities, such as rightist or centrist politicians, retired officers and officials, as well as important managers, entrepreneurs and newspaper editors.¹¹⁰ On June 1st 1959, the SIFAR and the CIA produced a joint progress report for Gen. Aldo Rossi, then chief of the Italian defense staff, in which the network's structure was organized as follows: the first level was made up of 40 resistance nuclei (6 intelligence, 10 sabotage, 6 propaganda, 6 E&E, and 12 guerrilla warfare), whose main characteristic was their stayability upon the outbreak of hostilities. The second level consisted of five rapid-deployment guerrilla units (*Stella Alpina*, *Stella Marina*, *Rhododendro*, *Azalea* and *Ginestra*), which were to become immediately active behind enemy lines in the form of “proper partisan units”. The CAG was identified not just as the main training facility, but also as the network's “ultimate” command center, even in the case of war. The commission explicitly underlined the importance of this document:

“[...] since it unmasks the core objectives pursued [by Gladio]: keeping Italy within the defense system established by NATO and guaranteed by the United States, through a structure dependent on the SIFAR. This dependency was justified by the necessity of blocking other loose or otherwise party-bound organizations from making similar preparations.¹¹¹”

Aside from sabotage, espionage and the relaying of information represented Gladio's core missions. Accordingly, a dense network of radio stations and related equipment was disseminated throughout the Italian territory, under the coordination and jurisdiction of the Olmedo base (near Sassari). Understandably, due to its far inferior consequences, the commission's report devoted little attention to this aspect of Gladio's mission, even though it is recognized as an integral part of its priorities¹¹². The commission furthermore concluded that all defense ministers and all chiefs of the Defense staff who held office between 1951 and 1957 necessarily had to support the Gladio-related planning, clearly implying that it would otherwise not have been possible. The list thereby includes the following politicians and generals: Randolfo Pacciardi, Giuseppe Codacci Pisanelli and Paolo E. Taviani, as well as Gen. Elfisio Marras and Gen. Giuseppe Mancinelli. Aside from Pacciardi (Italian republican party) the other aforementioned politicians were leading figures of the DC during the 1950s and

110 The report singles out this aspect of the source in question as compared to the rest of the Gladio documents they evaluated. See *ibid*, p. 17-8 and p. 42, footnote 5. [Link](#). However, aside from being the head of the “center for monographs” of the 5th territorial military command, Col. Specogno is furthermore described by the commission as a sort of area chief of Gladio for the north-east, a position which strongly resembles the “area organizers”, and which apparently existed only in one other area (central Italy, supervised by Col. Rossi). These two officers maintained their commissions at least until 1973, if not even longer. See IPICR 1991, Doc. XXIII, n. 36, p. 47. [Link](#).

111 Original: “[...] perché vi sono esposti senza mascheramento gli obiettivi di fondo che si volevano perseguire: mantenere l'Italia all'interno del sistema di difesa costituito dalla NATO e garantito dagli Stati Uniti, attraverso una struttura dipendente dal SIFAR. Questa dipendenza veniva giustificata con la necessità di evitare che «altre organizzazioni incontrollate o al servizio di interessi di partito» predisponessero autonomamente iniziative analoghe.” IPICR 1992, Doc. XXIII, n. 51, p. 18. [Link](#). See also IPICR 1991, Doc. XXIII, n. 36, p. 29. [Link](#). The original document referenced here has been translated and published in full by Ganser in (2006) *The ghost of Machiavelli*, p. 138-47. Compare with Azzellini 1997, *Gladio in Italien*, p. 23-4.

112 See IPICR 1991, Doc. XXIII, n. 36, p. 35. [Link](#).

beyond.¹¹³

However, it should not be assumed that the CIA and SIFAR were Gladio's only sources of funding. According to Italian researcher Dario N. Azzellini, Col. Renzo Rocca¹¹⁴ contacted several groups, such as the group of industrialists that had assembled around Vittorio Valletta and the Confindustria, as well as the smaller group close to Luigi Cavallo¹¹⁵. Among them Rocca found several wealthy individuals, eager to act as financiers of any anticommunist cause. Although Colonel Rocca died in somewhat mysterious circumstances on June 27th 1968, some of the Gladio components he had pieced together continued to cooperate long after that¹¹⁶.

By 1962, Gen. De Lorenzo had been promoted to be the Carabinieri's chief of staff, which led to some former SIFAR personnel moving into key positions across the Carabinieri's main commands. The general further executed a comprehensive modernization plan of the organization, by adopting new weapons systems, building from scratch a new dedicated telecommunication center, and by commissioning an entire new (11th) mechanized brigade, equipped with heavy tanks¹¹⁷.



Vittorio Valletta, late Forties. Original credit: unknown. Source: wikipedia.it. [Link](#).

Before continuing on the trail of mounting Italian political tensions, the following excursus takes a closer look at a rather controversial aspect of Gladio's past: its “affiliation” with the Atlantic Alliance.

Excursus: the connection to NATO

“The European network of clandestine stay-behind networks was coordinated by NATO. For in case of an invasion of Western Europe it would have been NATO’s task to coordinate military manoeuvres and re-establish European independence. Within NATO two clandestine committees, the so-called ‘Clandestine Planning Committee’ (CPC), and the ‘Allied Clandestine Committee’ (ACC), both linked to NATO’s SHAPE (Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe) met regularly on the level of officers from the various European military intelligence services in order to discuss questions related to stay-behind and secret

113 See IPICR 1992, Doc. XXIII, n. 51, p. 53. [Link](#).

114 Renzo Rocca was the head of the Ricerche Economiche e Industriali (economic and industrial research) division which, although being formally tasked with industrial counterespionage, had already been re-purposed towards the raising of “anticommunist funds”. According to Zagrandi, these funds were sponsored by Italian defense contractors, in exchange for military procurement contracts – both in Italy and abroad, as well as for other kinds of preferential treatment, which in some cases extended to other government agencies. It may be argued that this was one of the revenue sources which slowly enabled Gladio to become more and more independent from its American benefactors. See Zagrandi 1970, *Inchiesta sul SIFAR*, p. 102-3.

115 Luigi Cavallo was a prominent member of the PCI, and one of the first to distance himself both from his party and from Stalinist USSR after the Czechoslovakian coup d'état of 1948. After leaving the party, he lived abroad for several years, particularly in the US, France and Berlin. After some five years, he returned to Italy and reinvented himself as the campaign manager of several PSI politicians, such as Giacomo Mancini and Giuseppe Saragat. He maintained a close relationship with Vittorio Valletta throughout the second half of the 1950s and most of the 1960s. See *ibid*.

116 See Azzellini 2003, *Gladio in Italien*, p. 29-30.

117 See *ibid*, p. 30.

Despite being very popular, Daniele Ganser's description of the relationship between NATO and the stay behind networks is only partially confirmed by the commission's reports.

By August 1951 SHAPE's Standing Group had already approved the establishment of the Clandestine Planning Committee (henceforth CPC), as it was initially called, with the task of providing support to the Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR) in the fields of covert operations and intelligence services. While initially it only included French, British and US representatives, Gen. Eisenhower – the first SACEUR – explicitly recommended the integration of the intelligence services of all other NATO members. He officially invited the SIFAR to join the committee on April 7th 1952. However, the Italian military leadership did not react too well to the news, since they realized that by joining a pre-existing “club”, their position would be outranked by those of the three permanent members. This reasoning led to their refusing the invitation and to a consolidation of the special relationship with US intelligence, particularly the CIA¹¹⁹. As mentioned earlier, the restated agreement of 1956 also established the *Gladio Committee*, and – despite continuing its meetings in a more “informal” setting until stopping altogether in 1973 – after 1964 the average interval increased substantially. According to the commission, this correlates with SIFAR's joining of the ACC¹²⁰.

This committee was originally established in 1958, on the basis of a directive signed by then-SACEUR Gen. Norstad. Furthermore, the order renamed the CPC the “Coordination and Planning Committee”, and redistributed its former duties between both committees. Aside from France, Great Britain and the US, among the founding members of the ACC were also Belgium, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands. On March 2nd 1959 the SIFAR was re-invited to join the CPC, and De Lorenzo – then head of the SIFAR – decided to accept the invitation on April 27th. According to the commission, the first meeting with Italian officials (Col. Fettareppa Sandri) took place on May 19th. On the other hand, Italian officials decided to join the ACC only on April 15th 1964, right after West Germany. The report describes the ACC as the body in charge of settling problems and disputes arising from the collaboration of the different NATO members on the technical issues relating to their respective E&E lines, as well as to the joint wartime command base of Idlewood in Great Britain. The creation of the ACC correlates with NATO's first consideration of deploying unconventional warfare forces and methods on the (potential) European front¹²¹. The Unorthodox Warfare doctrine was developed within the framework of a scenario whereby one



Gen. Lauris Norstad, July 21st 1945. Original credit: National Archives, Washington D.C. Source: wikipedia.de. [Link](#).

118 Ganser 2006, *The CIA in Western Europe*, p. 770.

119 See IPICR 1992, Doc. XXIII, n. 51, p. 15-6. [Link](#) and IPICR 1991, Doc. XXIII, n. 36. p. 25. [Link](#).

120 See IPICR 1992, Doc. XXIII, n. 51, p. 17. [Link](#).

121 In itself, the deployment of special forces was of course nothing new for the US military, since by then the Green Berets had already executed several covert missions around Asia, particularly in Indochina and Korea. The novelty resided much more in the proposed theater of deployment: central and western Europe.

or more NATO countries had been occupied by the USSR. This doctrine called for the preparation and coordination of the two following forms of actions: unconventional military operations were to be aided and supported by the operations of stay behind networks, and these were to be further divided into covert intelligence gathering and covert operations. While the responsibility for military operations were under SHAPE's unified command, the covert actions referred to in the doctrine resided under the purview of the national “clandestine networks”, and were therefore organized under national command structures and hierarchies¹²².

The commission concluded that, at any given time, none of the national military intelligence agencies represented within the CPC and ACC were ever effectively subordinated to either of these committees. The first documentable interest expressed by SHAPE in unconventional warfare dates back to September 10th 1963, the date on which the then-SACEUR – the aforementioned Gen. Lyman Lemnitzer – issued the first directive on unconventional warfare. This document merely sought to enhance NATO's established war plans with elements drawn directly from the national special forces, able to conduct covert operations in enemy-held territories¹²³. The actual integration of NATO's war-planning with national stay behind networks was ordered on June 7th 1968, through a new directive which replaced the previous one.

“Among other things, this directive included norms aimed at ensuring wartime cooperation of the national clandestine networks [with SHAPE]. It would have been natural that allied military units, deployed within occupied territories, would be able to connect with the pre-established clandestine networks.”¹²⁴

According to the commission, within these two “Directives on Unorthodox Warfare”, Gen. Lemnitzer – SACEUR from January 1963 to mid-1969 – outlined the following structure: while the CPC was relegated to general issues, usually relating to operational requirements of the unorthodox warfare planning, the ACC acquired the responsibility for coordination of all covert operations undertaken by stay behind networks. The former is furthermore described as being responsible for preparations aimed at activities which were to take place on USSR territory, while the latter was tasked with the defensive planning for all Allied states. The report also stressed that, since both the CPC and ACC were mainly staffed by intelligence officers, and since their main function was to liaise between SHAPE (and NATO's three main regional commands) and the national intelligence services, both of these committees were not to be considered integral parts of NATO¹²⁵.

As a local result of the second directive, the then-chief of the Italian defense staff, Gen. Guido Vedovato, was tasked with bringing about a “strong coordination” between the structures of the military and those of the intelligence services. A power struggle ensued: initial negotiations between the chief of staff of the military branches and the SID's leadership failed almost immediately, only to be slowly resumed by 1973, when a vague

122 See IPICR 1992, Doc. XXIII, n. 51, p. 20. [Link](#)

123 The missions which these special forces units were expected to carry out were virtually identical to those expected from the sabotage and guerrilla units within Gladio. The only differences were to be found in the affiliation and command of the operatives in question: while in the first case the missions were executed by special operations forces (like the Green Berets, or the Italian Col Moschin regiment), under the purview of the relevant NATO military command, in the second it would have been agents of the national clandestine networks (i.e. Gladio), acting under the responsibility of military intelligence.

124 Original: “Questa direttiva conteneva anche norme per assicurarne la cooperazione, in caso di guerra, dei vari Servizi clandestini nazionali. Era naturale, infatti, che nei territori occupati dal nemico i reparti militari che vi fossero stati inviati potessero collegarsi con le reti clandestine predisposte.” IPICR 1991, Doc. XXIII, n. 36. p. 26-7. [Link](#).

125 See IPICR 1992, Doc. XXIII, n. 51, p. 21. [Link](#)

“promise” of collaboration was reached.¹²⁶ According to the commission, a precise agreement was only formalized in 1985, leading to the establishment of a national coordination committee for all unconventional warfare operations, chaired by the director of military intelligence. Understandably, this created a “certain degree of discomfort within the Italian defense staff.¹²⁷” Apparently, the newly created *Servizio Informazioni per la Sicurezza Militare* (SISMI¹²⁸, successor to the SID) had somehow managed to strong-arm the very top of the Italian military hierarchy.

However, as has been correctly pointed out by Hungarian researcher Glücksthal Lajos, the integration process of the stay behind networks both with each other and with SHAPE, as well as the emplacement of the “Nasco” between 1963 and 1969, stands in stark contrast with the Alliance's military doctrine of “forward defense”. This too was developed during the very same period and, according to Gen. Pleiner, by 1969 the line of actual defense already included all of Western Germany and most of Austria, which is considerably further east than Italy¹²⁹.

As hinted by Daniele Ganser, according to the evaluated sources NATO's overall role in the organization and management of the European stay behind networks was not a primary one. Depending on the perspective, it could be argued that in this context the Alliance represented either an attempt by US' allies to weaken Washington's predominance in military and intelligence matters, or just a new proxy of covert American influence.

“The only collective body that ever worked was NATO, and that was because it was a military alliance and we were in charge.¹³⁰”

1963-73: The Nasco and the Years of Lead

In the last of his three Gladio speeches in Parliament, Andreotti admitted that, up to the year 1973, Gladio had emplaced 139 underground caches of arms, explosives and other supplies, the so-called *Nasco(s)*. Most of the necessary weaponry arrived in two large tranches, the first in 1963 and the second in 1969¹³¹. The material came either directly from the US, or from its forces stationed in Germany, and was temporarily deposited either at Camp Derby (Livorno) or in Naples. The emplacement of the Nasco started in 1963 and continued for several years. The composition of each one was directly dependent upon the mission that its assigned unit was supposed to carry out. Most of them were in northern Italy, with a relatively high concentration in the north-eastern area. Of the latter, the majority was earmarked for Stella Alpina. The SAD office maintained detailed lists of both the position and the exact content of each Nasco. These caches, however, did not represent the

¹²⁶ See IPICR 1991, Doc. XXIII, n. 36, p. 27. [Link](#).

¹²⁷ Original: “Tale comitato fu posto in capo al Sismi (Martini), con un certo disappunto dello Stato Maggiore della Difesa.” Ibid. [Link](#).

¹²⁸ More information on this agency in the following section.

¹²⁹ See Lajos 1996, Gladio oder di Rache Moros, p. 51 and Pleiner 2017, p. A9 of the Annex.

¹³⁰ Richard Nixon, [undated], cited from Ganser 2005, NATO's secret armies, p. 27.

¹³¹ The first shipment was comprised of 198 explosives kits, 212 pistols, 636 hand grenades, 364 phosphorus bombs, 24 (60mm) mortars, 12 cannons, 120 carbines and 24 scoped rifles. The second (and larger) shipment was constituted almost exclusively of airtight containers, pre-packed with arms, explosives and other supplies and equipment, ready to be buried.

entirety of the material available to the Gladio network, as exemplified by the equipment stockpiled in and around Udine, and under the purview of Col. Specogno.¹³² Parallel to the emplacement of the arms and explosives caches, the SIFAR was engaged from the early Sixties in a second major undertaking, which was to provide Gladio with a comprehensive radio transmission system, completely integrated with all standards of US military radio communication (both technically and operationally)¹³³.

During this period Gladio continued to expand more or less according to plan, by selecting, recruiting and training more and more external staff, including at the base of Cerveteri, which was being expanded in view of its possible use as a subsidiary of the CAG. The growing number of both resistance nuclei and guerrilla units correlated with the increase in secret stashes of arms and equipment. The report states that, during the course of the entire decade, some 300 individuals were recruited, trained and integrated into one of the mentioned nuclei/units. According to Azzellini, the reports of special forces training there only started to emerge in 1969, and some 4000 individuals overall were trained between 1969 and 1976. The base was considerably expanded in 1968, with a helipad, underground structures and even a landing strip for small airplanes being added. Andreotti visited the base as early as 1961, as did Cossiga in 1967, though both later denied the visits¹³⁴.

Yet, further according to the report, “just as the network had started functioning regularly”, a major shift took place in the January 26th 1966 meeting of the Gladio Committee, the record of which reads as follows:

“In connection with the current geopolitical situation (the CIA representative) proposes: while guaranteeing the conservation and efficiency reached by the organization, that the joint project *Gladio* align its activities with a program capable of delivering results even during peacetime, and of supplying up-to-date possibilities of valorization, which could be inspired by the 'insurgency and counterinsurgency' doctrine”¹³⁵.

Using the research conducted individually by both Faenza and Igel, as well as William Colby's memoirs¹³⁶, Ganser argues that one of the main reasons which led to the 1963 electoral successes of the communist and particularly socialist parties, is to be found in Washington. At the time, the left's electoral victory was indeed their best result on record, which led to the formation of the first Italian administration with socialist politicians as cabinet ministers. Further according to Ganser's narrative, one of Kennedy's foreign

132 On April 29th 1966 the Italian army's general staff summarized that this stockpile in Udine now included: 1,050 pistols, 1,372 submachine guns, 144 M1 rifles, 87 bazookas, 97 machine guns, 110 flare guns, and the respective munitions. Further weapons were deposited in some 50 Carabinieri stations throughout the Italian north-east. By 1968, a significant share of the stockpiled material (some 1,000 sets of equipment, arms and munitions) was transferred to the CAG through the Argo-16. See IPICR 1991, Doc. XXIII, n. 36, p. 34-8. [Link](#).

133 In case of enemy occupation, the intelligence related nuclei were supposed to find and relay all information helpful to military leaders for the organization of counterattacks and liberation forces: the nature and position of military targets (units, command posts, infrastructure), as well as the overall status and demeanor of the occupation forces. In the documentation viewed by the commission regarding Gladio's training programs on intelligence gathering, civilian targets are given very little importance until the first half of the Seventies. See IPICR 1992, Doc. XXIII, n. 51, p. 25. [Link](#)

134 See Azzellini 2003, *Gladio in Italien*, p. 28-9 and Ganser 2006, *The ghost of Machiavelli*, p. 126-7.

135 Original: “In connessione con l'attuale situazione internazionale (il rappresentante del servizio americano) propone che il progetto comune “Gladio”, pur assicurando la conservazione e l'efficienza dell'organizzazione raggiunti, orienti la sua attività ad un programma che possa dar frutti sin dal tempo di pace e che offra attuali possibilità di valorizzazione quale quella che potrebbe ispirarsi alla dottrina della 'insorgenza e controinsorgenza'.” IPICR 1992, Doc. XXIII, n. 51, p. 19. [Link](#)

136 See Igel, Regine (1997), *Andreotti. Politik zwischen Geheimdienst und Mafia* (Andreotti. Politics between the secret service and the Mafia), Herbig Publisher, Munich / Faenza, Roberto (1978), *Il malaffare. Dall'America di Kennedy all'Italia, a Cuba, al Vietnam* (The dishonest affair. From Kennedy's America to Cuba and Vietnam), Arnoldo Mondadori Publisher, Milan / Colby, William (1978), *Honourable Men: My Life in the CIA*, Simon&Schuster Publisher, New York.

policies which most sharply diverged from those of his immediate predecessors was his moderate support for the Italian socialist party (PSI). This position of his led to repeated conflict and tensions with both the department of state and the CIA. Ganser then implies a connection between Kennedy's assassination in November of 1963 and De Lorenzo's mysteriously canceled coup d'état in the summer of 1964 by stating: "And five months later the CIA with the SIFAR, the Gladio secret army and the paramilitary police [almost, ed. r.] carried out a right-wing coup d'etat which forced the Italian Socialists to leave their cabinet posts they had held only for such a short period.¹³⁷" Despite being very plausible, particularly insofar as it may be argued that, had Kennedy still been alive in mid-1964, maybe the coup would not have even started, instead of getting canceled half-way through, the causal relationship between the two events remains unsubstantiated.

In contrast to Ganser, Azzellini argued that both the Carabinieri's build-up and the leftist's electoral gains contributed to the setting in motion of the "piano solo"¹³⁸, led by General De Lorenzo himself, and scheduled to take control of the country towards the end of April 1964. To this day, it still remains unclear what or who exactly stopped the plan in its tracks. The whole episode took place during the crisis of the first Moro administration (the first to be "externally supported" by the PSI), and while NATO was conducting some large-scale military exercises close by. Soon thereafter, the head of state Antonio Segni officially summoned both De Lorenzo and Gen. Aldo Rossi – then chief of the Defense staff – as part of the consultation process concerning the government crisis. This move was unprecedented, given that the two generals did not formally represent any established party, yet were officially consulted on the transition. In December 1965, De Lorenzo was nonetheless further promoted to the army's Chief of Staff, a commission which he kept until the spring of 1967 when – practically at the same time – both his intelligence dossiers and his involvement at the forefront of the "piano solo" became publicly known, leading to his forced retirement. The two scandals, as well as several others in which the SIFAR was involved, eventually led to the reform of the SIFAR and the changing of its name to Servizio Informazioni Difesa (Defense Intelligence Service, henceforth SID). Both the *Ufficio R* and its SAD office were transferred to the new agency without even changing their names¹³⁹.

After the 1966 cosmetic reform of the Italian military intelligence, De Lorenzo was dismissed and ordered to destroy all of the information contained in the files. According to a persistent but undocumented rumor, the files were eventually destroyed, but only after they had been copied and handed over to both the CIA station in Rome, and to the first of SID's directors, Gen. Giovanni Allavena. After just one year, he was

137 Ganser 2005, NATO's secret armies, p. 71. The fact that Italian socialist ministers left the cabinet immediately after the time frame in which the coup was supposed to take place can be easily verified. However, it remains unclear whether they left voluntarily or were somehow forced to appear to do so.

138 The name of the plan originated from De Lorenzo's intention not to use all branches of the Italian armed forces, but rather – aside from the inevitable intelligence agencies SIFAR and Ufficio R, as well as other parts of the Gladio network – chose to enforce the plan using only Carabinieri forces. Despite having several other translations, in this case the meaning of the word *solo* is: "only" or "just" (as in "just Carabinieri"). For more information see CIA Directorate for Intelligence; May 26th 1983; Terrorism Review p. 11-5 (here p. 13-4). [Link](#).

139 See IPICR 1992, Doc. XXIII, n. 51, p. 34. [Link](#). When, in the second half of the 1960s, it became known that De Lorenzo had set up tens or perhaps even hundreds of thousands of files on leading Italian figures across all social, economic, and political spheres, he eventually stated that the "USA and NATO" had "forced" him to do so. The investigatory committee which was formed at the time to investigate the affair, which was led by Gen. Aldo Beolchini, concluded that not only did many files contain extremely private information, but that the types of intelligence which could then be used as a means of intimidation and blackmail was more likely to have been collected and stored. Aside from this admission, and the clear but circumstantial parallels which can be drawn between the files set up by FBI director Hoover during the very same period of time, no further proof of the connection seems to be currently available. See Ganser 2005, NATO's secret armies, p. 72.

replaced by Adm. Henke and, instead of retiring from the fight against communism, Allavena joined the infamous Masonic lodge “Propaganda 2” (henceforth P2)¹⁴⁰. According to the rumors, this was also when Licio Gelli – the lodge's alleged master – got his hands on the secret SIFAR files, which then allowed him and the lodge to exert enormous political and financial influence throughout the Seventies, and at least part of the Eighties. De Lorenzo, on the other hand, found a different way to continue his fight against Italian communism, namely by joining the ranks of the MSI. He soon became one of its MPs, as well as one of its leading figures.¹⁴¹

During the period from 1968 to 1970 student protests and other kinds of demonstrations multiplied like mushrooms in a humid climate. While demonstrations against the Vietnam War had already started in April 1967, by the beginning of the following year, a wave of student occupations crippled most of the Italian universities. On March 1st 1968, during a single day of clashes between students and left-wingers on the one hand, and police and right-wingers on the other, several hundreds of people were injured. The overall increase in opposition to “the establishment” also manifested itself in further electoral gains by the PCI, as well as stronger tendencies inside the DC to argue for an alliance, the *compromesso storico* (a DC-PCI compromise). In August, Soviet tanks and other ground troops re-invaded Czechoslovakia, crushing the Prague Spring. During his first foreign trip as US president, Nixon visited the main capitals of western Europe between February 23rd and March 2nd 1969, spending most of his time in Rome, where he met both the Italian and Vatican leaderships¹⁴². By the beginning of September, protesting students and workers started coordinating their actions, rapidly increasing the sense of nearly continuous protests, particularly in Rome and other large northern urban centers.

Ordine Nuovo's first major response came with the two bombs of April 25th (national holiday) 1969, at the trade fair and at the central station of Milan, injuring 16 people. On the 8th and 9th of August, eight explosions took place inside different trains, injuring 12, while two further unexploded devices were found in the train stations of Milan Centrale and Venice Santa Lucia¹⁴³. The first major massacre also happened in Milan, on December 12th, when 17 people were killed and 84 injured by a single devastating explosion in the agricultural bank offices of Piazza Fontana. While a second device was disabled at the scene, further more minor explosions took place in Rome on the same day, causing injuries to a further 16 individuals¹⁴⁴. While the authorities in Rome debated on



Banca Nazionale dell'Agricoltura, December 12th 1969, Milan. Original credit: unknown. Source: [wikipedia.it](https://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Banca_Nazionale_dell'Agricoltura). [Link](#).

140 For more information on the Masonic lodge P2, see Ganser 2005, NATO's secret armies, p. 73-5.

141 See *ibid*, p. 72-3.

142 See “Presidential and Secretaries Travels Abroad – Richard M. Nixon”, at history.state.gov, [Link](#).

143 See Schaerf et al. 1992, *Venti anni di violenza*, Vol. 1, part 1, p. 115 and 125.

144 The following day the investigation was already pointing at violent anarchist organizations, although none of them had anything at all to do with any of it. The investigations and the many trials were severely tampered with on multiple occasions, deliberately causing the inquiring magistrates to go astray and leading to mistrials. In 2004, after ten different trials, throughout all levels of Italian jurisdiction, the Supreme Court of Cassation found that the attacks had been carried out by Ordine Nuovo, but that all those involved in plotting and carrying them out could no longer be tried, since they had all already been acquitted of the charges,

the imposition of the state of emergency, all prior authorizations for demonstrations were revoked and surveillance of left-wing and anarchist circles increased, as did the powers entrusted to the security apparatus. Increased repressions quickly led to further increases in tensions, as well as unauthorized protests¹⁴⁵.

The bloodbaths and tensions continued to increase: on July 22nd 1970 the sabotage of the central rail tracks inside the train station of Gioia Tauro (near Reggio Calabria) caused the “Freccia del Sud” (Arrow of the South) to derail, killing six people and injuring further fifty¹⁴⁶. Almost exactly a year after Piazza Fontana, during the night of 7th December, Valerio Borghese, together with armed militants of MSI, Avanguardia Nazionale and Fronte Nazionale, as well as some 200 agents of the Italian State Forestry Corp, gathered by the ministry of interior and stormed the entrance. Not only did some of them manage to enter the building, but they even successfully seized significant quantities of weapons from the armory, which were then handed over to other co-conspirators waiting outside. Borghese's plan was to storm and occupy the ministries of interior and defense and several offices of the RAI (Italian public broadcasting corporation), as well as to capture President Saragat, together with a list of



Junio Valerio Borghese, 1942. Original credit: unknown. Source: wikipedia.it. [Link](#).

other leftist political figures. One of the other leaders of the coup later turned out to be Amos Spiazzi¹⁴⁷. In contrast to De Lorenzo's coup attempt, this one was already in progress when, around midnight, Borghese himself broke off the operation, and signaled to his troops to desist and to give up all of the raided weapons. “The reason behind this change of plan is still shrouded in the utmost secrecy¹⁴⁸”.

“During that phase [early to mid-Seventies] the CIA's policy followed two distinct directions: on the one hand, the aim was to disengage from the direct administration (and funding) of the stay behind network, thereby handing control over to NATO commands. On the other, the renegotiation of the privileged [CIA-SID] relationship, by pushing for the network's reconfiguration towards internal counterinsurgency operations and activities. It isn't really necessary to recall that those were the years in which terrorism grew to a vast scale, as well as the time of the PCI's [large, ed. r.] electoral gains. The very same years in which the [intelligence] services' involvement in some of the

by the very same court, in 1987. See Azzellini 2003, 33-5. For a detailed reconstruction of the events which followed the attacks see IPICR 2001, Doc. XXIII, n. 64, Vol. I, Tome 3, p. 60-7, [Link](#).

145 See Azzellini 2003, *Gladio in Italien*, p. 33-5.

146 See Schaerf et al. 1992, *Venti anni di violenza*, Vol. 1, part 1, p. 171.

147 According to judge Casson's investigation into Vinciguerra and the Peteano bombing, together with Amos Spiazzi, Leo Joseph Luongo, Marcello Soffiati and Benito Rossi (all of whom were Italian military officers) were all also members of Carlo Digilio's group, within Ordine Nuovo. At first, the judge wasn't able to determine whether they were all part of this secretive paramilitary organization (Gladio), or whether the two groups just happened to regularly interact with each other. See Peterlini 2003, *Die Achse am Brenner*, p. 230.

148 IPICR, Doc. XXIII, n. 64, Vol. I, Tome 1, p. 136, [Link](#). For more information on the *Golpe Borghese* see Ibid., p. 135-42. One possible explanation for the aborted coup was given in 1984 by the unlikeliest of sources: former Mafia boss Tommaso Buscetta. In the course of his collaboration with celebrated judge Giovanni Falcone, the former explained that the 1970 coup was interrupted due to the attention it had understandably garnered among Soviet intelligence. This had in turn led to the presence of an unusually high number of Soviet vessels in the eastern and central Mediterranean Sea. See Ganser 2005, *NATO's secret armies*, p. 76-8.

darkest moments of republican history started to emerge.¹⁴⁹”

On February 24th 1972, Carabinieri agents stationed in Aurisina discovered by chance one of the Nascos. The SID immediately worried that the cache might be traced back to its operations and managed to almost immediately shut down the concerned investigation¹⁵⁰. Gerardo Serravalle, then head of the SAD office, decided to order the recovery of all of the remaining caches and to drop some 100 “hothead” agents from Gladio¹⁵¹. Gen. Vito Miceli, then the director of SID, agreed with the order, and the removal operation lasted until June 1973. It is unclear when the Americans learned about this, but since the CIA was not informed of the order prior to its implementation, their reaction was rather irritated as soon as they found out¹⁵². Serravalle furthermore testified that, during the same period, he also decided to send one of his closest colleagues at SAD – Major Cismondi – to the 5th territorial military command located in Udine, with the task of keeping a close watch over Col. Specogno. Serravalle justified the move by stating that he perceived Specogno to be *inaffidabile*¹⁵³, and to constitute a great security risk for the Gladio network, due to either his inability or unwillingness to follow even the most basic security protocols. When in 1972 Serravalle ordered the recovery of the Nasco's contents, some of it ended up under the purview of Specogno, scattered across Carabinieri stations and other military installations, this time throughout the entire northern region of Italy, stretching from Padova to Bolzano. The rest of the recovered material was flown to the CAG and to another base in Campomele (near Nuoro, in Sardinia) by way of the Argo-16¹⁵⁴. The commission concludes that, since three of the five rapid deployment units seem to have never been activated, “the entirety of the armament [available to Gladio, ed. r.] was enormously disproportionate in comparison to the force which was supposed to use it.¹⁵⁵”

In his statements, Andreotti had however revealed that twelve Nascos had not been recovered. Two of

149 Original: “La politica seguita in quella fase dal servizio americano si orientò lungo due distinte direzioni: da un lato, il disimpegno dalla gestione diretta (anche finanziaria) della rete stay-behind con il trasferimento del controllo ai Comandi NATO, dall'altro, la rinegoziazione del rapporto privilegiato accordato all'Italia sulla base di una riconversione della rete per operazioni ed attività di controinsorgenza interna. C'è appena bisogno di ricordare che erano quelli gli anni dell'avvio del terrorismo su vasta scala e della crescita elettorale del PCI. Ed erano parimenti gli anni in cui venivano emergendo le responsabilità dei Servizi nelle più oscure storie della Repubblica.” IPICR 1992, Doc. XXIII, n. 51, p. 22-3. [Link](#)

150 The single Nasco which was discovered by Carabinieri agents of the Aurisina station (near Trieste) contained the following: 15kg of plastic explosives, 5kg of dynamite, 200m of fuse, 80 detonators, 90 timer-devices, 20 pressure-detonators, 50 explosive traps, one pistol (with 50 bullets), another pistol with silencer (also with 50 bullets), 6 incendiary grenades and “numerous other explosive material”. By gradually expanding their search-grid around the location of the first Nasco, on March 3rd Carabinieri agents discovered a second smaller cache, not far from the first one. In contrast to the first one, the second contained much less explosives, but it also contained written instruction manuals of clear military provenience. See IPICR 1991, Doc. XXIII, n. 36, p. 39-40. [Link](#).

151 According to the commission, Gerardo Serravalle – head of the SAD office during the tumultuous period spanning between 1971 and 1974 – ordered the recovery of Gladio's underground caches due to the fact that about half of the nuclei leaders he contacted had turned out to be “teste calde” (hotheads). The recovery operation was therefore aimed at preventing some of those for whom the caches had been set up in the first place from accessing and using them in an “improper and dangerous” way. Following these contacts, Serravalle decided not to inform his superiors, but to personally implement the “exclusion” of the elements which explicitly proposed preemptive actions against the PCI, before any Soviet invasion. Yet some of them had been nuclei leaders, and therefore possessed a range of operational knowledge on both the network and its capabilities. See *ibid*, p. 43. [Link](#).

152 See IPICR 1992, Doc. XXIII, n. 51, p. 23. [Link](#). See also Ganser 2006, *The CIA in Western Europe*, p. 769-70.

153 Since the report only quoted this single word of Serravalle's testimony, I was not able to read it within its context and thereby choose its most appropriate translation. The Italian adverb “inaffidabile” may be translated with *unreliable*, *untrustworthy*, or even *disaffected*.

154 From June 1973 onward, aside from the stockpiles inside some of the north-eastern military installations, airdrops became the Italian military intelligence's only viable way of resupplying Gladio during wartime. See IPICR 1991, Doc. XXIII, n. 36, p. 41-3. [Link](#).

155 Original: “Tutto l'armamento era enormemente sovrabbondante rispetto alla forza che avrebbe dovuto utilizzarlo.” *Ibid*, p. 38. [Link](#).

those had “almost certainly been plundered by unknown individuals”, supposedly around the time of their emplacement, which he dated on October 31st 1964. Another two had not been found due to their location in close proximity of cemeteries which, in the meantime, had undergone several significant expansions. The remaining eight Nascos were described as having been reachable only through an amount of explosives which – at the time – wasn't deemed opportune. In November 1990, following Andreotti's revelations, Judge Mastelloni ordered the recovery of the remaining depots and, by the end of the month, eight of them had already been recovered. The contents of one of them, found in Lamporo (located 35km NE of Turin), was apparently recovered only partially, while those remaining had either already been casually discovered or were found soon thereafter. The commission concluded that the cache of Aurisina was missing from Andreotti's list of “plundered or otherwise unrecoverable” arms caches, raising serious doubts about the validity of some of the information submitted to the commission¹⁵⁶. Based on the emblematic case recovery operation of the Nascos the commission concluded that:

“If only the security apparatus' »difficult structures« had been kept in check, many [bad, ed. r.] things could have been avoided in our country. Out of the necessity of keeping certain activities secret [...], some made an opportunity, and managed to hide from the controllers both information and activities, which should have never been hidden [in the first place, ed. r.]”¹⁵⁷

On May 31st 1972, following an anonymous tip-off which lured the police to the site, a powerful bomb exploded inside a car in Peteano (near Gorizia), killing three Carabinieri agents and seriously injuring two more. Twelve years later, Judge Casson managed to obtain a legal confession from Vincenzo Vinciguerra – a member of Ordine Nuovo – who argued that for him the bomb was a way to directly attack the state, instead of bombing civilians in squares and trains¹⁵⁸. The kind of explosives used in this particular attack was of the military grade, the same which had been found inside the Nasco of Aurisina, discovered just three months earlier, on February 24th¹⁵⁹. On May 17th 1973, another bomb exploded at the entrance of



Vincenzo Vinciguerra, [undated]. Original credit: unknown. Source: wikipedia.it. [Link](#).

156 See *ibid*, p. 42. [Link](#).

157 Original: “Molte cose si sarebbero evitate nel nostro Paese qualora si fossero tenute sotto controllo le «difficili strutture» degli apparati di sicurezza. Della necessità [...] di tenere riservate e segrete certe attività, c'è chi ha approfittato per nascondere anche ai controllori informazioni e attività che in alcun modo avrebbero dovuto essere celate.” *Ibid*, p. 52. [Link](#).

158 See Azzellini 2003, *Gladio in Italien*, p. 36 and IPICR 2001, Doc. XXIII, n. 64, Vol. I, Tome 2, p. 171-4, [Link](#).

159 The results of the first investigation into the Peteano bombing were seriously compromised by the report of Marco Morin, the demolitions expert used by the court to analyze the remains of the device. According to Morin's conclusions, the perpetrators of the attack were clearly to be found on the left, possibly anarchists. When in 1984 Judge Casson obtained Vinciguerra's confession, the description given of the explosives did not match with Morin's report. After further investigations, the judge found out that – by way of a false report – Morin had managed to shield the actual perpetrators (Vinciguerra and Ordine Nuovo) from the first investigation, some of whom even turned out to be associates of his. Furthermore, during the Seventies and early Eighties, he had gone on to become a busy court expert. He was commissioned to contribute to many other cases: some of them took place in South Tirol (for more information see chapter eight), and a few were even high-profile, such as Peteano, the assassination of Gen. Carlo A. Dalla Chiesa, and the Moro assassination. See Ganser 2005, *NATO's secret armies*, p. 3-4 and Peterlini 2003, *Dia Achse am Brenner*, p. 245-6.

the Questura (Police HQ) of Milan, leaving 4 dead and 46 injured¹⁶⁰. By October, plans for a third coup attempt – commonly known as “Rosa dei Venti” (Rose of the Winds) – were exposed and denounced by Giampaolo Porta Casucci. According to the aforementioned left-of-center commissioners, beside the organizations of Avanguardia Nazionale and Ordine Nuovo, among the conspirators were Amos Spiazzi, Roberto Cavallo and Gen. Vito Miceli¹⁶¹. Azzellini described it as a complex six-phase plan, towards the end of which selected high-ranking officers would have taken control of the executive by force, eventually executing some of the former ministers, along with many other political opponents¹⁶².

In the downing of the Argo-16 aircraft, four members of its crew died. The plane was under the purview of the Italian air force and, despite having been frequently used by and for Gladio, it was also used for other purposes. On the basis of the investigatory successes achieved by the magistrate assigned to the case – Judge Carlo Mastelloni – the commission summarized the episode as follows. On September 5th 1973, following specific indications by Israeli intelligence, five presumed terrorists of Arab origin were captured near Ostia, apparently as they prepared to shoot down an *El Al* flight soon to depart from



Carlo Mastelloni, [undated]. Original credit: unknown. Source: Archive of La Stampa. [Link](#).

Fiumicino airport. At the trial of these five men, held on November 17th in Rome, they were all sentenced to five years in prison, but also immediately released on bail. Two of them were then escorted by Italian officials all the way to Libya via Malta, on board the Argo-16. On its way back to Italy, in order to resume its Gladio-connected operations, the aircraft was shot down by Mossad (Israeli military intelligence) over Marghera, in retaliation for the release of the alleged terrorists of Ostia¹⁶³.

1974-91: The climax of tensions and the reorganization attempts

In 1974, Gen. Paolo Inzerilli was promoted to head of the Ufficio R; from that point on, he continued to rise through the ranks, first of SID and later of SISMI, eventually reaching the position of deputy director, which he held until 1991. According to the commission, he directly oversaw the shift which took place after the tumultuous events of 1972-3, especially well documented by the revision of Gladio's intelligence gathering guidelines. As already mentioned, these guidelines were not initially aimed primarily at civilians, but they were changed to be so after the transition into SISMI. In a report dated December 31st 1975, Inzerilli describes the Gladio network as being in such a poor state that he concludes that, should the need for it soon arise, the network could not be activated due to shortcomings on nearly every front¹⁶⁴.

160 See Schaerf et al. 1992, *Venti anni di violenza*, Vol. I, part 1, p. 24 and 328-9.

161 See IPICR 2001, Doc. XXIII, n. 64, Vol. I, Tome 2, p. 177-85, [Link](#). Gen. Miceli was director of SID from late 1970 to mid-1974. After having retired with the rank of Lieutenant General, in 1976 Miceli followed the path of De Lorenzo and joined the MSI, eventually spending over ten years as one of its MPs. For more information on Col. Spiazzi's involvement, see the report on South Tirol: IPICR 1992, Doc. XXIII, n. 52, p. 21-3, [Link](#).

162 See Azzellini 2003, *Gladio in Italien*, p. 36-7.

163 See IPICR 1991, Doc. XXIII, n. 36, p. 45-6. [Link](#).

164 See IPICR 1992, Doc. XXIII, n. 51, p. 25-6. [Link](#).

“In any case, by now it has been proven that Gladio's transformation started in 1972, from a structure created to contrast an invasion of our [the Italian, ed. r.] territory on the north-eastern border, to a mainly intelligence related structure, operating throughout the national territory.¹⁶⁵”

The first and main phase of this transformation came about in the 1974-6 period. Gladio's logistic network and capabilities having been crippled by the Nascos' recovery operation, its structure was revised and adapted to the new planning. Firstly, the rapid deployment units (such as *Stella Alpina*) were supposedly disbanded and replaced by a three-level network, this time not just in the north, but spread across the country. The first level constituted a web of five-men nuclei, tasked with the maintenance of the E&E lines; the second level was made up of dozens of 25-man groups which in turn formed the so-called “reti di azione clandestina” (covert action network). The third level, and according to the plans evaluated by the commission the least important one, was composed of the “unità di guerriglia”, each with 105 men¹⁶⁶. Furthermore, while training at the CAG seems to have stopped in 1976, it remains unclear whether Gladio adopted a different central training facility after that year. Simultaneously, Adm. Casardi – the last SID director – informed the general staff of the army and of the Carabinieri that the entirety of the “special covert stockpile” would be moved out. At this point, virtually all of Gladio's equipment (excluding the somewhat outdated radio-related equipment) was transferred to Sardinia, mostly to the CAG¹⁶⁷. However, just one year after the revised plans were ready for implementation, the 3rd Andreotti administration approved a seemingly far-reaching reform of its intelligence services in 1977¹⁶⁸. This law was promoted to the general public as a far-reaching reform effort, aimed at definitively “cleaning house” in the scandal-ridden SID, but it was actually just the first time that the Italian republican Parliament was allowed to contribute to the issue of intelligence agencies.

Aside from splitting the SID in two, that is into a “civilian” and a “military” intelligence agency (SISDE and SISMI respectively¹⁶⁹), the 1977 intelligence reform had also created the “Comitato Esecutivo per i Servizi d'Informazione e Sicurezza” (henceforth CESIS). The intention was to create a sort of central secretariat of intelligence matters, directly subordinated to the prime minister, which was supposed to both act as an intermediary between the prime minister and the other two agencies, and to manage relations with all foreign intelligence services. However, according to the commission, the body failed in both of these tasks, particularly because both SISMI and SISDE continued to interact directly with foreign intelligence officers, and because the prime ministers always circumvented it by establishing direct relationships with the directors¹⁷⁰. All three of the first directors of the newly created intelligence bodies (SISMI, SISDE, and CESIS) turned out to be members of the infamous Freemason lodge P2: Santovito, Grassini and Pelosi, respectively. The report states that the influence of the P2 practically ceased altogether when, in the summer of 1981, the extent of the Freemasons' pene-

165 Original: “È comunque un fatto oggi provato che nel 1972 prese avvio la trasformazione di Gladio da struttura creata per contrastare una invasione del nostro territorio sul confine nord-orientale a struttura prevalente informativa operante sull'intero territorio nazionale.” Ibid, p. 24. [Link](#).

166 See IPICR 1991, Doc. XXIII, n. 36, p. 46. [Link](#).

167 See ibid, p. 39. [Link](#).

168 See law n. 801 of October 24th 1977: “Istituzione e ordinamento dei servizi per le informazioni e la sicurezza e disciplina del segreto di Stato” (Establishment and layout of the services for information gathering, security and regulation of State secrets), published of the official gazette on November 7th 1977, at camera.it, [Link](#).

169 The full names and translations are: “Servizio Informazioni per la Sicurezza Democratica” (democratic security and intelligence service, SISDE), and “Servizio Informazioni per la Sicurezza Militare” (military security and intelligence service, SISMI).

170 See IPICR 1992, Doc. XXIII, n. 51, p. 34, [Link](#).

tration became public¹⁷¹. Unlike in the 1966 intelligence reform, when both the *Ufficio R* and its office for studies and research (SAD), were transferred to the new agency SID without their names even being changed, following the 1977 reform, the former SAD office became SISMI's 7th division, but maintained its responsibility for Gladio. The commission estimates that it is during this period (since the source document is undated) that Gladio's new guidelines for intelligence gathering were issued. The document proves the radical shift towards civilian targets, listing the following six priorities: population, government, policy, economy, transportation, and communications¹⁷².

“The sharp prevalence of «civilian» issues is readily apparent, issues that have very little pertinence to the intelligence required to organize military operations (this holds true even in the context of «unorthodox warfare»). Priority is given to the biographical data of the most influential political leaders (from both local and national levels), to social movements, societies and associations, political parties and unions, news agencies and the press, marketing and advertisement firms, as well as to the staff of industrial and manufacturing corporations.¹⁷³”

Little more than a year after the explosion at the Questura of Milan, on May 28th 1974 an explosive device was detonated on Brescia's main square *Piazza della Loggia*, in the midst of a crowded union rally, killing nine and injuring a further 88 people. Violent demonstrations and clashes followed in the next couple of days, scattered across more than half a dozen Italian cities¹⁷⁴. Some two months later, on August 4th, the train *Italicus* suffered a massive explosion at the exit from a tunnel on the Florence-Bologna railway, killing 12 people and injuring over one hundred. The ensuing investigation was later able to establish that the bomb had been set to explode in the middle of the tunnel, and that many of its passengers had thereby survived only through mere luck¹⁷⁵.

The Nixon administration, particularly as represented by Henry Kissinger, had been unequivocal in its communications with the DC about its expectations with regards to Italy. However, as the PCI's electoral share continued to increase during the early part of the decade, the mood – even within the DC's own moderate circles – was shifting towards the so-called *apertura a sinistra* (opening to the left). Following Nixon's resignation, Aldo Moro and Italian President Giovanni Leone flew to Washington to test the waters on the

171 See *ibid*, p. 35, [Link](#). This interpretation, however, seems problematic, due to the fact that it is mainly based on the 1981 discovery of a partial membership list of the P2. The document was found by the judges Gherardo Colombo and Giuliano Turone, who were then investigating the death of financier Michele Sindona. It listed almost one thousand names, which read like a who's who of the Italian political, banking, industrial, military and media-related establishments. The problem with the commission's statement lies in the contradiction with the findings of another parliamentary investigation commission, established in late 1981 specifically to inquire into the P2 and its numerous connections, and led by Tina Anselmi. In 1984, this commission explicitly concluded that, while authentic, due to a wide array of documented inconsistencies, the discovered list was to be considered substantially incomplete. See IPICR 1984, Doc. XXIII, n. 2, p. 36-46, [Link](#). Broadly speaking, the P2 organization resembled some of the most influential and secretive groups operating in the US and western Europe, such as the Trilateral Commission, the Bilderberg group, the Council of Foreign Relations, or the Royal Institute of International Affairs.

172 See IPICR 1992, Doc. XXIII, n. 51, p. 34, [Link](#).

173 Original: “Come si può notare, netta è la prevalenza di temi del tutto «civili» che hanno ben poca attinenza con la predisposizione di informazioni finalizzate ad operazioni militari (sia pure in un contesto di «guerra non ortodossa»). L'attenzione informativa è posta sulle biografie degli esponenti politici più influenti (dal livello locale a quello nazionale), su movimenti, associazioni, partiti e sindacati, su giornali, agenzie di informazione e agenzie di pubblicità, sugli organigrammi di industrie e categorie produttive.” *Ibid*, p. 26, [Link](#).

174 See Schaerf et al. 1992, *Venti anni di violenza*, Vol. I, part 2, p. 393-6.

175 See *ibid*, p. 405.

issue, and met the new administration's officials.

“In a heavy confrontation with Henry Kissinger, who under Nixon had served as the President's National Security Advisor and now under Ford held the powerful position of Foreign Minister, the Italian representatives were told that under no circumstances must the Italian left be included in the Italian government. Italy had to remain firmly and strongly within NATO.”¹⁷⁶

Nevertheless, the PCI electoral successes continued, and in fact they achieved their best national result on record in 1976. As a consequence of still growing tensions, after just the latest of a long series of weak and short-lived administrations, Moro – who at the time was also the president of the DC – de-



(From left to right) Henry Kissinger, Giovanni Leone and Aldo Moro, 1975. Original credit: unknown. Source: theguardian.com. [Link](#).

ecided to invite the communist party to join the ranks of the new administration. He hoped to thereby break the cycle of tensions and mistrust which had clogged Italy's political arena for almost a decade¹⁷⁷. As noted by Dario Azzellini, this was also the period in which the massive propaganda concerning the supposed left-wing and anarchist origins of virtually all of the mentioned (as well as many more) attacks, seemed to finally show its general effect, most conspicuously through an important policy shift within the PCI, which in turn seemed a perfect match with Moro's plan. The leadership of the communist party opted for the absolute prioritization of its inclusion in the cabinet, no matter what the cost. By the end of the decade, it had gone as far as to actively support the security apparatus in its crackdown on all “extra-parliamentary” left-wing organizations, which basically meant every left-leaning person found protesting, except for card-carrying party members. This had profound consequences on virtually all left-leaning movements¹⁷⁸.

On March 16th 1978, while being driven by his armed escort to parliament to witness the inauguration of Andreotti's fourth administration, a tactically coordinated team attacked the convoy, killed the entire escort and kidnapped Moro. After 55 days of captivity, and so-called negotiations with Andreotti, his lifeless body was found in the trunk of a car in Via Caetani, approximately halfway between the PCI's and the DC's headquarters in Rome¹⁷⁹. In the immediate aftermath of the kidnapping, signed messages attributed to the BR (Red Brigades) laid claim to the operation, and this attribution was echoed throughout the political spectrum¹⁸⁰. In Moro's letters¹⁸¹, written during his captivity but only discovered in late 1990, he made explicit reference to the Gladio

176 Ganser 2005, NATO's secret armies, p. 79. Compare with Vittorio Gorresio, September 28th 1974, “Kissinger ci fa lezione” (Kissinger lessons us), published on *La Stampa* (major Italian daily), p. 3. See [archiviolaStampa.it](#), [Link](#).

177 See Ganser 2005, NATO's secret armies, p. 79-80.

178 See Azzellini 2003, Gladio in Italien, p. 37.

179 See *ibid*, p. 38.

180 For example see the many articles on p. 1-4 of *La Stampa* on March 17th 1978, on [archiviolaStampa.it](#), [Link](#).

181 These papers were found on October 8th 1990, apparently by a construction worker who, in removing a plaster panel under a window in a flat in Via Monte Nevoso in Milan, found 416 photocopied pages of Moro's handwritten papers (together with weapons, money and other documents). See Ganser 2006, The ghost of Machiavelli, p. 118-9.

network, listing all of its primary objectives, but stopping just short of mentioning its name. The letters also clearly identified Andreotti as the main contact person for US officials, as well as naming both him and Cossiga as the two main leaders of the DC who were opposing his release from captivity, because they were fundamentally against his plan to bring the PCI into his next administration¹⁸². In an effort to convey the message that no stone was being left unturned, the government organized a massive show of force, which eventually led to some 72,000 roadblocks, 37,000 house searches and the questioning of over 6,000,000 people¹⁸³. Azzellini further noted that this crackdown on the left more or less coincided with a noticeable reduction in violent right-wing activities, particularly bombings, even though the latter had not really been investigated during that period¹⁸⁴.



Aldo Moro during his captivity, 1978.
Original credit: unknown. Source: wikipedia.it. [Link](#).

In turn, the 1977 intelligence reform led to a second revision of Gladio's planning, which took place in the years leading up to 1980. According to the commission, efforts were focused on the recruiting practices, as well as on the broadening of the network's peacetime scope of operations. The commission summarized these modifications as follows:

“Essentially, from the Eighties onward, the structure which in the Fifties and Sixties had been originally planned for the case of an enemy invasion from the eastern border, was remodeled on a larger scale, not just in a territorial, but also in a programmatic way. More importance was given to the E&E and intelligence gathering tasks, rather than to those relating to guerrilla operations. The criteria for recruitment became more rigorous.”¹⁸⁵

However, the report does not confirm the extent to which either of these two rounds of reform actually affected Gladio's organization. It is therefore hard to say whether these modifications were: a) actually executed reforms; b) plans which remained either partially or completely disregarded; c) wishful thinking among some policy-makers; or d) part of the copious efforts aimed at purposefully misleading controllers, investigators, and researchers.

The last two major bloodbaths commonly associated with the strategy of tension took place on August 2nd 1980 and December 23rd 1984: the former being the massacre at Bologna's central station (85 deaths, 177 wounded), and the latter the double-bombing of train 904 Milan-Naples, with the bombs exploding in a tunnel

182 For more information on the content of these papers, see the specific reports filed by the Parliamentary investigation commission, see IPICR 1991, Doc. XXIII, n. 26, Vol. I, (see for example p. 78-80) [Link](#) / and Vol. II, [Link](#).

183 See Ganser 2005, NATO's secret armies, p. 80. Compare with De Lutiis 2007, Il golpe di Via Fani, p. 8.

184 See Azzellini 2003, Gladio in Italien, p. 37-9. Arguably, one of the two main exceptions to this trend was a cellular organization established in 1977, the very same year of the intelligence reform: the right-wing group known as NAR (Armed Revolutionary Nuclei), which was charged with over 130 acts of violence in their first five years of operations alone. See CIA Directorate for Intelligence; May 26th 1983; Terrorism Review p. 11-5 (here p. 12-3). [Link](#). The second exception being the bombing of the Bologna station on August 2nd 1980, less than two months prior to the Munich *Oktoberfestattentat* (Oktoberfest bombing).

185 Original: “In sostanza, a partire dagli anni '80, la struttura prevista negli anni '50-'60 per fronteggiare una invasione nemica sul confine orientale venne rimodellata su base più ampia, non solo territoriale ma anche programmatica. Venne data più importanza ai compiti di informazione e di esfiltrazione che a quelli di guerriglia. I criteri di arruolamento divennero più rigorosi.” IPICR 1991, Doc. XXIII, n. 36, p. 49. [Link](#).

just outside Florence (16 deaths, 277 injured)¹⁸⁶. In what may be considered to be one of the first real admissions of Gladio's cooperation with violent right-wingers, in 1984 Vincenzo Vinciguerra stated that:

“With the massacre of Peteano [...] as with all those that have followed, the knowledge should by now be clear that there existed a real live structure, occult and hidden, with the capacity of giving a strategic direction to the outrages. [The structure, ed. r.] lies within the state itself. There exists in Italy a secret force parallel to the armed forces, composed of civilians and military men, in an anti-Soviet capacity, that is, to organize a resistance on Italian soil against a Russian army. [...] A super-secret organization with a network of communications, arms, and explosives, and men trained to use them.”¹⁸⁷

Around 1986, Inzerilli ordered the establishment of the *Gruppo Operativo Speciale* (special operations group, henceforth GOS), also called *nucleo K*, a rigidly compartmentalized structure endowed with a formidable degree of operational autonomy from SISMI's 7th division (formerly SAD). The group, consisting of some 15 highly specialized elements, was later housed in the base of Cerveteri, which in the meantime had graduated to become a communication interception center¹⁸⁸. Among other things, elements of this group were tasked with the protection of maximum priority targets during events and trips, up to and including the Pope. Most of its members came from the elite units of the individual military branches: the Comsubin (navy), the Col Moschin battalion (army), or the Carabinieri paratrooper battalion Tuscania¹⁸⁹. On April 10th 1990, Inzerilli further proposed a reorganization of the 7th division; he called for the outright disbandment of the remaining nuclei earmarked for wartime sabotage and guerrilla, as well as for the further increase in intelligence and E&E related networks¹⁹⁰. His report concludes that, throughout the 1980s, all persons that acted as sources for the Gladio network did so after being convinced by the respective agent and/or officers that it was all just part of a training exercise in preparation for military invasions. The same happened to the several highly trained soldiers co-opted from the aforementioned elite units¹⁹¹.

The report dates Gladio's effective disbandment to the 1991 dismissal of both Adm. Fulvio Martini, then head of SISMI, and his chief of staff Inzerilli, to whom Andreotti denied the last promotion to the rank of Lieutenant General¹⁹². Aside from the two already mentioned generals, in December 1991, the military district attorney of Padova identified the following generals as the upper echelon of the late Gladio network: Gerardo

186 See Schaerf et al. 1992, *Venti anni di violenza*, Vol. II, part 1, p. 921-2; and *ibid.* Vol. II, part 2, p. 1108. See also CIA Directorate for Intelligence; May 26th 1983; *Terrorism Review* p. 8-12 (here p. 10-1). [Link](#). Italy continued to be plagued by many smaller terrorist attacks of different kinds, even after the end of the Cold War, but the increased chronological proximity to the present, the mutated geostrategic context, as well as the internal political upheavals which led to the collapse of both PCI and DC in the early 1990s, does not justify comparison with the aforementioned period of the Years of Lead. For a brief overview on the deadliest attacks of the 1990s, see Azzellini 2003, *Gladio in Italien*, p. 42-4.

187 Vincenzo Vinciguerra 1984, translated by Ganser in 2006, *The ghost of Machiavelli*, p. 130.

188 In contrast with the rest of Gladio networks, this one could be called upon only by order of the SISMI director, but could be requested by any of its divisions.

189 See IPICR 1992, Doc. XXIII, n. 51, p. 28-9. [Link](#). Broadly speaking, these units are functionally equivalent to the US Green Berets, or the UK's SAS. Gladio's integration with other military units might be seen as a direct result of the 1985 formation of the Italian council on unorthodox warfare, as documented in the section on the connection to NATO.

190 Inzerilli's proposal also sought to increase the GOS share of the Gladio budget, perhaps because that was the only part of the network directly subordinated to the head of SISMI. None of these proposals was ever put into practice.

191 See IPICR 1992, Doc. XXIII, n. 51, p. 29. [Link](#)

192 See *ibid.*, p. 30. [Link](#)

Serravalle, Fausto Fortunato, Giuseppe Cismondi, Bernardo De Bernardi Bernini Buri, Pietro Savoca Corona, and Giovanni Romeo¹⁹³.

In the documentation transmitted by the SIFAR to Andreotti, and later forwarded to the commission¹⁹⁴, Gladio was described as having employed only 622 people during the whole 40 years of its existence: 408 for the nuclei and 214 for the guerrilla units. This would mean that Gladio had an average of 230 to 250 active agents between the early 1960s and 1991. However, in a footnote to the report, the commission documents how this list might have been tampered with, since 127 of the 622 members listed appear to have been effectively recruited prior to the otherwise standard background and security check. Furthermore, massive amounts of information were filed for over 1,900 “rejected” candidates, showing that information continued to be gathered about these individuals even after their rejection¹⁹⁵. The parliamentary commission argued that the aforementioned list did not include the overwhelming majority of the members of Gladio's so-called *unità di pronto impiego* (rapid deployment units), among these being Stella Alpina. “There is no doubt that the numbers were [actually, ed. r.] far higher than those declared¹⁹⁶.” Furthermore, the commission also documented how the numbers supplied by Andreotti did not take into account some 280 Gladio “controllers”, “the men who held operational command”. Regretfully, the commission's report does not indicate the exact affiliation of these controllers, other than stating that they were “highly qualified and with relatively high military ranks”¹⁹⁷. However, it does stand to reason that, due to the absence of a collaboration agreement (on this specific issue) between the Italian military intelligence and the Italian defense staff until the mid-Eighties, most – if not all – of these 280 “controllers” were affiliated either to the CAG, the SAD office (later SISMI's 7th division), or military intelligence in general. The report furthermore confirms that, of the 137 training officers that they were able to track down, only 93 are listed¹⁹⁸.

The commission concludes that, instead of decreasing – as described by Andreotti in 1990 – Gladio's illegality continued to increase throughout its existence, particularly during the second half of the 1980s. “There is no justification whatsoever for Gladio. Neither at the beginning, nor at the end. There is an expansion of its illegality, as well as of the threat that it posed as the years passed by.”¹⁹⁹ In one of its most revealing passages, the commission's report described how the transmission of the network-related information actually worked.

“Within the evaluated sources, not one act of the Executive regarding Gladio could be documented, be it a guiding principle, be it a coordination or control measure. In short, with the exception for foreign intelligence agencies, which always knew everything about it, for forty years Gladio has existed out of the sight of Italian

193 See *ibid*, p. 31. [Link](#)

194 Andreotti submitted this documentation on February 26th 1991, almost four months after his most famous Gladio-related speech of November 8th, and it included a list of 622 names, alleging that these were the only agents Gladio had ever had. See IPICR 1991, Doc. XXIII, n. 36, p. 50. [Link](#). Even Gen. Pleiner seemed to question this particular notion of Gladio. See Pleiner 2017, p. A9 of the Annex.

195 See IPICR 1992, Doc. XXIII, n. 51, p. 43, footnote 9. [Link](#)

196 Original: “Non c'è dubbio che i numeri siano stati assai più alti di quelli dichiarati.” IPICR 1991, Doc. XXIII, n. 36, p. 31. [Link](#). The commission concluded that the only documentable copy of the complete list of members of the Stella Alpina unit was destroyed by Col. Cismondi in 1973. See *ibid*. p. 33.

197 See *ibid*, p. 32. [Link](#).

198 See *ibid*, p. 47-8. [Link](#).

199 Original. “Non vi è alcuna giustificazione per Gladio. Né all'inizio né alla fine. Vi è invece un accrescimento della sua pericolosità e della sua illegittimità con il passare degli anni.” IPICR 1992, Doc. XXIII, n. 51, p. 40. [Link](#)

institutions. [...] Not only did [De Gasperi's, ed. r.] administration not forward the information regarding Gladio's establishment and priorities to the following administrations (from one Prime Minister to the next, from one Defense Minister to his successor) but, at a certain point, the task of «informing» [the policy-makers] about Gladio and its activities, about the commitments made to other countries, shifted from the controllers to the controlled. In other words, it was the intelligence apparatus that decided what to say to whom. At their own discretion, the directors of the [intelligence] services decided not only which prime ministers and which defense ministers were to be informed, but also what should be mentioned, and what should be omitted.²⁰⁰

Excursus: Giulio Andreotti

According to Daniele Ganser, “[i]n order to limit the strength of the Italian Communists the CIA sided with the Mafia and right-wing extremists.” This statement is mainly based upon the two following sources: firstly, the statements of former CIA agent Victor Marchetti, who explicitly termed the Italian “mafia” one of the means “which the CIA uses to control Italy”; secondly, the deal struck by US officials with a number of Italian crime syndicates (particularly those operating in Sicily), which resulted in the latter's cooperation with the Allies, both



Charles “Lucky” Luciano, June 11th 1948, Rome. Original Credit: Remo Nassi. Source: wikipedia.org. [Link](#).

prior to and during their WWII landing. Furthermore, in exchange for his alleged mediation between the leaders of these groups on the one hand, and US and Allied officials on the other, the 30-year prison sentence of infamous mob-boss Charles “Lucky” Luciano was commuted.²⁰¹ While the exact nature and value of Luciano's contributions remain subject to debate, the deal which led to the commutation of his sentence is not, and may be therefore considered as an established matter of record. Yet the implications carried by Ganser's and Marchetti's statements remain fundamentally unsubstantiated. However, what can be documented are the links which existed between these very same crime syndicates and countless Italian politicians, as well as a number of security officials of various types and ranks. The same holds true in the case of Gladio's connection to the Vatican: while the existence of a structured relationship cannot be documented, it has been proven that selected individuals did maintain simultaneous ties to both the Holy See and the clandestine network. In such a context it is therefore extremely difficult to precisely define the extent of actual collaboration. It may well be argued that the single most significant example among this group of selected individuals who were documentably

200 Original: “Agli atti non risulta alcun atto dell'Esecutivo di indirizzo, di coordinamento e di controllo riguardante Gladio. In sostanza Gladio ha vissuto clandestinamente per quarant'anni, non per i servizi di informazione avversari, che ne hanno sempre conosciuto l'esistenza, ma per le istituzioni italiane. [...] Non solo l'«informazione» della avvenuta costituzione di Gladio e delle sue finalità non è calata dal primo Governo che aveva preso la decisione ai Governi successivi (da un Presidente del Consiglio all'altro, da un Ministro della difesa al suo successore), ma il compito di fornire l'«informazione», di ciò che era Gladio, degli impegni assunti anche con altri Paesi, delle attività svolte, ad un certo punto è passato dai controllori ai controllati. In altri termini erano i servizi a decidere che cosa dire e a chi. I direttori dei servizi, a loro discrezione, sceglievano quali Presidenti del Consiglio e quali Ministri della difesa informare e quali no, di che cosa informarli e che cosa tacere.” Ibid, p. 36. [Link](#)

201 See Ganser 2005, *NATO's secret armies*, p. 63. The same idea was also expressed by author Markus Kemmerling in: Kemmerling 1996, “Strategia della Tensione”, p. 66.

linked to the Vatican, to the Mafia and to Gladio is Giulio Andreotti²⁰².

“As the leading representative of the conservative [DC], which had functioned as a bulwark against the PCI during the entire Cold War, Andreotti had enjoyed the support of the United States. He personally knew all US presidents, and by many within and outside Italy was considered to be the most powerful politician of Italy's First Republic (1945-1993). Although the governments in Italy's fragile First Republic had changed in short intervals Andreotti throughout the Cold War had cunningly managed to remain in power in numerous coalitions and had thus established himself as the dominant presence in the Italian government residence at Palazzo Chigi in Rome. [...] His admirers compared him with Julius Cesar [!Caesar, ed. r.] and called him [“il Divo”, ed. r.] 'divine Giulio', while his critics have accused him of being the quintessential back-room wheeler-dealer and nicknamed him [„zio Giulio“, ed. r.] 'the uncle'.²⁰³”

By any standards, Andreotti's career and influence had reached unprecedented levels by the early Nineties, his political seniority rivaled only by that of Queen Elizabeth II. Besides being the youngest cabinet member (under-secretary to Prime Minister De Gasperi in 1947) on record, at only 28 years of age²⁰⁴, he set several other political records. He was first elected to the constitutional assembly in 1946, then to Parliament in the very first elections two years later, in one of Rome's electoral districts. From then on, he maintained a seat in Parliament for 44 consecutive years, acted 21 times as a minister²⁰⁵ and seven times as prime minister in a period which saw a total of 46 different cabinets. Six months after his revelations, he was appointed *senatore a vita* (life-long senate appointment) by then-President Cossiga, prolonging his stay in the Italian Parliament until his death in 2013, at the age of 94.



Felice Casson, 2013. Original credit: Italian Senate. Source: wikipedia.org. [Link](#).

It is therefore somewhat remarkable that – while never disputing Andreotti's personal involvement in the establishment and operation of the Italian stay behind network – Ganzer did not even raise the question concerning the permission granted by the then-prime minister to Judge Felice Casson. As all researchers of intelligence-related topics know, it most certainly isn't *generally* common for a judge to obtain access to such archives, even more so in this particular case. Ganzer's omission is even stranger when considered in the context of his overall narrative concerning Italy, where Andreotti, Casson and the documents the latter found

202 In the 2003 sentence of the Perugia court of appeals, where Andreotti was acquitted of colluding with the Mafia in the period after 1980, the judges also highlighted the following: although the statute of limitations of the Mafia-related crimes he perpetrated prior to 1980 had since expired, the court also described Andreotti in no uncertain terms as collaboratively colluded with *prominent Mafia leaders* prior to 1980. In 2004, by rejecting the appeals of both the defense and the prosecution, the Italian supreme court confirmed the preceding sentence, rendering his association with the Mafia (prior to 1980) a matter of record. See original 2003 sentence of the Perugia court of appeals against Andreotti and others (see in particular p. 15-22 and 341-2), at archivioantimafia.org. [Link](#). For a critical German-language biography of Andreotti, see Igel, Regine (1997), “Andreotti. Politik zwischen Geheimdienst und Mafia” (Andreotti. Politics between intelligence services and Mafia), Herbig Publisher, Munich.

203 Ganzer 2005, NATO's secret armies, p. 10.

204 According to Italian author Bruno Vespa, Andreotti obtained this early cabinet position at the explicit suggestion of Giovanni Battista Montini, who later went on to become Pope Paul VI. This move “surprised a large number of older conservative politicians, which back then crowded the political halls of the new Italy.” Vespa 2004, Storia d'Italia, p. 8.

205 Of these: eight times in Defense; five times in Foreign Affairs; three times in State Industry; three times in Treasury, Finance, and/or Trade; and once in Interior, Culture, and EU-community policy, respectively.

inside Fort Braschi (the SISMI's aforementioned archive) all play major roles²⁰⁶.

Austrian historian Günter Bischof argued that most of the sources and documents relating to the inner workings of the Cold War started to become available only during the Nineties. He further argued that this is due to multiple reasons: most obviously, the fall of the USSR led to a significant reduction in the perceived level of threat across western countries. In turn, this no longer justified the “cult of secrecy” which had surrounded most of the action regarding both defense and foreign policy, gradually prompting most archives in Europe and North America to embrace the concept of declassification and publication²⁰⁷. Yet, according to the commission, Casson's original request to enter the SISMI's archive was submitted on January 19th 1990 and accepted by Andreotti only in July. Furthermore, following the investigations into the downing of Argo-16, Judge Carlo Mastelloni had already requested access (to practically the same documents) several years prior to Casson. This is further supported by the fact that, as the prime minister partially lifted the imposition of state secrecy, both of the judges' investigations were affected simultaneously²⁰⁸.

According to Ganser's narrative, by virtue of the amount of material evidence that Casson had already gathered on the Peteano bombing Andreotti was somehow forced to grant him the access. The evidence includes Marco Morin's documentably false evaluation of the explosives; the fact that the explosives actually used were of military grade type C-4, the same found in the cache near Trieste, as well as Vincenzo Vinciguerra's legal confession. Dario Azzellini argued that the fall of the Iron Curtain made the revelations possible, and that virtually all the information Andreotti “revealed” had already been pieced together from different high-ranking sources, such as statements by Aldo Moro, Mariano Rumor, Vito Miceli and other intelligence operatives²⁰⁹. Undoubtedly, the evidence gathered by Casson was more than enough to warrant a thorough investigation into Gladio. But did it really manage to basically strong-arm one of the sharpest and most powerful politicians Italy has ever had into opening the doors of the military intelligence's secret archives? Given the astonishing nature of the history which preceded this event, anything is possible.

206 See for example Ganser 2005, NATO's secret armies, p. 8-9 and 109 /Ganser 2006, The Ghost of Machiavelli, p. 111 and 117 / Ganser 2009, Secret Warfare in Neutral Austria, p. 3-4. Most recently in 2015, in an interview conducted by Julian Charles, the transcript of which was later published on [globalresearch.ca](#), [Link](#).

207 See Bischof 2000, Eine historiographische Einführung, p. 20. For an overview of the development of Cold War Studies, see Ibid. p. 22-3.

208 See IPICR 1991, Doc. XXIII, n. 36, p. 50. [Link](#).

209 See Azzellini 2003, Gladio in Italien, p. 40.

4 1996: uncovering one of Austria's *underlying* realities

While most Austrian archives started to open their doors to historians and Cold War researchers²¹⁰, the topic of stay behind networks was avoided almost completely, particularly by government officials. In 1991, shortly after Andreotti's revelations, Peter Pilz – then a member of parliament for the Austrian Green party – submitted to the government a query concerning the possible existence of a “Gladio secret service or some other Gladio-linked secret service on Austrian territory”. While the chancellor, foreign minister and interior minister responded with a short “no”, defense minister Werner Fasslabend added a rather telling remark: “in the interest of national security, matters of the intelligence services are generally not suited to be dealt with publicly in the context of an answer to a parliamentary inquiry.”²¹¹ The matter rested until early 1996, when the *Boston Globe* published an exposé by Paul Quinn-Judge titled: “US caches in Austria stir diplomatic concerns - Austria unaware supplies were stashed by CIA²¹²”. Soon thereafter both President Thomas Klestil and Chancellor Franz Vranitzky decisively denied having had any knowledge whatsoever about the CIA's depots²¹³. With quite some embarrassment, US ambassador Swanee Hunt was thereby forced to admit that the CIA had emplaced 79 underground caches containing both weaponry and explosives in Austria, and had to supply Vienna with a detailed list of locations soon thereafter²¹⁴.



Peter Pilz, December 10th 2009. Original credit: Mike Ranz. Source: parlament.gv.at. [Link](#).

“The Austrian Government, through our bureaucratic error, had not been informed²¹⁵”.

Fritz Molden and Franz Olah in 1996

By January 21st – just one day after the publication of Quinn-Judge's story – Fritz Molden²¹⁶ had already

210 While it would've been reasonable to expect that Austrian archives had been opened sooner than those in the Eastern Europe, those in Moscow, Budapest, Prague, and Warsaw actually allowed research on Cold War sources more or less during the same period. For more information on Vienna's longstanding policy of keeping their documents sealed, see Bischof 2000, *Eine historiographische Einführung*, p. 21-2. Within this very context, researcher Markus Kemmerling noted how, in sharp contrast to the gradual opening of the archives, in 1990 the Austrian ministry of interior proceeded to destroy all files which dated back to earlier than 1972, probably destroying many promising leads and/or source-documents. See Kemmerling 1996, *Explosive Erdlöcher*, p. 13.

211 Peter Pilz (1991) and Werner Fasslabend (1991), cited as found in Ganser 2009, *Secret Warfare in Neutral Austria*, p. 5-6.

212 Paul Quinn-Judge (*Boston Globe*), January 20th 1996. For an abstract of the article, see secure.pqarchiver.com, [Link](#).

213 See Ganser 2009, *Secret Warfare in Neutral Austria*, p. 6.

214 See Riegler 2016, *Strukturen für den geheimen Krieg*, p. 669.

215 Swanee Hunt (January 1996), cited from Ganser 2009, *Secret Warfare in Neutral Austria*, p. 6.

216 After having deserted the *Wehrmacht* in 1944, Fritz Molden joined an Italian resistance group called “Fiamme Verdi” (green flames), through which he made contact with both the Austrian resistance and the Allies. He later became a member of the Austrian resistance network known as *O5*, where – under the code name “Gerhard Wiese” – he established contact with both the Swiss intelligence and Allen Dulles, then the OSS station chief in Switzerland. From 1946 to 1948, he allegedly participated in the establishment and operation of a covert resistance organization in the eastern sector of Austria, until its discovery, which in turn led to Molden's “escape” to the US, where he met and married Joan Dulles, daughter of Allen Dulles. Following his return to Austria and the death of his own father, by 1953 he became the sole publisher of the daily newspaper “Die Presse”, a position which he held for over ten years. His brother, Otto Molden, is a co-founder of the “Forum Alpbach”, a think tank which was originally called “Österreichisches College”. See Csépai 1996, Interview with Fritz Molden, p. 34.

given an interview stating that the whole project of the underground depots was part of a larger anti-occupation strategy, and that not only were the caches known to the Austrian administration, but they themselves had taken the original initiative. He furthermore connected the aforementioned plans with the 1948 wave of arrests which took place in the Soviet sector, explicitly describing the arrest and imprisonment of Margarethe Ottillinger as a reaction to her collaboration in such plans. The idea, according to Molden, was originally developed by former members of the Austrian anti-Nazi resistance together with the administration of the time: he cited Chancellor Figl, vice-chancellor Schärff, foreign minister Gruber, minister of the interior Helmer, and the latter's undersecretary Graf. Molden further explained that Graf had been largely responsible for the plans' implementation, which eventually earned him the post of defense minister. The governors of all affected regions were also aware of the operation²¹⁷. According to Molden's narrative, the whole project was so secret that the Austrian government was not really in a position to put up a fight when Oettillinger was kidnapped by the KGB and later sentenced to 25 years forced labor in Siberia²¹⁸. Molden claimed that the Soviets



Fritz Molden, during the late Seventies.
Original credit: Austrian institute for contemporary history. Source: Austria-forum.org. [Link](#).

wanted him too, which led him to leave for New York in the summer of 1948, where, together with Austrian ambassador Martin Fuchs, he continued to work towards the implementation of the anti-occupation strategy. His job was to create and manage contacts with several high-level US figures, such as members of the administration or of the trade unions²¹⁹. Aside from that, Molden gave no further specifics on what his actual role was within this network. In fact, in a different interview, he insisted on identifying Ernst Lemberger – another former member of the *O5*²²⁰ resistance organization – as “the liaison man, naturally only on an unofficial and covert basis, between the Austrian ministry of foreign affairs and these activities, particularly those of the Austrian unions, which means Olah. [...] I actually only met Olah in America.”²²¹. Other journalists took the chance to ask him about the persistent speculation surrounding the possible links between the underground

217 See Segur-Cabanac 1998, *Erkenntnisse aus der Verteilung*, p. 55.

218 For more information about the events leading up to and including the 1948 wave of arrests, including some details regarding Margarethe Ottillinger, see Beer 2000, *Rund um den “Dritten Mann”*, p. 86-7; Kopeczek 2000, *Die amerikanischen Waffenlager*, p. 113 and Engelke 2000, *Zum Thema Spionage*, p. 120-1

219 See Segur-Cabanac 1998, *Erkenntnisse aus der Verteilung*, p. 56.

220 This particular anti-Nazi resistance organization, one of the few in WWII Austria, turned out to be a crucial player in the transition period. For example, this particular organization took it upon itself to nominate Eugen Kaniak as the first interim governor of the Austrian Central Bank. This happened on April 12th 1945, a full 15 days prior to the establishment of the Austrian interim government, which, among its very first acts, confirmed Kaniak's appointment as the Austrian Central Bank's “public administrator”. See Weber 2016, *Lernen aus der Geschichte*, p. 563-4. The *O5* furthermore constituted one of the founding members of the *Provisorische Österreichische Nationalkomitee* (Austria's provisional national committee), a trans-partisan body which most of the Allied powers took seriously, even during the early part of 1945. See Beer 2000, *Rund um den “Dritten Mann”*, p. 82. According to Christoph Franceschini, during this early period Molden also worked as an OSS informant, whose main intelligence gathering target was the political situation in South Tirol. See Franceschini 2012, *Zwischen Rom, Wien und Langley*, p. 449.

221 Original: “Lemberger war der Verbindungsman, inoffiziell und geheim natürlich, des Außenministeriums zu diesen Aktivitäten, insbesondere derer der Gewerkschaften, also zu Olah. [...] Olah habe ich eigentlich nur in Amerika kennen gelernt.” Csépai 1996, *Interview with Fritz Molden*, p. 40.

caches and the BAS bombing campaign which took place in South Tirol during the Sixties. In an explicit attempt to debunk such rumors, Molden decided to address some of them in another 1996 interview, the one conducted by Ludwig Csépai.

“Back then [during WWII] the unambiguous goal was: make all South Tirol north of Salurn part of Austria. This dream collapsed at the 1946 Paris negotiations; as undersecretary for foreign relations I was a member of the delegation, and right in front of me was sitting a certain Andreotti²²².”

According to the narrative presented by Molden, due to the deterioration of the state of the official negotiations with Italy during the late Fifties, combined with a “skillful enforcement” of Italy’s demographic subversion policies in South Tirol, some of the BAS members started to openly support the idea of violent retaliation: “[Wolfgang] Pfaundler was one of those who supported a harsh solution. I rather tended towards a softer solution, as did Gerd Bacher and Max Lersch. We were the ones that [...] left the [BAS] during the crucial meeting of December 1960²²³.” Molden then went on to ascribe most of the tendencies towards violence to Pfaundler, whom he characterized as a believer in the pursuit of independence through bombings.

“That was [Pfaundler’s] theory, and the events proved that he was right, for while South Tirol does not belong to Austria, it does have an autonomy it can live with. Roughly speaking, this wouldn’t have happened without the *Bumsern* [“bang-boys”]. The first one and a half years fight in South Tirol, those were Klotz, Amplatz, and later Kerschbaumer, all of those were our people, pro-Austrian folks. They wanted one Tirol. Only afterwards came Burger and the other similarly right-wing guys [...]. During the first phase the goal wasn’t to make progress by shedding blood, but rather through actions like the detonations of 40 electrical pylons during the *Herz-Jesu* night [Night of Fire, between the 11th and 12th of June 1961, ed. r.]. [...] That was exactly the kind of policy that we wanted. Even on this particular occasion I voted against it, but it was a mistake. I now admit that I should’ve voted with the others back then. [...] Those *Pusterer-Buam* [the boys of Pusterer valley, ed. r.] were still part of our people but, because they were chased into the forests, they turned out pretty wild. That’s also why they used harsher methods.”²²⁴

Austrian researcher Ludwig Csépai then turned the topic of the conversation towards the origin of the explosives used by the BAS, as well as its sources of financing. Unsurprisingly, after having rejected any possible connection with the equipment uncovered in the caches, Molden also denied having been one of the organization’s single largest financiers²²⁵:

222 Original: “Damals war das eindeutige Ziel: Südtirol bis Salurn an Österreich. Dieser Traum ist 1946 bei den Verhandlungen in Paris geplatzt, an denen ich noch als Sekretär des Außenministers teilgenommen habe, mein vis-à-vis war damals ein gewisser Andreotti.” Ibid, p. 33-4.

223 Original: “Als auch die [Verhandlungen mit Italien] immer schlechter liefen und die Italiener eine sehr geschickte Unterwanderungspolitik machten, war Pfaundler einer jener, die sich für eine scharfe Lösung ausgesprochen hatte. Ich war eher für eine mildere Lösung, übrigens auch Gerd Bacher und Max Lersch. Wir waren die [...] die bei der entscheidenden Sitzung im Dezember 1960 aus dem Befreiungsausschuß ausgeschieden sind.” Ibid, p. 34.

224 Original: “Das war seine Theorie, und per saldo hat er recht behalten, denn Südtirol gehört zwar nicht Österreich, aber es hat eine Autonomie, mit der es leben kann. Das wäre ohne den Bumsern nicht passiert, grob gesprochen. Die ersten anderthalb Jahre Kampf in Südtirol, das waren Klotz, Amplatz, dann Kerschbaumer, das waren alles Leute von uns, proösterreichische Leute. Die wollten ein Tirol. Dann kamen eben Burger und ähnlich rechtsradikale Typen [...] Es war in der ersten Phase nie geplant, durch Blutvergießen weiterzukommen, sondern durch Aktionen wie zum Beispiel die Sprengung von 40 Strommasten in der Herz-Jesu-Nacht. [...] Das war genau die Politik die wir wollten. Sogar zu dieser habe ich persönlich nein gesagt, was ein Fehler war. Ich gebe heute zu, ich hätte damals mitstimmen sollen. [...] Die Pusterer-Buam waren noch unsere Leute, aber die waren schon wild, weil man sie in die Wälder gejagt hat. Deswegen haben sie auch schärfere Methoden angewandt.” Ibid, p. 35.

225 For more information on Fritz Molden’s many documentable contributions to the BAS, see chapter eight.

“I believe that the best method [to raise funds] is a little bit of extortion, where you simply say: Dear Mr. manager “X”, if right now you don't hand over 50 million [Austrian Schillings, ed. r.] out of all your billions, than one of your plants will possibly be blown up by mistake. I don't know if they [the BAS members, ed. r.] did it like that, we certainly did it during the Nazi period. [...] It wasn't so difficult to raise funds, but I was happy not to be involved with it²²⁶.”

Contrary to Molden, Franz Olah²²⁷ did not jump at the opportunity to talk about his role in the affair, not just because of his consistent refusal to do so, but also because he had just published what could be argued to be an “up-to-date” version of his statements on the subject in 1995²²⁸. However, some journalists did manage to press him for a comment on Molden's latest statements. In his memoirs, Olah had already stated that both interior minister Helmer and himself knew all about the CIA's depots in Austria, so on this occasion he merely stated: “Within a state, there are certain things of which one simply shouldn't speak. Even afterwards.” And when confronted with Molden's remarks naming four other members of the then-administration, Olah replied: “That is right, but I certainly would not have felt warranted to say it out loud. Molden said more than I would have²²⁹.”

The caches' content, distribution, and state of preservation

Austrian authorities only received the documentation revealing the locations of 79 underground depots towards the end of January 1996. By April, the two mine clearance teams of the ministry of the interior, together with units of the Austrian armed forces, started the clearing operation. By September the operation was concluded. The overwhelming majority of the depots turned out to be still in situ. Most of the deposited equipment was stored in waterproof crates, which were to be opened by using hammers and crowbars, which were usually located on top of the boxes. Finally, the depots were made as good as invisible, even to metal-detecting equipment, thanks to a layer of metal scraps between the depot and the earth's surface²³⁰.

“The establishment of the 79 weapons caches was *one* kind of precaution that the US (and its western allies) took against what they expected to develop into an Austrian “sovietization”, starting from the eastern sector. On the other hand, it is safe to assume that the Austrian government was determined not to give the impression – for a second time, so soon after 1938 – that it would simply stand by idly, and allow the country to be occupied without a fight. It may therefore be assumed that the weapon caches were established not just with the knowledge, but rather the active support of the then-administration²³¹”.

226 Original: “Die beste Methode ist, glaube ich, daß man die Leute ein bißchen erpreßt, indem man ihnen sagt: Lieber Herr Kommerzialrat “X”, wenn du von deinen Milliarden nicht fünfzig Millionen gibst, dann wird möglicherweise auch eine deiner Fabriken durch Irrtum hochgehen. Ich weiß nicht, ob es die Südtiroler so gemacht haben, wir haben es in der Nazizeit getan. [...] Es war also nicht schwer, Geld zu beschaffen, aber ich war glücklich darüber, daß ich das nicht zu tun hatte.” Csépai 1996, Interview with Fritz Molden, p. 37.

227 For more information on the person of Franz Olah, see chapter seven.

228 See Pleiner, p. A3 of the Annex and Olah 1995, Die Erinnerungen.

229 Franz Olah, January 1996, cited from Segur-Cabanac 1998, Erkenntnisse aus der Verteilung, p. 57.

230 See Rauchensteiner 1998, Vorwort, p. 4.

231 Original: “Die Anlage der 79 Waffendepots war *eine* Art der Vorsorge der USA (und der alliierten Westmächte) gegenüber einer angenommenen drohenden “Sowjetisierung” Österreichs, ausgehend von der sowjetischen Besatzungszone. Demgegenüber ist die feste Absicht der österreichischen Bundesregierung anzunehmen, gestützt auf die Erfahrungen des März 1938 diesmal keinesfalls den Eindruck aufkommen zu lassen, daß sich Österreich ohne Gegenwehr einer dauernden Besetzung/Einverleibung ausliefern würde. Es kann daher mit einiger Sicherheit angenommen werden, daß die Anlage der Waffendepots durch die USA nicht nur mit Wissen der zuständigen österreichischen Bundesregierung sondern auch mit deren aktiven Unterstützung durchgeführt wurde.” Segur-Cabanac 1998, Erkenntnisse aus der Verteilung, p. 60.

According to Christian Segur-Cabanac, one of the leading military officers involved in the recovery operation, agencies of the United States government emplaced a total of 85 caches on Austrian soil: six of them contained only civilian equipment (such as landing lights), ten had already been cleared and/or plundered²³², and one could not be found. Therefore, a total of 68 caches with military content were cleared, yielding an impressive amount of weaponry²³³. According to Johann Schadwasser, a high-ranking official of the Austrian interior ministry involved in the recovery operation, less than 8% of them were located in Styria, while the rest were more or less equally distributed between Upper Austria and Salzburg. All-in-all the depots contained: 300 pistols, 250 carbines, 270 submachine guns, 65 machine guns, 20 special weapons, 50 anti-tank weapons, 2,700 hand-grenades, some 230,000 fire-arms bullets, 1,150 anti-tank missiles as well as 3.4 metric tonnes of explosives and its associated detonators²³⁴. Not all depots were the same: while some of them were larger, thereby containing more weapons, others carried an explicit description of the number of agents that they were supposed to equip (such as “five men” or “ten men”). On the basis of these two differences, researcher Christian Ortner divided the depots in sub-groups.

<i>Number of caches</i>	<i>Number of soldiers to equip</i>	<i>Explicit labeling</i>
26	5	y
21	10	y
10	9 or 10	n
9	20 or 25	n
2	150	n
11	explosives only (75-100kg)	n
6	civilian equipment	n

Underground caches identified in the documentation handed over by Ambassador Hunt. Source: Ortner 1998, Die amerikanischen Waffenlager in Österreich, p. 76-7. Compare with Schadwasser 1998, Planungsphase und technische Durchführung der Bergungen, p. 69.

According to Ortner's rather detailed study of the military potential achievable through the content of the underground CIA-caches, while the some 900 firearms would have been barely sufficient to equip the equivalent of a US rifle battalion in the Korean War, the over 3,400kg of modern plastic explosives exceeded the average endowment of an entire US infantry division. He furthermore argued that both the explicit labeling of some of the caches, as well as some of the discrepancies in the equipment itself, could either point to divergent tactical priorities or different dates of emplacement²³⁵. While not all depots (such as the unlabeled 20-25 men type) did contain an antitank component, those that did differed between the M.9 (60 mm) and the M.20A1 (89.9 mm). According to Ortner, the former had been used by the US military up until the start of the Korean War in 1950, when its limited ability to perforate thick metal armor rendered it obsolete and it was replaced by the latter version. This distinction also points to the fact that the labeled depots for five and ten men were set up later, since they all only contained the larger and more modern version M.20A1. A similar pattern can be reconstructed through the explosives: only the labeled and “explosives only” caches contained the more modern version of C-4, while all other depots only carried the C-3²³⁶.

232 Regretfully, aside from noting that some of the depots had already been found by chance and subsequently cleared by Austrian authorities, the author of this essay did not provide further information on the fate of the “previously plundered” ones.

233 See Segur-Cabanac 1998, Erkenntnisse aus der Verteilung, p. 62.

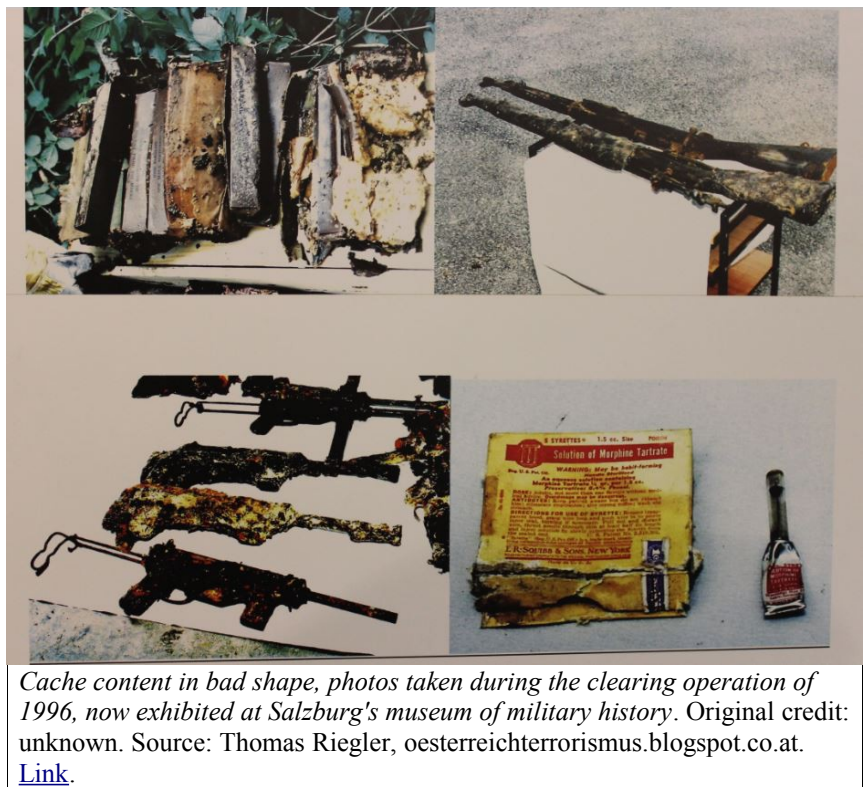
234 See Schadwasser 1998, Planungsphase und technische Durchführung der Bergungen, p. 69-70.

235 See Ortner 1998, Die amerikanischen Waffenlager in Österreich, p. 76-7.

236 According to Ortner, the fact that whoever actually filled these depots preferred burying gas lamps instead of electric reflectors is consistent with the absolute absence of any kind of electrical detonation devices for the massive amounts of explosives contained in the depots. Ortner explains this rather singular circumstance by citing an unspecified “American distrust towards either the storage durability or reliability of electrical materials”. While the latter motivation may not be excluded, the former does seem a lot more plausible and coherent with a wider time frame, stretching well into the 1960s, possibly even longer. See *ibid*, p. 81-4. See also Ortner 2005, Die amerikanischen Waffendepots, p. 163-4.

Last but not least, there were the non-military depots, comprised of gas lamps²³⁷ and an electromagnetic radio beacon (type AN/URC-4), which were also furnished with instruction manuals in German. This particular piece of equipment is generally used for the “homing” of airplanes: the device broadcasts a distinctive radio signal, which can be homed onto by incoming aircraft. Ortner furthermore notes that the German instruction manuals for the homing beacons were the only kind of manual or even description found across all depots. Despite the fact that some medical supplies were present inside virtually every cache, not even medical manuals were recovered²³⁸. In all labeled depots, the weapons and explosives were found within rubber sealed containers, which allowed for impeccable conservation for almost 50 years. While in all other depots the weaponry had been wrapped inside oiled paper and oilcloth, showing clear signs of corrosion in the late 1990s, according to Ortner most of the material could still be repaired²³⁹. Ortner furthermore suggested that while the labeled depots cannot be appropriately assigned to any of the regular units of the US regular forces, particularly due to their highly irregular endowment of explosives and suppressed pistols, they do correlate quite closely with the equipment of US Special Forces, and with their average operational strength²⁴⁰.

In his 1992 dissertation, historian Arnold Kopeczeck was able to trace over a dozen underground caches which had been uncovered in Austria during the Cold War. However, since most of the pertaining sources lacked the necessary degree of detail, it remains difficult to ascertain how many of them were part of the CIA's stock-piling program. Furthermore, one such example, dating back to the summer of 1955, is completely absent from his list, thereby raising further questions on its completeness. Since new evidence has surfaced among the sources evaluated for this research, this particular instance – which involved the plunder of two separate CIA depots near Hintersee (Salzburg) – will be dealt with individually in chapter nine.



237 Interestingly enough, for each of these gas lamps the depots also contained a cartridge, which in 1996 still bore the logo of the Viennese company “Flaga”.

238 See Ortner 1998, *Die amerikanischen Waffenlager in Österreich*, p. 84. In fact, aside from the improvement in the conservation methods, the only noteworthy difference indicated by the source evaluated by this narrative's author relates to the date of emplacement: all labeled caches were buried after 1953. See for example [case officer redacted]; March 1955; Status report – Project “GRCROOND” (p. 1). [Link](#) and Chief of Base (Salzburg); April 27th 1959; Dispatch EASA 5184 – Inventory of SOB Arms Caches (p. 1). [Link](#).

239 See Ortner 1998, *Die amerikanischen Waffenlager in Österreich*, p. 86. See also Ortner 2005, *Die amerikanischen Waffendepots*, p. 166.

240 See Ortner 1998, *Die amerikanischen Waffenlager in Österreich*, p. 86.

<i>Date of discovery</i>	<i>Site of discovery</i>	<i>Content found</i>
1954	Golling (Salzburg)	Undocumented
Summer 1958	Stadlpaura (Wels-Land)	9 submachine guns, 9 assault rifles and ammunition
Aug. 1 st 1965	Paternion (Villach-Land)	90kg explosives, detonators and fuses,
1965	[near] Loibl pass	Unspecified number of rations, explosives and fuses
1972	St. Pangratz (Krems)	100 M1 rifles, some machine guns, 13mm ammo-belts for machine guns
Mar. 15 th 1976	Micheldorf (Krems)	100 M1 rifles, some machine guns, 13mm ammo-belts for machine guns
Jun. 6 th 1977	Windischgarsten (Krems)	100 M1 rifles, some machine guns, 13mm ammo-belts for machine guns
Nov. 13 th 1982	Neuhaus (Baden)	Unspecified number of hand-grenades, explosives and detonators
Jul. 27 th 1987	Hochwald (Lilienfeld)	24 missiles for 8cm grenade launcher
Jul. 16 th 1987	St. Anton/Jessniz (Scheibbs)	150 missiles for 8cm grenade launcher, 11 bazookas, 26 rifle-attachment grenades and 40kg infantry munitions
Dec. 11 th 1988	Neunkirchen/Großvenediger (Zell am See)	312 hand-grenades, 297 teargas grenades, 150kg infantry ammo, 80 delayed detonators, 30kg of weapon parts, 20 time-fuses and 40kg of explosive gel
Feb. 2 nd 1989	Wals (Salzburg)	46 missiles for 37mm grenade launcher
Jun. 11 th 1989	Neunkirchen/Großvenediger (Zell am See)	2 bazookas, 33 missiles for them, 7 sub-machine guns, 1 assault-rifle, several detonators, 136 empty magazines for either sub-machine guns or assault rifles, 42 hand-grenades, 88kg TNT, 210kg infantry ammo, 40kg spare parts and 40kg transportation equipment

Arms caches uncovered in Austria during the Cold War, possibly emplaced by the CIA. Source: Kopeczek 1992, Fallbeispiele des Kalten Krieges, p. 54-55. Compare with Kemmerling 1996, Kaltes Kriegsspielzeug, p. 8. It should also be noted that this list purposefully excludes the more than thirty individual depots emplaced by the UK government across Carinthia, Burgenland and Vienna, most of which were recovered between the late Fifties and 1965. For more information on this topic, see Blasi/Etschmann 2005, Überlegungen zu den britischen Waffenlager, p. 139-54.

Historian Oliver Rathkolb rejected the idea of the CIA's depots in Austria being part of anything similar to the Italian stay behind network. In 1996 he argued that since no structural connection to the Austrian armed forces could be documented (such as in the Italian and German cases), the primary purpose of those weapons and equipment was to serve as backup for US special forces and paratroopers, and that the “native elements” of this network were not only of secondary importance, but even uncertain in their existence. His narrative revolved around operation *Easeful* – a guerrilla warfare training program jointly run by the CIA and the Department of the Army during the first half of the Fifties – which he described as the overall stay behind plan for Europe, as well as a sort of blank authorization for the CIA's caching programs²⁴¹. A year later, in the context of the publication of his dissertation in the form of a book, Rathkolb revisited the topic and added that since “Easeful” had been negotiated with the highest representatives of the Austrian government, the US stay behind networks north of the Alps could not be equated with Gladio²⁴². Conversely, by leaning heavily on the statements made by Simon Preston – a former MI6 agent – who admitted to have personally participated in the setting-up of some of the UK's depots²⁴³, Markus Kemmerling presented three possible scenarios to explain the caches uncovered and cleared in 1996: 1) part of Franz Olah's operation; 2) part of US stay behind operations;

241 See Kemmerling/Lajos 1996, Interview with Oliver Rathkolb, “Covert operations”, p. 10.

242 See Rathkolb 1997, Washington ruft Wien, p. 148.

243 For more information on Preston's testimony see Kemmerling 1996, Explosive Erdlöcher, p. 12 and 17. See also Ganser 2009, Secret Warfare in Neutral Austria, p. 11-2.

3) part of sabotage and guerrilla activities targeting eastern Europe²⁴⁴. Similarly, in a 2005 essay, Christian Ortner concluded that the only logical explanation for this relatively “small” amount of weapons and the rather large amount of explosives was a stay behind operation, targeted at the possibility of a shooting war in central Europe. He thereby rejected another popular theory at the time, which insisted on identifying the threat of a possible communist putsch or internal political unrest as the scenario for which these weapons had been originally stockpiled²⁴⁵.

The legal aspects of the affair were conclusively evaluated by Franz Cede, a senior diplomat and legal expert of the Austrian foreign ministry. According to Cede, the State Department argued that, despite having initially been the property of the US government, by the mid-Nineties all of the depots had fallen into “dereliction”, and were therefore to be considered *abandoned property*. Despite the absence of any further official explanation, the Austrian government ended up caving in on the issue, by adopting the same interpretation soon thereafter²⁴⁶. By referencing the bilateral treaty of September 26th 1955²⁴⁷, signed by Austria in the context of the US troop withdrawal, Cede summarized the argument as follows:



Cache content from the depots uncovered in 1996, now exhibited at Salzburg's museum of military history [undated]. Original source: Thomas Riegler. Source: oesterreichterrorismus.blogspot.co.at. [Link](#).

“Assuming that all acts and omissions relevant to the issue at hand took place during the time frame described in Article IV [the entire period of Austrian occupation until November 1955, ed. r.], it can be deduced that all of the Austrian Republic's claims against the United States, resulting from the emplacement, existence, and clearing of the weapons caches, fall under the general waiver of the September 26th 1955 Treaty²⁴⁸”.

244 See Kemmerling 1996, Explosive Erdlöcher, p. 15-7.

245 See Ortner 2005, Die amerikanischen Waffendepots, p. 167-8.

246 See Cede 1988, Die rechtlichen Aspekte, p. 8.

247 While this particular treaty was never published in the official gazette, its full title is listed on the website of the Austrian foreign ministry: “Abkommen zwischen den Vereinigten Staaten von Amerika und der Republik Österreich betreffend die Verfügung über gewisse Vermögensschaften der Vereinigten Staaten in Österreich” (Treaty between the United States of America and the Austrian Republic regarding the disposal of certain US' assets in Austria). See bmeia.gv.at, [Link](#).

248 Original: “Davon ausgehend, daß die maßgeblichen Handlungen bzw. Unterlassungen in dem gemäß Artikel IV erfaßten Zeitraum gesetzt wurden, ist daher zu folgern, daß Ansprüchen der Republik Österreich gegen die Vereinigten Staaten, die sich aus dem Anlegen, der Existenz sowie der Entsorgung der Waffenlager ergeben, unter den generellen Anspruchverzicht gemäß dem Abkommen vom 26. September 1955 fallen.” Cede 1988, Die rechtlichen Aspekte, p. 10.

5 Living on the border with the USSR

As already mentioned in the introduction, the aim of this chapter is to provide a *thick* description of the context in which the researched networks developed and operated in. For the sake of clarity, the narrative has been divided into the following four interconnected layers of context: geostrategic, political, socioeconomic, and intelligence related.

As noted by Austrian historian Erwin A. Schmidl, one should always bear in mind that being physically located directly on the border between conflicting systems of influence does have significant effects on one's own perception. While it may be argued that this concept does hold true in any larger context, its application to Austria's postwar context provides some prerequisite insights: compared to decision-makers in Washington, Paris, Brussels, London and Moscow, officials stationed in Austria (be they Austrian nationals or otherwise) tended to perceive threats and dangers as larger and more imminent than their own commanders and/or colleagues back in the respective capitals. On the one hand, individuals standing on the front lines do undoubtedly have a better view of the specific local developments, generally giving them the ability to foresee these developments a bit sooner. On the other hand, such individuals are usually so focused on the two squares lying right in front of them that they lack an overall perspective of the entire chessboard. In the context of the Cold War, such an overall perspective existed only in the core centers of power, mostly in the aforementioned capitals. Yet western-minded Austrians' main fear was not of a strict military nature, involving outright battles for the territory, but rather that the Soviets would be able to progressively take over power through other less-violent means, such as (rigged) elections and palace coups, as exemplified by the cases of Poland, Hungary and Czechoslovakia, all of which fell into the hands of communist administrations before or during mid-1948²⁴⁹.

A geostrategic perspective of Austria and central Europe

“Although re-established as an independent nation after World War II, Austria still suffers from the war's political and economic aftermath – aggravated by the East-West struggle which complicates the four-power occupation of the country – and remains economically dependent on foreign powers. Austria's relation to US security lies in: (a) its position, second only to Germany, as a critical point of contact in Central Europe between the Western Allies and the USSR; (b) its importance to US objectives throughout Western Europe; (c) its pivotal strategic location along the northern border of Italy, flanking Czechoslovakia and Germany and bordering the Balkans.”²⁵⁰

Immediately after the cessation of hostilities, the strategic priority of the Allies focused on the implementation of “de-nazification” measures, which naturally included the physical persecution and prosecution of selected war criminals, but also the disbandment of all the various party-linked structures and organizations of the Third Reich. In the American sector, and sometimes even beyond that, most of these measures were carried out by the Army's Counterintelligence Corps (henceforth CIC), which on many occasions also acted as the judge on

249 See Schmidl 2005, Österreich in Europa, p. 15.

250 Copy of: Central Intelligence Agency; May 1948; Report to the President SR-16 – Austria (p. 1 of summary). From Prof. Rathkolb's private archive.

whether certain documented war criminals were to be prosecuted, or to be employed²⁵¹. According to Austrian historian Siegfried Beer, the shift in the strategic priorities of US intelligence agencies took place in early 1948²⁵². American researcher James J. Carafano timed it even sooner:

“By May 1947 US Army intelligence concluded that its role in the process of denazification was all but complete. Thereafter, intelligence support for denazification became mostly passive, monitoring programs, preparing special reports and compiling statistical analysis²⁵³.”

In his evaluation of the earliest surviving US intelligence reports on postwar Austria, Carafano noted that the first ever report which singled out the USSR and the *Kommunistische Partei Österreichs* (Austrian communist party, henceforth KPÖ) as the most dangerous threats to the United States Forces in Austria (henceforth USFA) was issued on February 28th 1948. Soon after that, virtually all “intelligence” started pointing towards the subversive influence and activities of communists almost everywhere²⁵⁴.



Vienna, US military parade in front of the Hofburg, which back then was (also) the Soviet Officer's Club, [undated]. Original credit: Basch-Pressedienst, cited from: Bischof/Leidenfrost (ed.), 1988: Die bevormundete Nation, picture 40.

“What is most startling about the transition in the assessment of the Soviet and Communist threat between 1945 and 1948, is that by mid-1947 American forces began to highlight the kinds of Soviet and Communist behavior that had been all but ignored in the previous years of the occupation. In addition, previous acts were resurrected and reinterpreted as threats as well. Past intelligence was used to confirm a deliberate, aggressive pattern of Soviet intentions in Austria²⁵⁵.”

As one might expect, this shift did not take place in a vacuum, but was closely related to a similar shift taking place in the hierarchies of the USSR. “Both the coup in Prague, as well as June's crisis in Berlin had a profound impact on Austria's overall situation; not only did they sharpen the tone of the ideological opponents, but they also led to increased nervousness and overreactions by national security officials of both sides.²⁵⁶”

251 For more information on this particular issue, see this chapter's section on the political context as well as chapter six. For a more general overview of some of the most infamous Nazi informants ever employed by the CIC in Austria, see Beer 2000, *Rund um den “Dritten Mann”*, p. 88-9.

252 See *ibid*, p. 86-90.

253 Carafano 2000, *Deconstructing US Army Intelligence Operations*, p. 67-8. Compare with Kopeczek 2000, *Die amerikanischen Waffenlager*, p. 101.

254 See Carafano 2000, *Deconstructing US Army Intelligence Operations*, p. 69. At least two other factors undoubtedly contributed to this shift of western and Austrian priorities towards anti-communism: first and foremost the divisive implementation of the Marshall plan, and secondly the replacement of Heinrich Dürmayer with Oswald Peterlungen at the helm of the Austrian civilian intelligence agency (StaPo) in late 1947. For more information on these subjects, see this chapter's sections on the European Recovery Program (henceforth ERP) and on the Austrian political context, respectively.

255 *Ibid*, p. 71.

256 Original: “Wir wissen heute, dass 1948 das Schwellenjahr zum “Ersten Kalten Krieg” in Europa war. Für die Lage in Österreich waren vor allem der Putsch in Prag und die im Juni ausgebrochene Krise um Berlin prägend; sie verschärften nicht nur den Ton der ideologischen Gegner, sondern führten auch zu Nervosität und Überreaktionen im Verhalten der sicherheitspolitischen Kader

Almost as a reaction to the takeovers in Warsaw, Budapest and Prague, the US introduced the Marshall plan in Western Europe, which right away had to prove its level of commitment in keeping Berlin afloat during its blockade between 1948 and 1949²⁵⁷. On the other hand, these new sources of tensions were somewhat offset by the developments in the relationship between Moscow and Tito, the communist leader of the Yugoslavian state. Following his 1948 request for American financial aid, his relationship with Stalin broke off almost instantly, leading to a relaxation of tensions in the borderlands with both Austria and Italy, but thereby also changing the strategic value of what was generally referred to as the “Italo-Austrian bridgehead”. Back then, most western decision-makers interpreted this Alpine pathway – leading from central Europe to Trieste – as the only plausible land path for Soviet tanks to reach Italy. This in turn led the western Allies to reevaluate Austria's strategic role upwards, at least for the feared case of all-out war against Moscow²⁵⁸.

It has been argued that contemporary western decision-makers considered the eventuality of communist coup attempts in Vienna as a serious threat, for which preparations had to be made²⁵⁹. Beer was even able to uncover the records of a meeting for one such plot, which involved a number of KPÖ's policymakers and mid-level Soviet functionaries stationed in Austria, and which dated back to late 1947. However, Beer also specifically highlighted the fact that such conspiracies did not reflect the strategic priorities of Moscow's upper echelons:

“Even though we now know that neither the Soviet Government nor the Soviet Party leadership in Moscow had plans for orchestrating a putsch in Austria, top- and middle-echelon KPÖ-functionaries, perhaps even under encouragement from Soviet high-ranking military personnel stationed in Vienna and in the Russian zone, entertained thoughts and probably also wishes of forcefully grabbing power in Austria, in the hope or expectation that Soviet forces in the country would then lend their support.”²⁶⁰

As already mentioned in the preceding section, officials in Washington didn't usually agree with the threat-assessments given by officials in Austria, as shown by the following passage of a CIA report on Austria for President Truman, dated May 1948:

“From the Soviet point of view a *putsch* or a forced partition would seem undesirable because it would: (a) forfeit Western Austria to the US, UK and France, thereby delaying and perhaps damaging Soviet chances of absorbing all of Austria; (b) as a further evidence of Soviet expansionism, unnecessarily antagonize the US; (c) prolong Western occupation in a strategically important area of Europe; and (d) deprive Soviet-operated industries in eastern Austria of valuable sources of raw materials and semi-finished goods in the western zones of Austria.”²⁶¹

auf beiden Seiten”. Beer 2000, Rund um den “Dritten Mann”, p. 90. For more information on both the coup in Prague and the blockade of Berlin, see Bischof 1988, »Prag liegt westlich von Wien«, p. 317-23 and p. 324-31, respectively.

257 See Schmidl 2005, Österreich in Europa, p. 19. See also Schmidl 2000, “Rosinenbomber über Wien”, p. 177-8 and 184-5.

258 After the death of Stalin in 1953 and the resolution of the Trieste issue in 1954, Tito de facto returned to the Soviet fold, thereby reversing virtually all of the strategic considerations that his decisions had caused in the first place. See Schmidl 2005, Österreich in Europa, p. 20 and Riegler 2016, Strukturen für den geheimen Krieg, p. 666-70.

259 See Schmidl 2000, “Rosinenbomber über Wien”, p. 176.

260 Beer 2016, “Planned Communist Insurrection in Austria”, p. 689.

261 Copy of: Central Intelligence Agency; May 1948; Report to the President SR-16 – Austria (p. 2 of summary). From Prof. Rathkolb's private archive.

Despite the several other new peaks in Cold War tensions, such as the first successful nuclear experiment of the Soviet Union in 1949, the very same assessment was given again some fifteen months later in a similar report for the president²⁶². Unsurprisingly, this didn't stop some of the key western military planners from concocting contingency plans for larger Soviet attacks. In an operational overview sent by USAF Headquarters to Washington, dated May 11th 1949, regarding the plans prepared for the event of a Soviet aggression in Austria, it is clear that Allied forces did not intend to put up a fight to defend the country. All plans included a full-scale withdrawal of troops from eastern Austria and Trieste to the Brenta-Piave area in northern Italy²⁶³.

“Austrian military experts regard the eastern two thirds of Austria as militarily indefensible in major conflict. Furthermore, the area west of Salzburg could only be held with considerable outside assistance²⁶⁴.”

Aside from confirming the withdrawal of troops, one of the versions – the one code-named “Pilgrim Charlie”, dated May 23rd – made the first ever mentioning of local “partisans”. It explicitly authorized unit commanders to make the following choices: “Commanders may accept the support of Austrian Partisans” and “Supplies which cannot be transported will be destroyed, abandoned, or turned over to Austrian Partisans.”²⁶⁵ By December the “Pilgrim Dog” plan, which had originally been proposed by the French, attributed even more significance to the native resistance element, calling among other things for the organized mass mobilization of as many “Austrian combatants” as possible²⁶⁶.

These evacuation plans for Austria did not just include foreign military forces and local high-level dignitaries, but also the largest number possible of WWII veterans. For the purpose of reorganization, the latter were first to be transferred to Italy, or even North Africa if necessary, in order to make a later military contribution to the liberation of central Europe²⁶⁷. However, Washington's plans for this liberation relied heavily on the deployment of nuclear explosives and bombardments. In this and other regards, the US's strategic planning started to change only after the establishment of the Western Union Defense Organization (henceforth WUDO) in 1948 and particularly that of NATO in 1949. Schmidl argued that this shift was the main result of the joint formulation of the defense plans drawn up jointly by both Americans and Europeans, and that the latter

262 “While the course of action which the USSR will follow toward Austria is uncertain, at present it is unlikely that the Soviet Union intends to partition the country. Soviet decision in this respect would presumably be determined largely by its over-all European strategy which is presently directed towards avoiding the risk of war and increasing east-west trade rather than by negligible factors involved in the local Austrian situation.” Copy of: Central Intelligence Agency; August 31st 1949; Report to the President ORE 56-49 – The current situation in Austria (p. 3-4). From Prof. Rathkolb's private archive.

263 See copy of: USAF Headquarters; May 11th 1949; Report to JCS – CINCEUR orders in the event of Soviet aggression. From Prof. Rathkolb's private archive. In all of the “Pilgrim” contingency plans, that is *Able*, *Baker*, *Charlie* and *Dog*, prepared for the eventuality of a Soviet push towards northern Italy (either from Austria or from Yugoslavia), Allied troops were to withdraw to either Trieste or north-western Italy. Only afterwards were the preparations for a counterattack to take place, while in the meantime guerrilla warfare units and local partisans would sabotage and delay the Soviets' advance. See Riegler 2015, “Die Rössner-Soucek-Verschörung”, p. 57 and Thomas Riegler, October 1st 2015, “Sorry guys, no gold” on oesterreichterrorismus.blogspot.co.at. [Link](#). See also Zellhofer 2003, *Diener zweier Herren*, p. 94 and CIA [author redacted]; June 24th 1953; Dispatch EAVW-1466 – GRCROOND - Paramilitary (p. 3). [Link](#).

264 Copy of: Geoffrey Keyes; November 11th 1949; Report n. P 4300 to JCS and Departments of Army and State – Follow-up to P 3971 on Austrian neutrality (p. 3). From Prof. Rathkolb's private archive.

265 Copy of: USAF Headquarters; May 23rd 1949; Report – Brief of “Pilgrim Charlie” (p. 3 and 4). From Prof. Rathkolb's private archive.

266 See copy of: Geoffrey Keyes; December 22nd 1949; Report to JCS – Allied Plans in the event of an aggression, operation plan “Pilgrim Dog” (p. 2). From Prof. Rathkolb's private archive. See also Schmidl 2000, “Rosinenbomber über Wien”, p. 175.

267 For more information on this topic, see the next section of this chapter.

were far less inclined to follow the aforementioned strategy²⁶⁸. As already briefly described in chapter three, during the late Forties and early Fifties, the successful rigging of Italy's first postwar parliamentary elections convinced key officials in Washington of the effectiveness of such covert operations, even in times of "peace". As noted by Austrian researcher Christian Ostermann, among several other places this policy shift manifested itself also in NSC directive 68, dated April 14th 1950, approximately one month prior to the outbreak of the Korean War. Aside from calling for an overall expansion of the US armed forces and its allies, this directive also sought the "intensification of affirmative and timely measures and operations by covert means in the fields of economic warfare and political and psychological warfare with a view to fomenting and supporting unrest and revolt in selected strategic satellite countries"²⁶⁹.

Despite the fact that by mid-1950, both the CIA and other American intelligence agencies reported a substantial decrease in troops in the Soviet sector of Austria²⁷⁰:

"The Joint Chiefs were still convinced that the USSR was actively planning to include Austria in its sphere of influence, and that such a profound defeat would have constituted a serious threat to the security of NATO. This means that by 1953 Austria was an integral part of NATO defensive plans – it seems it was supposed to be a delaying element, though. The plan also sought to reinforce Italy's northern border with troops stationed in the Trieste area²⁷¹".

This version of military planning remained substantially unchanged even after the complete withdrawal of all occupation forces in October 1955, as attested by James Lay's NSC policy paper concerning "U.S. Objectives and Policies with respect to Austria". The only major difference was that the "center of resistance" in western Austria would have been operated primarily by the Austrian armed forces, instead of the occupation armies; leaving the main strategic result largely unchanged. "The Austrian Army as it is now constituted and envisaged for the future is expected to be capable of maintaining internal security and it is hoped that it can delay any Soviet attack long enough to enable NATO forces in cooperation with the Austrian Army to hold the western part of Austria including key passes into Italy²⁷²".

"[T]he conclusion of the State Treaty and the [international, ed. r.] recognition of Austria's neutrality – even by the US administration – did not guarantee the future independence and neutrality of the Austrian Republic's foreign policy. While the restrictions relating to the occupation were formally lifted, other means of exerting both political and economic influence ended up replacing them²⁷³".

268 See Schmidl 2000, "Rosinenbomber über Wien", p. 174-5. With the establishment of NATO, and particularly of the Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR) in 1951, questions started to arise about whether USFA units were subjected to the newly founded authority. A state department memo dated July 6th of that year did not really clarify the issue by stating that the post affected US forces in Austria only "in the event of hostilities and for planning purposes." Harrison F. Matthews; July 6th 1951; Memo for James S. Lay, Jr. – Third Progress Report on NSC 38/4 and NSC 38/6 (p. 1). [Link](#).

269 NSC 68, April 14th 1950, cited from Ostermann 1998, Geheimdienstlichen Aktionen, p. 46.

270 See Rathkolb 1988, Von der Besatzung zur Neutralität, p. 387.

271 Original: "Nach wie vor waren die Vereinigten Stabschefs davon überzeugt, daß die Sowjetunion Österreich in ihre Einfluß-sphäre einbinden wolle und daß ein derart tiefer Verlust eine gravierende militärische Bedrohung der NATO darstellen wurde. Das heißt, daß 1953 Österreich direkt in die NATO-Verteidigungsplanung eingeplant war – jedoch scheinbar als Verzögerungs-element. Überdies war geplant, Streitkräfte aus dem Raum Triest zur Stärkung der Italienischen Nordgrenze zu verlegen." Rathkolb 1998, Österreich in den strategischen Planungen der USA, p. 38. See also FRUS 1952-1954, Vol. VII, Part. 2, p. 1943.

272 Copy of: State Department; March 6th 1956; NSC policy draft – U.S. Objectives and Policies with respect to Austria; attached to letter by James S. Lay to the Executive Office of the President (p. 10). From Prof. Rathkolb's private archive.

273 Original: "[...] daß mit dem Abschluß des Staatsvertrages und der Anerkennung der Neutralität – auch durch die USA – die

Historian Oliver Rathkolb was able to convincingly argue that the Austrian government – despite making a number of military purchases from the USSR, which led to some degree of criticism from Washington – never came anywhere close to the bipolar armament policy practiced in Finland. In fact, statements written by the Austrian Desk of the State Department seemed to interpret the purchases as a necessary act, part of the larger facade of its *everlasting neutrality*²⁷⁴. Following the conclusion of the Austrian Treaty²⁷⁵, Moscow had more than one reason to keep a watchful eye on Austria's interpretation of its neutrality: first and foremost because of its geographic position, constituting a bridge between the central area (West Germany) and the southern flank of NATO (Italy). Secondly, the USSR wanted to make an example out of the Austrian case, not just for Germany, but also for other central and eastern European countries. Yet, less than three years later, an overt diplomatic incident occurred in the context of the so-called “Lebanon crisis” of 1958, which has since been used to argue against the actual neutrality of the Austrian government's foreign policy. This incident revolved around a breach of Austrian airspace by US/NATO military aircraft which, without prior authorization, were carrying either weapons or other military equipment. According to Austrian historian Walter Blasi, this manifestation of Austria's helplessness in the defense of its own airspace led to the de facto correction of Vienna's own interpretation of its neutrality, “ultimately determining the future course of Austrian neutrality and foreign policy²⁷⁶”.

Behind the curtains of the political theater, certain leading figures of the Austrian government proved to be dissatisfied with Washington's reduction in military aid, as well as with some of the most stringent clauses of the Treaty, which forbade Vienna from acquiring specific weapons systems, such as guided missiles. For example, behind close doors the defense minister of the time, Ferdinand Graf, even appeared to argue for a top-level structural link between Austrian and NATO troops, falling just short of saying this in so many words²⁷⁷.

Prior to investigating the political layer of Austria's postwar context, the following excursus is focused on distinguishing the US stay behind networks in the Alpine republic, and other more-or-less similar secret military dealings between Washington and Vienna which took place during the early Cold War.

10.000 Carbines
10.000 Sub-machine guns
32 (77mm) field artillery guns
24 (105mm) howitzers
32 (120mm) mortars
28 (T-34) tanks
2 wrecker tanks (with crane)
8 (JAK 18) training airplanes.

The USSR's military deliveries to Austria in 1955. Source: copy of: Bundeskanzleramt; October 6th 1955; List, GZ 325.273-POL/55 – Sowjetische Waffenlieferungen an Österreich (Soviet military deliveries to Austria). From prof. Rathkolb's private archive.

künftige selbstständige und neutrale Außenpolitik der Republik Österreich nicht in toto gewährleistet war. Die Restriktionen der Besatzung wurden zwar formal aufgehoben, doch durch andere Mittel, politischen und wirtschaftlichen Einfluß auf Österreich auszuüben, ersetzt.” Rathkolb 1988, Von der Besatzung zur Neutralität, p. 398.

274 See Rathkolb 1997, Washington ruft Wien, p. 154.

275 Given that the Austrian State Treaty of 1955 and the long and complex process of negotiation that preceded it have both been studied extensively, this topic has been purposefully omitted from the narrative. For more information, see for example Rathkolb 1988, Von der Besatzung zur Neutralität, p. 371-401 and Schmidl 2000, “Rosinenbomber über Wien”, p. 171-92.

276 Original: “Letzlich war es dieses Ereignis, das die künftige Linie der österreichischen Regierung bestimmte”. Blasi 2000, Die Libanonkrise 1958, p. 239. For more information on the incident itself see Ibid. p. 244-56. For a rather clear example of this relationship of informal political dependency between Washington and Vienna, see the negotiations pertaining to both Austria's oil-related assets and the issue of Jewish property, which stretched into the early 1960s. See Rathkolb 1997, Washington ruft Wien, p. 163-75 and p. 227-32.

277 On June 3rd 1957 Graf met Gen. Lauris Norstad, who was from November 1956 to January 1963 the incumbent SACEUR, at the residence of the Italian ambassador Alessandrini. During their private conversation, Graf spoke both about Austria's defensive planning, as well as about the build-up of the Austrian armed forces; on both topics Norstad refused to make any concessions, consistently pointing to the US embassy in Vienna as Graf's “appropriate” interlocutor. See Lauris Norstad; June 4th 1957; Memo for the record – Graf meeting of June 3rd. [Link](#).

Excursus: distinction between *stay behind* and other covert plans

During the early Cold War, besides the stay behind networks, Austrian officials actively took part in the establishment of other covert defensive strategies. Two of the best documented examples of such plans are commonly referred to as *B-Gendarmerie* (sometimes also called “operation Kismet²⁷⁸”) and *Aufgebot*. The former was a secret militarization program, which sought to establish “alarm battalions” within the federal police force, which back then was called Gendarmerie.

“The idea of training a cadre for the future army within the police was originally suggested to Headquarters USFA by Julius Deutsch, Socialist Party leader and member of the Austrian two-party military planning committee [...]. Each battalion would be composed of about 500 men, and would include scout and motorized infantry units, [...]. Gendarmes would be supplied with uniform American arms and ammunition, initially from British stockpiles of lend-lease equipment²⁷⁹.”

Following the gradual expansion and equipment of these battalions, which lasted from the late Forties until 1955, these units ended forming the pre-existing core the *Österreichisches Bundesheer* (Austrian Armed Forces, henceforth ÖBH), particularly with regards to the upper echelon of the military hierarchy²⁸⁰. The second aforementioned example may be described as plans for the formation of an Austrian expeditionary force, mainly composed of WWII veterans. These plans involved the establishment of “Wehrmeldeämter” (military registration offices) in each of the six western-controlled provinces, which ultimately were expected to collect and update personal data on tens of thousands of Austrian veterans. This data was then to be used to select a large number of “trustworthy” potential soldiers who, in case of open military confrontation with the USSR, were to be evacuated to Italy or even Northern Africa if necessary, only to then take part in NATO's broader strategy to reconquer the occupied territories²⁸¹.

As noted by historian Thomas Riegler, the establishment of the US's stay behind operations in Austria took place in the same context of the other aforementioned secret militarization programs. Taken together, these three plans clearly document how the government of the Austrian republic ended up positioning itself as a “secret ally of the West”, rather than a neutral country, well before the stipulation of the State Treaty. However, due to the limitations self-imposed by the author in chapter two, the issues of the *B-Gendarmerie* and *Aufgebot*²⁸² will be largely omitted from here on, with the narrative looking at the period from a more political perspective.

278 See Kemmerling 1996, Interview with Christian Stifter, p. 20-9.

279 Copy of: John G. Erhardt; September 21st 1948; Foreign Service Despatch n. 416 – Preparation for Austrian Army (p. 1). From Prof. Rathkolb's private archive.

280 “In order to facilitate a more rapid army organization, and mitigate any possibility that an Austrian force capable of maintaining internal security would not be immediately available following quadripartite troop withdrawal, western occupation authorities are currently engaged in training and equipping a gendarmerie regiment in the Western zones. This force could form the nucleus for the future army.” Copy of: Central Intelligence Agency; August 31st 1949; Report to the President ORE 56-49 – The current situation in Austria (p. 10). From Prof. Rathkolb's private archive.

281 It remains unclear whether the information gathered by these military registration offices was ever handed over to CIA operatives and informants, in order to then be used as a basis for choosing the “native elements” of the US' stay behind networks in Austria. By stating that the information gathered within those files, which accounted for tens of thousands of WWII Austrian veterans, did not correlate with the amount of weapons found in the CIA depots, Oliver Rathkolb argued against this otherwise plausible possibility. See Rathkolb 1997, *Washington ruft Wien*, p. 150.

282 For a recent overview of the available information on these subjects, see Riegler 2016, *Strukturen für den geheimen Krieg*, p. 665-7.

The political context

Most Austrians trace the origins of the postwar Alpine republic back to the Moscow Declaration, originally signed by the foreign ministers of the Soviet Union, the US, and the UK on October 30th 1943²⁸³. Aside from the section on Austria, Italy featured prominently in the largest section of the document, which stated “that Fascism and all its evil influence and configuration shall be completely destroyed and that the Italian people shall be given every opportunity to establish governmental and other institutions based on democratic principles.” As a rather conspicuous result of the secret negotiations in London, and of the armistice of September 8th, no mention was made of Italy's responsibility for the war. On the other hand, the Austrian section of the declaration consists of only four sentences which – depending on the readers – tended to receive unequal amounts of attention.

“The governments of the United Kingdom, the Soviet Union and the United States of America are agreed that Austria, the first free country to fall a victim to Hitlerite aggression, shall be liberated from German domination.

They regard the annexation imposed on Austria by Germany on March 15, 1938, as null and void. They consider themselves as in no way bound by any charges effected in Austria since that date. They declare that they wish to see re-established a free and independent Austria and thereby to open the way for the Austrian people themselves, as well as those neighboring States which will be face[d] with similar problems, to find that political and economic security which is the only basis for lasting peace.

Austria is reminded, however that she has a responsibility, which she cannot evade, for participation in the war at the side of Hitlerite Germany, and that in the final settlement account will inevitably be taken of her own contribution to her liberation.²⁸⁴”

Even though most contemporary Austrians were well aware of the existence of the Moscow Declaration, as well as that it proclaimed the reestablishment of the prewar borders, the last sentence of the section was rarely raised as a topic for conversation. According to historian Manfred Rauchensteiner, while it is difficult to argue that the few concrete actions undertaken by Austrian resistance on the side of the Allies may be interpreted as the country's “own contribution to her liberation”, this very document laid the foundations on which Austria's first generation of postwar politicians staked their initially precarious authority. Karl Renner – the country's first head of state – even went on to reference it explicitly in the republic's declaration of independence from Germany²⁸⁵. As opposed to most other officials, at times Soviet representatives continued to make reference to the importance of the Moscow Declaration when discussing issues relating to Austria, even after the start of quadripartite occupation. Remarks on the scanty progress achieved in the de-nazification of Austria were often accompanied by explicit references to the clause proclaiming the Alpine republic to be jointly responsible for the war²⁸⁶.

Despite being rather similar, the quadripartite occupation of Germany and Austria did manifest certain substantial differences. One of the best examples of such differences turned out to be the jointly administrated

283 For the entire English version of the text of the Moscow Declaration, October 30th 1943, see [Link](#).

284 Moscow Declaration on Austria, October 30th 1943, see [Link](#).

285 See Rauchensteiner 2016, *Totgeglaubte leben lang*, p. 533-6.

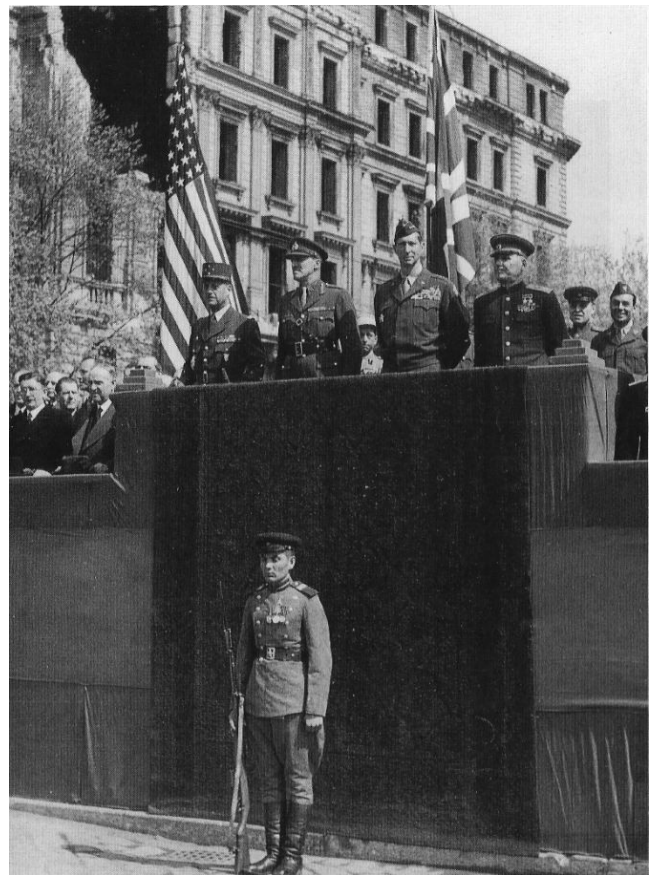
286 See *ibid*, p. 542-5.

center of Vienna, which is the city's 1st district. Here, even during the hottest phases of the early Cold War, the four powers took regularly scheduled turns in occupying the chairmanship of the Viennese Allied Council, thereby also causing the local administration in the city center to rotate accordingly. In this regard, historian Erwin Schmidl even argued that this specific aspect of the Austrian occupation has contributed to the development of relatively divergent feelings towards the Allied powers: while in Germany, particularly after the 1948 blockade of Berlin, the locals used to split the occupiers into the “three [good] Allies” and the “evil enemy in the east”; Austrians tended to describe all “four Allies” as more or less unwelcome. He furthermore argues that this difference is consistent with what he terms the “current sensitivity on the issue of neutrality.”²⁸⁷

Unlike in Italy, the *Kommunistische Partei Österreichs* (Austrian communist party, henceforth KPÖ) did not manage to achieve political significance, at least not through the polls: in the first parliamentary elections of November 1945, they netted only about 5% of the consensus.

The possibility of rigging the elections enough so as to transform that result into a majority of seats seemed far-stretched even for contemporary conspiracy theorists. This meant that – from a western-aligned perspective – the only “real” danger was a communist putsch in Vienna, even though most historians agree that Soviet intentions were not as aggressive as painted by most officials at the time²⁸⁸. Other main differences developed among the policies practiced in the four Austrian sectors: for instance, Soviet officials usually preferred to keep a tight overview, but they mostly stayed out of the day-to-day administration²⁸⁹. On the other hand, the western Allies – and the US in particular – tended to engage in a more detailed control of their sectors, and did not shy from intervening directly if deemed necessary²⁹⁰. Unlike the B-Gendarmerie battalions mentioned in the preceding section, which were distributed among the three western sectors, but were ostensibly secret, major factories and infrastructures in the eastern sector were protected by overtly organized units of factory guards, commonly referred to as “*Werkschutz*“. Despite the fact that some contemporaries continued to consider these units as a noteworthy threat, the CIA did not seem to share this assessment, at least until mid-1949.

“Communist para-military organizations and the Soviet-controlled *Werkschutz* (factory guards) do not



Vienna, the Allied Council, Béthouart (FR), McCreery (GB), Clark (USA), and Konjew (SU), April 13th 1946. Original credit: Österreichische Nationalbibliothek – Bildarchiv, cited from: Bischof/Leidenfrost (ed.), 1988: Die bevormundete Nation, picture 44.

²⁸⁷ Schmidl 2005, *Österreich in Europa*, p. 12 and footnote 3.

²⁸⁸ See *ibid.*, p. 16.

²⁸⁹ “The USSR has not seized complete control over the eastern zone, and the general mildness of the occupation has encouraged the Austrians to be outspoken and self-reliant.” Copy of: Central Intelligence Agency; August 31st 1949; Report to the President ORE 56-49 – The current situation in Austria (p. 1). From Prof. Rathkolb's private archive.

²⁹⁰ See Schmidl 2005, *Österreich in Europa*, p. 13. For a general overview of the different US authorities operating in occupied Austria, see Mähr 1988, *Der Marshallplan in Österreich*, p. 248-51.

constitute a serious threat to internal security, either now or following quadripartite troop withdrawal, provided that no large-scale aggression is launched from Soviet-controlled areas.²⁹¹

Nonetheless, as early as October 1948, the leaderships of the two major Austrian parties, the socialists (Sozialistische Partei Österreichs, henceforth SPÖ) and the conservatives (Österreichische Volkspartei, henceforth ÖVP)²⁹², started to discuss their respective plans for the event of a communist putsch. According to the protocol of a high-level meeting held on October 15th 1948, one of an apparently small number to have been held, the SPÖ and ÖVP leaderships exchanged views on the topic of the Soviet threat and the relatively under-equipped nature of the Austrian police forces. Socialist leaders argued that “the resistance should be organized within the respective *camps*²⁹³.” The Chancellor and leader of the ÖVP of the time, Leopold Figl, responded that, despite sharing the concerns over Soviet and/or communist threats, his party strictly rejected the establishment of any form of party militia, whether in uniform, armed or otherwise²⁹⁴. All details concerning the possible defensive strategies were then delegated to a six-strong team, composed of Ferdinand Graf, Julius Raab and Alfons Gorbach for the ÖVP and Oskar Helmer, Julius Deutsch and Hans Brachmann for the SPÖ²⁹⁵. Given the high-level nature of this meeting, as well as the fact that no references were made to either the concept of neutrality, or to Austria's hypothetical military contribution towards repelling the feared Soviet aggression, it may be argued that both of these ideas probably developed at a later point in time²⁹⁶. However, this meeting should also be placed in the context of the wave of arrests and outright kidnappings made by Soviet security forces in 1947-8. As already mentioned in chapter four, Margarethe Ottillinger, who was identified by Fritz Molden as being part of the Austrian stay behind planning, was only one case among hundreds of similar ones²⁹⁷. According to Edda Engelke, one of the first researchers to study the files relating to

291 Copy of: Central Intelligence Agency; August 31st 1949; Report to the President ORE 56-49 – The current situation in Austria (p. 10). From Prof. Rathkolb's private archive.

292 For a short overview of the re-foundation and development of the major Austrian political parties in the immediate postwar period see Kopeczek 2000, *Die amerikanischen Waffenlager*, p. 102-5.

293 Original: “Da die Polizei nicht entsprechend bewaffnet ist, sollte man den Widerstand im eigenen Lager organisieren.” Adolf Schärf, October 15th 1948; cited from copy of: Felix Hurdens; October 15th 1948; Niederschrift – Besprechungen mit Vertretern der SPÖ (Meeting with SPÖ's representatives); as attachment to letter by Hurdens to Figl (p. 1 of attachment). From Prof. Rathkolb's private archive.

294 This position reflects the awareness that internal party militias constituted one of the main elements which led to the disintegration of Austria's interwar republic. This assessment was even shared by the CIA in mid-1948, see copy of: Central Intelligence Agency; May 1948; Report to the President SR-16 – Austria (p. I-1 and I-2). From Prof. Rathkolb's private archive.

295 See copy of: Felix Hurdens; October 15th 1948; Niederschrift – Besprechungen mit Vertretern der SPÖ (Meeting with SPÖ's representatives); as attachment to letter by Hurdens to Figl (p. 2 of attachment). From Prof. Rathkolb's private archive.

296 The earliest documentable reference that the author found to the idea of Austrian neutrality dates back to early November 1949, and is contained in a message sent to Washington by Gen. Geoffrey Keyes – the then-commander of USFA. In this report Gen. Keyes informed the JCS of the troubling rumors spread by French commander Béthouart, concerning the talks he and other French officials had recently held with Karl Renner, Leopold Figl, Karl Gruber, and Julius Deutsch. “These talks have shown a new tendency in the minds of the Austrian leaders who wish their country to adopt a neutral attitude which is certainly chimerical and moreover dangerous by the spirit of concession it shows which would certainly grow if the Western Allies do not react to it.” Copy of: Geoffrey Keyes; November 3rd 1949; Report n. P 3971 to JCS and Departments of Army and State – Béthouart's memo (p. 1). From Prof. Rathkolb's private archive. In a follow-up report, agreed upon by then-US ambassador Erhardt, Gen. Keyes reassured the JCS and other officials that “we can continue to rely upon Austria's pro western orientation without the necessity of exacting formal pledges while still occupied.” This second report then goes on to note that individual outbursts of neutrality rhetoric by selected Austrian leaders are but a requirement of *realpolitik*, and that “Austria's foreign policy has [actually, ed. r.] been decidedly pro western.” Copy of: Geoffrey Keyes; November 11th 1949; Report n. P 4300 to JCS and Departments of Army and State – Follow-up to P 3971 on Austrian neutrality (p. 1-2). From Prof. Rathkolb's private archive.

297 For a short overview of the events leading up to and including the wave of arrests of 1948, including some details regarding Margarethe Ottillinger, see Beer 2000, *Rund um den “Dritten Mann”*, p. 86-7; Kopeczek 2000, *Die amerikanischen Waffenlager*, p. 113.

the aforementioned arrests in Moscow's archives, almost all of these Austrian nationals were formally charged with espionage against the USSR. In most cases, the details mentioned in the reports support the idea that some of the defendants actually were spying for the west, but there are also some instances where no apparent justification can be found²⁹⁸.

This initial period of the occupation was furthermore characterized by an internal power struggle, which took place within the fledgling security apparatus of the Alpine republic. In recognition of their crucial contributions to the wartime anti-Nazi resistance, the KPÖ was awarded the post of minister of the interior in the transitional cabinet prior to the November 1945 elections, to which it then appointed Franz Körner. Before being forced to step down from office due to his party's meager results at the polls, Körner in turn appointed the first postwar head of the *Staatspolizei* (Austrian civilian intelligence service, henceforth StaPo²⁹⁹). In this position, Heinrich Dürmayer – who among other things had fought in the Spanish Civil War and had survived Nazi imprisonment – spearheaded the country's de-nazification efforts. Despite the change in leadership within the ministry of the interior, which was then led by Oskar Helmer (SPÖ, minister of the interior until 1959) and Ferdinand Graf (ÖVP, undersecretary of the interior until 1955, then minister of defense), Dürmayer continued his fight against “all forms of extremism³⁰⁰”. According to his own statements, in late 1947, both Helmer and foreign minister Karl Gruber practically forced him to step down from office, officially by transferring him to Salzburg, and replacing him with Oswald Peterlungen. According to historian Arnold Kopeczek, both Helmer and Graf grew to trust the newly appointed head of the StaPo so much that – to use a term currently widespread in the US – he soon became the *counterintelligence czar* of the Austrian government, and retained this position for decades on end. Austrian researcher Thomas Riegler argued that, despite the immediate shift in priorities towards the containment of communist influence, most of the staff continued to be aligned towards communist ideals – or even to be KPÖ card-carrying members – for quite some time, eventually causing the agency to become known as a “moles' stronghold”³⁰¹. However, this didn't last too long:

“According to the available information, the cooperation between the StaPo and western intelligence agencies – both during and after the occupation period – was very tight. The intensity of the contacts ranged from acquiescence, particularly towards the US and UK intelligence services, all the way to the active support of western agencies in the cases where they themselves could not be effective³⁰².”

In accordance with the Austrian political traditions of social partnership and bipartisan coalitions,

298 See Engelke 2000, Zum Thema Spionage, p. 121-2.

299 It should be borne in mind that, until the 1954 establishment of the *Gruppe Nachrichtenwesen* (Austrian military intelligence, GNw), the StaPo constituted the only agency of the Austrian government formally tasked with intelligence gathering operations. For more information on the development of the Austrian military intelligence, see the last section of this chapter.

300 Heinrich Dürmayer (1991), cited from Kopeczek 1992, Fallbeispiele des Kalten Krieg, Annex III.

301 Riegler 2015, “Die Rössner-Soucek-Verschwörung”, p. 69, footnote 3. In recognition of this problem, among other things Helmer authorized the retention/reintegration of ministry and police staff who fell under the category of so-called “Minderbelastete” (lesser offenders during the Nazi regime), thereby securing not only a strongly anti-communist group within Austrian security personnel, but also his own personal reputation as a friend of nationalist circles. See Kopeczek 2000, Die amerikanischen Waffenlager, p. 109.

302 Original: “Soweit sich das feststellen lässt, war die Zusammenarbeit der österreichischen Staatspolizei mit westlichen Nachrichtendiensten während der Besatzungszeit – und wohl auch danach – sehr eng. Die Intensität der Kontakte reichte von der Duldung der Tätigkeit vor allem der US-amerikanischen und britischen Nachrichtendienste bis zur Unterstützung westlicher Dienste in Fällen, wo diese selbst in Österreich in aktiv werden konnten.” Ibid, p. 116-7.

negotiations concerning collective bargaining agreements took place regularly, under the leadership of the federal government itself. Employers and employees – as represented by the Österreichischer Gewerkschaftsbund (Austrian trade unions federation, henceforth, ÖGB) – thereby practically managed the standards of living of most of the population, for example by negotiating on the incidence of inflation on wages. According to historian Siegfried Beer, it may be argued that, after 1948, the balance reached in these agreements between wages and corporate profits constituted a direct result of the policy directives of the Economic Coordination Administration (the agency of the US government responsible for the implementation of the Marshall plan, henceforth ECA)³⁰³. Due to a number of reasons, Vienna found itself in 1949 with a massive hole in its federal budget, a two-billion schilling deficit³⁰⁴.

“Partly in an effort to bring the budget into balance, a far-reaching wage-price fiscal agreement was enacted into law in June 1949 and is now being implemented. The new measures provide for a stoppage of all Federal Government subsidies on such items as coal, public utilities and transportation tariffs. [...] In partial compensation for the expected increase in cost of living (official index) a general wage and salary increase was ordered, amounting to about 8.5 percent. Despite this increase, real wages have [further, ed. r.] declined³⁰⁵”.

On September 25th 1950, it became known that ÖGB leadership planned to sign off on the fourth such agreement on the very next day, without even informing – let alone asking – the union's own membership base, and this triggered preparations for what became arguably the largest strike in Austrian postwar history³⁰⁶. In the immediate aftermath of the strike(s), several leading Austrian politicians proclaimed the event to have been a communist putsch attempt. Conversely, many US diplomats and decision-makers, both in Washington D.C. and in Vienna, were not in the least impressed by the alleged communist coup attempt³⁰⁷. Historian Manfred Lechner concluded that the protests and strikes weren't even aimed at the winners of the agreement – the employers, who had obtained a further decrease in real wages – nor at the federal government, but rather at the

303 See Beer 2000, Rund um den “Dritten Mann”, p. 93. The ÖGB officially sanctioned the ERP and the enforcement of all its measures at the assembly of July 12th 1947. It may be argued that the trade unions accepted the program knowing full well what the framework dictated by the ECA entailed as preconditions to the aid: 1) balanced budgets “to help stabilize the currency”, 2) acceptance of high corporate profits as the engine of high investments, 3) limited resistance to both low wages and the ensuing low levels of mass consumption, and 4) a ceiling on welfare spending. As has been noted by Wilhelm Svoboda – one of Franz Olah's biographers – this was only possible due to the absence of a credible alternative to the ERP. See Svoboda 1990, Franz Olah: Eine Spurensicherung, p. 20-1 and Konrad/Lechner 1992, “Millionenverwechslung”, p. 30. For more information on the Marshall plan and the ECA, see the following section.

304 According to a 1949 CIA report, the major individual causes of that year's massive Austrian deficit were: a significant revenue reduction from the tobacco monopoly (AS 450 million), a smaller amount of ERP-counterpart funds released “than planned” (AS 400 million), and a chunk of occupation costs which “it expected would've been eliminated” (AS 600 million). Copy of: Central Intelligence Agency; August 31st 1949; Report to the President ORE 56-49 – The current situation in Austria (p. 8). From Prof. Rathkolb's private archive. For more information on the economic context of the period, see the two following sections.

305 Copy of: Central Intelligence Agency; August 31st 1949; Report to the President ORE 56-49 – The current situation in Austria (p. 8). From Prof. Rathkolb's private archive.

306 See Konrad/Lechner 1992, “Millionenverwechslung”, p. 52. For a detailed account of the events leading up to and including the several strikes that actually took place, see Ibid. p. 54-62 and see Svoboda 1990, Franz Olah: Eine Spurensicherung, p. 35-6. For an even larger degree of detail, context and analysis, see Andreas Bilgeri (unpublished), Die Oktoberstreiks 1950 und der ‘Putsch’ als österreichischer Erinnerungsort, phil. Dipl., 2011, Vienna University.

307 While the strike was practically still in progress, the US embassy in Vienna described it in a dispatch to Washington as the “recent general strike effort made by the Austrian Communists subsequent to the negotiations of a new wage-price agreement”. The same dispatch furthermore noted that “the strike was abortive”. Copy of: US Embassy (Vienna); October 26th 1950; Foreign Service Despatch n. 386 – Communist strength in the Austrian trade unions (p. 1). From Prof. Rathkolb's private archive. See also Rathkolb 1998, Österreich in den strategischen Planungen der USA, p. 31.

ÖGB leadership, for having consistently failed to represent the interests of its membership base³⁰⁸.

“Logic and economic reality, to be sure, are not on the side of the Socialists; yet the rank-and-file workers are becoming more and more responsive to the argument that they are not getting their share of the national product³⁰⁹.”

Lechner argued that, despite the strikes falling short of constituting a coup attempt, the discourse which surrounded the affair did however manage to fuel the hardliners' theory that Austria was in real danger of being subjected to a Soviet putsch. This kind of rhetoric furthermore contributed to the opening of the door to the establishment of Franz Olah's so-called special project³¹⁰. In conclusion, it can be argued that, whether through its officials, or through the directives it issued in the context of the Marshall plan's implementation, the ECA contributed in more than one way to Olah's rise to prominence.

Excursus: the ERP and the 1950 “putsch” attempt

At the core of the intersection between the political and the economic context of occupied Austria stood the Marshall plan, technically known as the ERP. As noted by Erwin Schmidl, the Alpine republic was one of the highest recipients of aid per capita³¹¹. These funds piled up on top of the aid which the Allied powers had already granted: \$682.8 million between 1945 and 1948 alone, almost 80% of which came directly from US taxpayers³¹². This was mainly due to the geostrategic considerations described in the first section of this chapter, which from Washington's perspective more than justified the granting of hundreds of millions of dollars to Austria, in order to build up and further modernize its economic infrastructure.

“This Government continues to regard Austria as of the greatest political and strategic interest. We cannot afford to let this key area fall under exclusive influence of the Soviet Union, for if this should happen it would only consolidate Soviet domination of Danubian and Balkan areas but would also weaken our position in Italy, Germany and Czechoslovakia.³¹³”

Rather than being lent to Austria, the aid was granted in the form of physical deliveries of industrial goods manufactured in the United States. Upon arrival in central Europe, these goods were then purchased by local market actors, including both local governments and municipalities, as well as private businesses. However, Vienna did not have immediate and independent access to the revenue generated by the sale of these goods, and it ended up forming the so-called *ERP counterpart-funds*. Despite being nominal property of the state and being stored in special accounts at the Austrian central bank³¹⁴, these funds resided under the effective

308 See Konrad/Lechner 1992, “Millionenverwechslung”, p. 60.

309 Copy of: US Embassy (Vienna); October 26th 1950; Foreign Service Despatch n. 386 – Communist strength in the Austrian trade unions (p. 21). From Prof. Rathkolb's private archive.

310 See Konrad/Lechner 1992, “Millionenverwechslung”, p. 53. For more information on the topic of Olah's paramilitary activities, see also chapter 7.

311 See Schmidl 2005, Österreich in Europa, p. 22.

312 Mähr 1989, Der Marshall-Plan in Österreich, p. 15-21.

313 Joint Chiefs of Staff, in a telegram to Geoffrey Keyes dated May 24th 1947, cited from Rathkolb 1988, Von der Besatzung zur Neutralität, p. 376.

314 For more on the postwar re-establishment of the Austrian National Bank, see Weber 2016, Lernen aus der Geschichte, p. 562-74.

purview of the ECA, since they had been specifically designed for the two following purposes. Their main task was the stabilization of the exchange rate of the Austrian Schilling (henceforth AS), while their secondary purpose was to be loaned out at low interest either for reconstruction projects or for expansion of private businesses³¹⁵. All loans had to be cleared by US officials: accordingly, the selection process didn't always reflect the perspective of Austrian policy and decision-makers³¹⁶. When the ERP grants ceased at the end of 1953 (the last shipments were delivered the following year), Austria had received goods worth a total of \$955.2 million, generating a total of some 16 billion AS in counterpart-funds³¹⁷. Aside from managing the implementation of the Marshall plan, the establishment of the ECA's mission in Vienna had other far-reaching consequences.

“With the establishment of the ECA [...] in Vienna as well as in multiple Austrian field offices, the CIA further expanded its ability to covertly gather intelligence in Austria³¹⁸.”

Unlike the Italian case, where the cooperation between communist and other elements of the trade unions continued until the late Forties, by mid-1947 most of the communist elements within the ÖBG had been isolated to the point of becoming irrelevant³¹⁹, correlating with the StaPo's own “purge”. However, the Austrian federal government repeatedly refused to give the ÖGB a real say in the implementation of the ERP, eventually stirring significant resentment among some unionists³²⁰. Following the debacle of the failed general strike of

315 See Mähr 1988, *Der Marshallplan in Österreich*, p. 262-3. Taken together, the author of this narrative is of the opinion that the ERP's implementation perfectly embodied the true meaning of the slogan used by modern-day financial advisers: “let other people's money work for you”. Under the cover of geostrategic arguments – which normally allow for looser spending regulations and related oversight – Washington was able to largely pick and choose the suppliers of the industrial goods it granted in aid, not necessarily giving too much attention to matters of efficiency and pricing. Through the generous sponsorship of the taxpayers, this in turn gave selected government officials the ability to covertly funnel taxpayer dollars to their respective big business cronies and campaign-financiers. Furthermore, as already briefly explained, the revenues generated from the sale of these goods on the Austrian market effectively remained under the control of the ECA, primarily serving for “currency stabilization purposes”, which often meant artificially low exchange rates: not just for the AS, but also for most European currencies. For capital-rich foreign corporations looking to invest in Europe, it was a golden opportunity to scoop up assets for a fraction of prewar prices. Then, even after the formal granting of aid had ceased (in the Austrian case in late 1953), through the ECA, Washington continued to exert a large degree of so-called “soft power” on ERP recipients for years, by procrastinating on the final release of the counterpart-funds until virtually all bilateral issues that were still on the table had been resolved in favor of US interests. On top of all that, the American government was meanwhile paraded throughout mainstream media and most of historiography as the “hero” that thereby rebuilt European civilization out of the pile of rubble which it had itself massively contributed to in the first place. The success of this charade rested largely on the outsourcing of the related propaganda efforts to the AFL, CIO and the associated European labor unions (such as the ÖGB), as well as all kinds of other personnel disseminated across the local media landscape. For more information on these efforts, see the two following sections of this chapter, as well as chapter seven's last section.

316 For example, in 1957, ministers Graf (defense) and Bock (commerce) pushed for the “Westautobahn” (western highway) project, correctly arguing that it would even have been directly in the US military's and NATO's interest to have a highway connecting Vienna to Salzburg and southern Germany. Yet the funds were denied. See Rathkolb 1997, *Washington ruft Wien*, p. 139. This is particularly surprising when considered along with the fact that, at the time, as briefly mentioned in this chapter's section on the geostrategic context, Ferdinand Graf was widely known as one of Vienna's most outspoken atlanticists.

317 See Copy of: US Embassy (Vienna); January 5th 1955; Foreign Service Despatch n. 763 – Semi-Annual Review of FOA Programs by Chief of Diplomatic Mission (mid to end 1954) (p. 1). From Prof. Rathkolb's private archive. Compare with Riegler 2015, “Die Rössner-Soucek-Verschörung”, p. 50 and Kopeczek 1992, *Fallbeispiele des Kalten Krieges*, p. 45-6. Despite having financed a substantial number of projects and loans, by 1962 there were still a whopping 11 billion AS in those accounts. However, Washington sanctioned the final release of the ERP counterpart-funds only on March 29th 1961, after all other disputes in economic matters (oil-related assets, restitution of Jewish property, as well as former Austrian assets seized first by Hitler, later by the Allied powers) had been resolved in favor of the US. See Rathkolb 1997, *Washington ruft Wien*, p. 139-141.

318 Original: “Mit der Etablierung der ECA (Marshallplan) in Wien und in mehreren österreichischen Außenstellen wurde eine für die CIA-Austria hinsichtlich der Tarnung ohnedies schon günstige Situation noch weiter erleichtert.” Beer 2000, *Rund um den “Dritten Mann”*, p. 94.

319 See Sensenig 1985, *Gewerkschaftspolitik im Kalten Krieg*, p. 199.

320 See Svoboda 1990, Franz Olah: *Eine Spurensicherung*, p. 22.

October 1950, the ÖGB's annual congress of 1951 sanctioned the formal exclusion of the remaining communist elements from all positions of power within the union, despite the founding role some of them had played in the postwar period³²¹. As briefly mentioned in the third chapter, the two major American unions AFL and CIO played significant roles in US foreign policy during this period. A program of close collaboration with Austria started as early as May 1948 when, on the occasion of the ÖGB's first postwar congress, high-level representatives of both aforementioned organizations took part in the official proceedings: among them were Irving Brown and Henry Rutz³²². This program included scheduled visit exchanges of Austrian unionists to the US, and vice-versa, explicitly aiming at the conquest of the “hearts and minds”³²³.

Franz Olah³²⁴ emerged in the immediate postwar period as a prominent opponent of communism within the SPÖ³²⁵. Upon his return to Vienna, Olah quickly regained his former mid-management position in the *Gewerkschaft für Bau und Holzarbeiter* (Austrian construction and wood workers' union, henceforth GBH), one of the largest individual member-unions of the ÖGB. Due to his prominent reputation, Olah rose quite rapidly through the ranks of both party and union. By late 1945, he had already become a member of the Viennese municipal council, while just two years later he was appointed chairman of the SPÖ's local section of Hernals, one of Vienna's political districts³²⁶. By the time the union's exchange program with the US started in 1948, he had been further promoted to first secretary of the GBH, and was one of the first to benefit from the program, embarking on a five-week-long journey to America in the autumn of the same year. Among several other things, aside from formally representing Austrian workers at the AFL's annual congress in Cincinnati, it was during this trip that Olah met Wesley Cook, whom he quickly befriended, and who in 1949 was appointed Vienna's labor adviser for the ECA. Unsurprisingly, upon his return to Europe, Olah argued that the ERP would help secure Austria's freedom and independence, while also arguing for increased ÖGB influence on the

321 According to historian Gene R. Sensenig, the role played by the AFL and CIO was in fact so great that he termed them both “prerequisites of the Marshall plan's success”. Sensenig 1985, *Gewerkschaftspolitik im Kalten Krieg*, p. 199 and 211.

322 See Konrad/Lechner 1992, “Millionenverwechslung”, p. 43; Sensenig 1985, *Gewerkschaftspolitik im Kalten Krieg*, p. 210, and Beer 2000, *Rund um den “Dritten Mann”*, p. 93.

323 Within these visits, nothing was left to chance. Aside from carefully selecting the foreign beneficiaries of such trips, US officials were very keen on showing the guests only the best that their country could offer, and sometimes these decisions involved even senior politicians. For example, in mid-August 1952, the office of the US secretary of defense Robert A. Lovett submitted a written proposal for limiting future visits by Austrian officials and unionists only to districts and regions where no strikes had taken place. See Rathkolb 1997, *Washington ruft Wien*, p. 203.

324 Born in Vienna in 1910, Olah broke off his higher education due to economic reasons and completed a *Lehre* (professional apprenticeship) as a piano-builder instead. He joined the SPÖ's youth organizations early on and was deeply influenced by the fights which followed the 1934 popular uprisings, in which he himself took part. Between 1934 and 1938, he became a leading figure among the Viennese “revolutionary socialists”, and his political activities led him twice to jail prior to the *Anschluss* (Germany's 1938 “annexation” of Austria). Due to his role in negotiating a common defense front against the incoming Nazis with the Austro-fascist regime, he was immediately arrested after the so-called annexation. During his long imprisonment, by consistently refusing to “join forces” with the communist prisoners – even fellow Austrians – Olah gained the reputation of a staunch opponent of communism. On April 21st 1945 he managed to escape from a camp in Südharz and to subsequently return to Vienna. See Konrad/Lechner 1992, “Millionenverwechslung”, p. 15-6. For more information on his time inside Nazi concentration camps, see Svoboda 1990, *Franz Olah: Eine Spurensicherung*, p. 13-8 and Ganglmair 1988, *Widerstand und Verfolgung*, p. 21-2.

325 “Ever since it started advocating the Marshall plan, the Austrian socialist party [SPÖ] was recognized as the most reliable advocate of the US within the Austrian political spectrum.” (Original: Spätestens mit ihrem Eintreten für den Marshall-Plan war die Sozialistische Partei Österreichs als der verlässlichste pro-amerikanische Faktor der österreichischen Politik anerkannt.) Konrad/Lechner 1992, “Millionenverwechslung”, p. 18. This assessment – or at least its timing – clashes with some of the sources available on the intelligence-related context, which will be described in this chapter's last section. For a detailed account of the SPÖ's structure and priorities during the Cold War, see Kopeczek 1992, *Fallbeispiele des Kalten Krieges*, p. 31-56.

326 See Svoboda 1990, *Franz Olah: Eine Spurensicherung*, p. 26.

implementation and administration of the Marshall plan³²⁷.

“The contact between ÖGB and CIO was of a much deeper and of a more personal nature than with the AFL. Henry Rutz, the AFL official responsible for Germany and Austria, spent most of his time in Germany. Aside from Franz Olah, both Rutz and Irwing Brown seem not to have cultivated personal contacts with any of the ÖGB's other leading figures. While the ÖGB did share the AFL's long term goals, its conservatism and organizational structure were alien to the social-democratic leadership of the ÖGB.³²⁸”

Towards the end of 1948 Olah furthermore “inherited” a seat in Parliament from Erwin Scharf, one of the former leaders of the SPÖ. In rather sharp contrast to Olah, Scharf had been vocally arguing for – at the very least – a loose collaboration between his own party and the KPÖ. Wilhelm Svoboda described this as one of the SPÖ's overt turning points in its realignment towards the center of the left-right dichotomy. By February of the following year, Olah's growing power within the ÖGB came under internal scrutiny for the first time, following the scandal centered upon the Weinberg castle in Kefermarkt in Upper Austria, and its development into a internal training/housing facility. Following the launch of an investigation commission, which reported several counts of accounting fraud and misallocation of vast internal resources, the blame was laid on both Olah and Rudolf Holowathyi (the then-chairman of GBH). Despite the fact that after the release of the commission's report, even Johann Böhm himself – the then-head of the ÖGB – went on record to sharply criticize both of them, only Holowathyi was forced to step down, whereas Olah proceeded to take his place³²⁹.

When the aforementioned strikes of late October 1950 were already dying out, thereby posing no immediate threat to Austria's national security, Olah proceeded to arm hundreds of his fellow GBH members with sticks, and to violently quash the activities of smaller groups of workers, some of whom were still barricading the streets of the nation's capital³³⁰. In the ensuing press coverage, some mainstream media outlets ended up presenting him as the “hero” who “stopped the violent coup attempt”, further cementing his pro-western reputation³³¹. In the second half of the Sixties, during his trial for embezzlement, he explicitly referenced the events of 1950 as one of the pivotal turning points in the establishment of his paramilitary unit:

“The organization that was established in response to the failed communist coup was drawn from a relatively small cadre of young workers. My position within the union and my seat at the National Assembly gave me the external cover necessary to lead this defense project³³².”

327 See Rathkolb 1997, Washington ruft Wien, p. 202, Konrad/Lechner 1992, “Millionenverwechslung”, p. 44-5, and Svoboda 1990, Franz Olah: Eine Spurensicherung, p. 22 and 26.

328 Original: “Der Kontakt zwischen ÖGB und CIO war viel enger und persönlicher als zum AFL. Der für Deutschland und Österreich zuständige AFL-Vertreter Henry Rutz verbrachte den Großteil seiner Zeit in Deutschland. Außer zu Franz Olah scheinen Rutz und Irving Brown zu keinem der führenden ÖGB-Funktionäre enge Beziehungen gepflegt zu haben. Der ÖGB teilte zwar die langfristigen Ziele des AFL, doch deren Konservatismus und Organisationsstruktur waren der sozialdemokratischen Führung des ÖGB fremd.” Sensenig 1985, Gewerkschaftspolitik im Kalten Krieg, p. 211. See also Svoboda 1990, Franz Olah: Eine Spurensicherung, p. 28.

329 See *ibid*, p. 28-33.

330 See Konrad/Lechner 1992, “Millionenverwechslung”, p. 58-9.

331 According to Oliver Rathkolb, there have been a handful of instances in which Olah managed to profile himself not as a fanatic US supporter, and the examples he cites are: his critiques of the severe limitations on Austrian commerce with the eastern block and his public condemnation of the US veto on a planned sale of an Austrian steel factory to Czechoslovakia. See Rathkolb 1997, Washington ruft Wien, p. 206.

332 Original: “Die nun nach dem Scheitern des kommunistischen Putsches im Oktober 1950 ins Leben gerufene Organisation, stützte sich auf einen relativ kleinen Kader jüngerer Arbeiter. Meine Funktion in der Gewerkschaft und mein Mandat als Abgeordneter

By 1955, Franz Olah had become vice-chairman of the entire ÖGB, only to replace Böhm just four years later, thereby achieving the following status in 1959: second president of the lower house and simultaneously head of the SPÖ's fraction, as well as chairman of the Austrian labor union federation. Among many other things, he also played an instrumental role in 1959 in the commercial establishment of a newspaper called *Kronenzeitung*, which in the 1970s became – and remains to this day – Austria's most-read daily³³³.



Franz Olah, [undated]. Original credit: APA / Archive Olah. Source: diepresse.com. [Link](#).

In December 1961, he concluded with Julius Raab (ÖVP) the negotiations for the secret Olah-Raab agreement, which to this day is still considered as one of the foundations of the Austrian social partnership. With the purpose of solving the country's chronic labor deficit, this agreement established the first regulations which would allow the mass-immigration of (mainly) eastern European workers, who over time became known as *Gastarbeiter*³³⁴. Following his appointment as minister of the interior in 1963, without even renouncing the chairmanship of the trade unions, he had reached the apex of his power grab. However, despite the “enthusiasm” he put into keeping Austria safe, a number of scandals forced him out of office just eighteen months later. Of the several factors which contributed to his downfall, it may be argued that the most salient ones involved the revelation of the scandal concerning his one-million AS credit injection into the fledgling *Freiheitliche Partei Österreich* (Austria's major right-wing party since 1956, henceforth FPÖ); as well as the scandal revolving around the thousands of surveillance files that he set up during his tenure in the ministry of the interior. This surveillance explicitly targeted high-level officials, including other federal ministers and the chancellor himself³³⁵. It is difficult to ignore the conspicuous parallels with both De Lorenzo's surveillance in Italy, and J. Edgar Hoover's own questionable practices at the Federal Bureau of Investigation, all of which took place during the Sixties. While the topic of Olah's paramilitary activities, together with the other documentable stay behind networks, will be extensively described in chapter seven, the narrative of the following section focuses central Europe in the late Forties and Fifties, shifting further towards an economic perspective.

The aftermath of WWII: struggle, aid and recovery

In the immediate aftermath of WWII, amid border disputes with both Italy and Yugoslavia, vast sections of the Alpine republic were on the brink of starvation. In the first postwar years (until November 1947) the food

zum Nationalrat gaben mir die notwendige äußere Deckung zur Leitung dieser Abwehraktion.” Franz Olah's personal defense statement of 1969, cited from Konrad/Lechner 1992, “Millionenverwechslung”, p. 64.

333 For a detailed account of the paper's history, including Olah's determining role in it, see *ibid*, p. 92-156. For the sake of accuracy, the paper is nowadays technically called *Krone Zeitung*.

334 For more information on the rest of his fascinating career, which among many other things included a private audience with Pope John XXIII, see for example Svoboda 1990, Franz Olah: Eine Spurensicherung, p. 44-53.

335 See Ganser 2009, Secret Warfare in Neutral Austria, p. 13. For more details on Franz Olah's political downfall, see Konrad/Lechner 1992, “Millionenverwechslung”, p. 67-9 and Svoboda 1990, Franz Olah: Eine Spurensicherung, p.70-80.

supply was rationed to 1550 calories per day per person, down from a 2900 average of the prewar years.

“This is due in part to Soviet actions in the eastern zone – the richest agricultural land in Austria, normally producing 60% of all agricultural commodities. Sporadic Soviet prohibitions and retardations of food movements out of this zone prevent the success of governmental plans for equitable distribution throughout the whole of Austria. [...] Only about 40% of the minimum monthly requirements of the Austrian economy is furnished the Austrian Government for distribution. The bulk is exported mainly to the satellite countries; a small portion is sold to Switzerland.³³⁶”

Four years after the end of the war, and following the significant aid it had received during this period, just a third of the average amount of calories had been regained.

“Only about 50 percent of the present daily ration of 2,100 calories is being met by indigenous production. [...] Because the Soviet Zone is the “breadbasket” of Austria, the question of equitable distribution of food throughout Austria arose early during the occupation period. It was solved by four-power agreement requiring all food, both domestic and imported, to be pooled for distribution by the Austrian Government³³⁷.”

Aside from the distortions induced by the rationing system, the weight of the occupation costs³³⁸, and the collapse of foreign tourism³³⁹, one other major cause of the persisting poverty among millions of Austrians was the rampant price inflation. Just one month after the first parliamentary elections of November 1945, the first Renner administration pushed the first currency reform through parliament, which decoupled the national currency from Germany on a one-to-one basis, thereby reestablishing the Austrian Schilling (AS). However, it would only take two years for the same administration to pass a second – much more painful – monetary reform.

“In general, official prices in the summer of 1947 were double the prewar level, while wages had not kept up with the advance; the real cost of living was more than double because most Austrians were forced to supplement official rations with black market purchases at prices ten to fifty times higher than the official rates. Moreover, in view of the differential between official and black market prices, producers were reluctant to sell at authorized rates, and industrial goods were channeled into the black market. [...] A second currency conversion was promulgated in December 1947. In general terms, the reform provided for conversion at the rate of one new Austrian schilling for three of the old, except that individual holdings up to 150 schillings were exchanged on a one-to-one basis. Of the bank deposits dating from before the first currency reform, 60% were wiped out and the remaining 40% converted into 2% Government bonds³⁴⁰”.

336 Copy of: Central Intelligence Agency; May 1948; Report to the President SR-16 – Austria (p. II-4 and II-5). From Prof. Rathkolb's private archive.

337 Copy of: Central Intelligence Agency; August 31st 1949; Report to the President ORE 56-49 – The current situation in Austria (p. 7). From Prof. Rathkolb's private archive.

338 According to a state department memo of mid-1951, the US government started carrying its own occupation costs only in July of 1947, while all other occupiers argued to “still not be able” to do so as late as 1951. Harrison F. Matthews; July 6th 1951; Memo for James S. Lay, Jr. – Third Progress Report on NSC 38/4 and NSC 38/6 (p. 1). [Link](#).

339 “The tourist program is being revived despite the present disturbed conditions in Europe. The reduced scale of the present operation is indicated by the fact that it yielded less than \$100,000 in 1947 as against \$37 million in 1937.” Copy of: Central Intelligence Agency; May 1948; Report to the President SR-16 – Austria (p. II-5). From Prof. Rathkolb's private archive.

340 Ibid, (p. II-7). From Prof. Rathkolb's private archive. Concerning the first currency reform of 1945, see Weber 2016, *Lernen aus der Geschichte*, p. 570-1. Despite all of that, according to a 1949 CIA report, between July 1948 and June 1949 alone, “the cost-of-living index” had roughly risen by another 20%. Copy of: Central Intelligence Agency; August 31st 1949; Report to the President ORE 56-49 – The current situation in Austria (p. 9). From Prof. Rathkolb's private archive.

Arguably, as per all divided countries and territories, one of the largest drags on the national economy was represented by the dissemination of “complementary” industrial and commercial businesses across the newly established frontiers. This expressed itself in a 40% loss in industrial production compared to prewar averages³⁴¹. Given that most of the Austrian population

traditionally lived in the eastern part of the country (when expressed in its post-imperial borders), it should be of no surprise that by exerting their dominion of the eastern zone, the Soviet Union ended up controlling large and important industrial sectors. Of course, this phenomenon also affected Austria's few major raw material producing facilities, which included the anthracite mine of Gruenbach (Lower Austria) and the oil reserves and facilities of the Vienna basin³⁴².

<i>Western sectors</i>	<i>Eastern (Soviet) sector</i>
Pig iron facilities	Railroad equipment
Crude steel facilities	Heavy and light electrical equipment
All hydroelectric power facilities	Machine tools' production facilities
Nitrogen related facilities	Automotive and related industries
Synthetic fibre industries	Over 2/3 of chemical facilities
Aluminum facilities	Crude Oil and refineries
Division of key industries between the western and eastern sectors of occupied Austria. Source: Copy of: Central Intelligence Agency; May 1948; Report to the President SR-16 – Austria (p. II-6). From prof. Rathkolb's private archive.	

“This compartmentalization is an all-around loss which reduces Soviet exploitation but which is decidedly detrimental to the Austrian national economy³⁴³.”

The economic drag-effect was further exacerbated by the heavy limitations imposed on Austrian (western) businesses' traditionally extensive trade relationships with eastern Europe, which during the Cold War was viewed as “trading with the enemy”. Some US officials in Vienna even seemed to realize how important it was for the Austrian economy to resume these relationships as soon as possible, noting that “Eastern Europe is the traditional market for Austrian industrial production and the source of its food and raw materials³⁴⁴.” This did not, however, stop Washington from subjecting all export licensing for such countries to the ECA's purview³⁴⁵.

Despite these trading restrictions, which – in contrast to most other aforementioned economic difficulties – did not end together with the country's occupation, and despite the new increases in Cold War tensions, Austria's gross domestic product really started to take off during the early Fifties. In fact, from Washington's perspective, by 1956/7 the country had recovered so much that it no longer justified special treatment. Unsurprisingly, following the end of quadripartite occupation, US-Austrian trade slowed down considerably. Accord-

341 See copy of: Central Intelligence Agency; May 1948; Report to the President SR-16 – Austria (p. II-6). From Prof. Rathkolb's private archive.

342 The “current production [of the Gruenbach mine] amounts to approximately 13,000 tons per month, but only 10% of this output is available to Austria.” Ibid, (p. II-4 and). From Prof. Rathkolb's private archive. In the same report, the CIA estimated the reserves of the Vienna basin at over 10 million metric tons of crude oil, with a total refining capacity estimated at 925,000 tons per year. See Ibid. p. II-5.

343 Ibid, (p. II-6). From Prof. Rathkolb's private archive.

344 Copy of: Geoffrey Keyes; November 11th 1949; Report n. P 4300 to JCS and Departments of Army and State – Follow-up to P 3971 on Austrian neutrality (p. 2). From Prof. Rathkolb's private archive. “Among the chief partners in 1937, [Austrian] trade with present Soviet satellite states amounted to 38% of imports and 32% of exports”. Copy of: Central Intelligence Agency; May 1948; Report to the President SR-16 – Austria (p. II-11). From Prof. Rathkolb's private archive.

345 Despite being an agency of the US government, Austrian historian Wilfried Mähr described the ECA as de facto independent, being headed by an administrator who had the rank of a minister and reported directly to the President. See Mähr 1988, *Der Marshallplan in Österreich*, p. 252. Compare with Rathkolb 1988, *Von der Besatzung zur Neutralität*, p. 379-80.

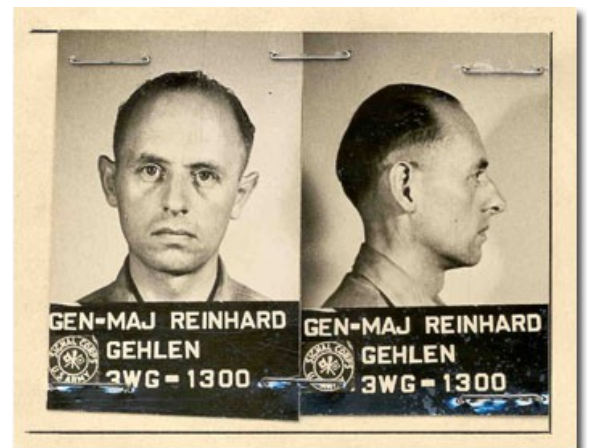
ding to Oliver Rathkolb, while in 1956 the US was still delivering some 13% of Austrian imports, its share had already sank to 10.1% by 1958, eventually falling to 4.6% during the course of the following ten years. During this same period, the US's share of exports from the Alpine republic tended to remain fairly stable, oscillating between 4.4 and 4.9%³⁴⁶. However, as already addressed in the preceding sections, the decrease in aid and trade did not correlate with a decrease in Washington's overall influence on Austrian politics, as further supported by the intelligence-related layer of the context, which is the subject of the following section.

Intelligence gathering in postwar Austria

Given the extent of poverty in war-torn central Europe, it should not come as a surprise that average Austrians were willing to do just about anything in exchange for some money, or other more stable exchangeable commodities. In his 2007 memoirs, former CIA officer Tennent H. Bagley – who was stationed in Vienna for most of the 1950s – describes the city of those initial years as an outright “turntable of espionage”, a concept which had already been popularized by other narratives, such as Carol Reed's movie *The Third Man*.

“The war had done relatively little damage to the physical face of this lovely city, but it had shattered the social structure. [...] The war's toll had left few young men to build or inspire a future. Life for many was reduced to getting along as best as they could, at or beyond the edge of legality and with little room for morality. It was a climate for adventurers, black marketeers, information peddlers and fabricators, soldiers without an army, refugees from the East without prospects of going further, and former intelligence operatives with a cunning sense of what the increasingly hostile occupiers would want to know about each other.”³⁴⁷

Similarly to Germany, and as already mentioned in the section regarding the political context, the Austrian government formally established its military intelligence services only in 1954, creating a nine-year vacuum in which a variety of groups and actors juggled for position. In such an environment, just about every politically significant entity operated its own information gathering network: as well as the major political parties, even the Austrian Church had its own intelligence net³⁴⁸. Some of these groups were not directly associated to any political entities, but were rather “private” networks of individuals, mostly former intelligence professionals of the Third Reich, in search for golden opportunities among the postwar chaos. One person who had a particularly keen interest in the developments in Austrian intelligence was none other than Reinhard Gehlen, who, in a matter of just a few months, had gone from being Hitler's top eastern-front spy, to



Reinhard Gehlen, 1945. Original credit: US Army.
Source: wikipedia.org. [Link](#).

346 See Rathkolb 1997, Washington ruft Wien, p. 142-3.

347 Tennent H. Bagley (2007), cited from Riegler 2015, “Die Rössner-Soucek-Verschörung”, p. 70, footnote 42.

348 According to a 1949 report by Reinhard Gehlen – once one of the Third Reich's top intelligence officials, who later went on to found and lead the *Bundesnachrichtendienst* (West German military intelligence agency, henceforth BND) – the Austrian church's intelligence network was led by a Jesuit: Father Menjoie. See Reinhard Gehlen; June 14th 1949; Study – Preparatory measures for the Future Organization of an Austrian IS Under the Predominant Influence of the United States; as attachment to Dispatch MGL-A-23 (p. 7). [Link](#).

Washington's intelligence darling and (arguably) the front runner in the bid to establish the German intelligence services³⁴⁹. In 1949 he wrote a report for his US-intelligence handlers, appropriately titled “Preparatory measures for the future organization of an Austrian IS under the predominant influence of the United States”, which in part reads as follows:

“The situation in Austria is characterized by the fact that several groups are operating there in the field of intelligence activities [...]. Some of these groups pursue the aim of eventually being incorporated into the IS [intelligence services] of a future Austrian Federal Republic. The various Allied Intelligence Services, i.e., the American, French, and British, cooperate with some of these individual groups and are equally interested in the solution of this question, particularly in securing themselves the predominant influence on the future Austrian IS. [...] None of the groups at present operating in the field of intelligence activities is so important that it can blaim [!claim, ed. r.] for itself the sole candidacy to form the future Austrian IS. The problem takes on an even more complicated aspect since three of the groups, i.e., those of Höttl, Urban-Ranner, and Wickler-Loos, originated from the Reichssicherheitshauptamt, SD [Sicherheitsdienst], and are organized along the lines of the directives issued before the end of the war by SS Oberführer Schellenberg, and thus will probably not make Austrian and European interests their primary goal.³⁵⁰”

This same report then went on to list some seventeen different intelligence networks, usually complete with some of the names of the people involved, and sometimes even with a small description. For example, while Bruno Pitterman is identified as the head of the SPÖ's network, Ferdinand Graf is described as his ÖVP-counterpart³⁵¹. This information thereby clearly correlates with the high-level meeting documented in this chapter's section on Austria's political context, in which the leaderships of both parties agreed not to form internal party militias, but did not say anything about intelligence gathering nets. Wilhelm Höttl, the aforementioned former SD officer and “competitor” of Gehlen, was embroiled in several political activities, which only served to fuel the German's general dislike of him. Aside from identifying Höttl's network as the intelligence net of the so-called “fourth party”, which until 1956 was officially named the *Verband der*

349 As the former head of the *Fremde Heere Ost* (Foreign Armies East), Gen. Gehlen had access to plenty of information which the Americans viewed as extremely valuable. Amid the chaos of the last months and weeks of WWII, Gehlen was flown to the US with a handful of his closest colleagues to be “debriefed”. During these meetings, he was able to convince his handlers of the value he could bring to Washington's future intelligence operations both in Germany and against the Soviet Union. Gehlen was soon transported back to Europe, and set to work to build what became known as the “Gehlen Organization” (henceforth ORG), which laid the foundations for the BND, formally established only in 1956. All except one of Gehlen's aforementioned colleagues were allowed to join his efforts, the exception being Karl F. Lütgendorf, who had allegedly been caught (by the US's own electronic surveillance) expressing antisemitic thoughts to his comrades. According to Gen. Horst Pleiner, despite being thereby excluded from Gehlen's innermost circle, contact between the latter and Lütgendorf continued to be cultivated, perhaps even until the early Seventies, when Lütgendorf was appointed Austrian minister of defense by then-chancellor Bruno Kreisky (SPÖ). See Pleiner 2017, Annex p. A5-A6. Compare with Blasi 2005, *Die Anfänge des militärischen Nachrichtendienstes*, p. 132-3. For a short overview of the ORG's origins, see Kopeczek 2000, *Die amerikanischen Waffenlager*, p. 114. For a more systematic approach to the stay behind networks in Germany, of which Gehlen soon became one of the main leaders, see Goebel 2003, *Gladio in der Bundesrepublik*, p. 50-82; Ganser 2005, *NATO's secret armies*, p. 189-211 and Lecorte 2015, *Gauner, Nazis und Agenten*. [Link](#).

350 Reinhard Gehlen; June 14th 1949; Study – Preparatory measures for the Future Organization of an Austrian IS Under the Predominant Influence of the United States; as attachment to Dispatch MGL-A-23 (p. 3-4). [Link](#). As correctly interpreted by his US handlers, the generally negative remarks on the *Reichssicherheitshauptamtes* (the Third Reich's major intelligence agency after the de facto disbandment of Adm. Canaris' *Amt Ausland-Abwehr*) and the *Sicherheitsdienst* (the Nazi Party's internal intelligence agency, henceforth SD) were mostly due to Gehlen's professional animosity towards his former competition, which apparently lasted well into the Cold War period. See Chief of Station (Karlsruhe), June 21st 1949, Dispatch MGL-A-23 – ODEUM interest in Austrian Intelligence circles (p. 1-2). [Link](#).

351 For more information, especially on Ferdinand Graf and the ÖVP intelligence network he led, see Blasi 2005, *Die Anfänge des militärischen Nachrichtendienstes*, p. 130 and footnote 35.

Unabhängige (associations of independents, Austria's major right-wing party until 1955, henceforth VdU), Gehlen stated that individual members of this organization – such as Erich Kernmayer – were cultivating parallel contacts to the nets of the other two parties. He argued that the purpose of these contacts was to secure their “benevolent attitude” towards his organization and the VdU³⁵². Unsurprisingly, being addressed to Washington, this report did not contain much information on the US's own intelligence operations in Austria.

“Intelligence is a major element of any military operation not only in wartime. During the postwar occupation of Austria, 1945-55, the United States Army gathered intelligence on its Allies, the Austrians and the surrounding countries. Proximity to Eastern Europe, a constant flow of Soviet deserters, political refugees, former Nazis and displaced persons offered a steady stream of intriguing information, making the country a lucrative target for U.S. intelligence operations³⁵³.”

Immediately after WWII, the OSS established a command post in Salzburg, which was soon followed by stations in Innsbruck, Klagenfurt, Linz, Zell am See and Vienna. Although OSS-Austria was formally recognized as USFA's intelligence gathering arm in October 1945, by August of the following year it had already been superseded by the CIC, which eventually even took over many of its field officers³⁵⁴. The CIC's 430th Detachment was headquartered first in Salzburg and then (from August 1945) in Vienna. Soon, CIC sub-detachments were also established in Linz, Innsbruck, Klagenfurt and Graz. Contrary to Thomas Riegler, who stated that by 1949 the CIC had already turned over most of its local duties to the CIA, fellow Austrian historian Oliver Rathkolb argued that the CIC continued to dominate US intelligence activities in the Alpine republic until the conclusion of the 1955 Treaty, by stating that as late as 1954, the 430th Detachment was still employing some 311 uniformed officers, 85 American civilians, and 143 Austrian nationals³⁵⁵. Without taking sides in the debate concerning the relative importance of the two intelligence agencies, similarly to the Italian case, the evaluated primary sources clearly depict the CIA as the organization primarily responsible for the US's stay behind networks in Austria. Accordingly, the focus of this narrative has been primarily aimed at the CIA.

As soon as the fight against Communism superseded “de-nazification” as a security priority, the entire American intelligence apparatus started to embrace the fact that – on the outer edge of the western view of the world, in places like Austria (or Italy and Germany, for that matter), the aim was to conquer the “hearts and minds” of the local population³⁵⁶. Accordingly, so-called “opinion leaders” were soon highly sought-after:

352 See Reinhard Gehlen; June 14th 1949; Study – Preparatory measures for the Future Organization of an Austrian IS Under the Predominant Influence of the United States; as attachment to Dispatch MGL-A-23 (p. 7-8). [Link](#). For more information on Wilhelm Höttl, Erich Kernmayer, and their postwar intelligence activities, see the following chapter.

353 Carafano 2000, Deconstructing US Army Intelligence Operations, p. 55. For more information on his description of the Army's “threat-based planning”, see Ibid. p. 58-60.

354 See *ibid*, p. 63, footnote 23 and Beer 2000, Rund um den “Dritten Mann”, p. 83. It is during this early period of the postwar era that the War Department initiated the shift towards peacetime threat-based priorities, for example by issuing its Basic Intelligence Directive. Among several other things, this document argued that “[t]he transition from war to peace [...] has necessitated changes. Intelligence needs have now become all inclusive, covering every nation of the world with equal emphasis on military, political, economic, sociological, Who's Who and scientific intelligence”. War Department (ed.) June 1946, “Basic Intelligence Directive”, cited from Carafano 2000, Deconstructing US Army Intelligence Operations, p. 69.

355 See Riegler 2015, “Die Rössner-Soucek-Verschörung”, p. 50 and Thomas Riegler, August 24th 2015, Ein vergessener Spionage-“Hotspot” des Kalten Krieges: Gmunden-Altmünster; cited from [oesterreichterrorismus.blogspot.co.at](#). [Link](#). Compare with Rathkolb 1997, Washington ruft Wien, p. 188.

356 Unsurprisingly, just like in Italy and West Germany, this shift in priorities simultaneously relaxed the already loose limitations on the cooperation between Allied intelligence officers and former Nazi/Fascist decision-makers. For a short overview of some of the most infamous former Nazis employed by the CIC/CIA in Austria, including the likes of Otto von Bolschwing, Wilhelm

individuals who, through their journalistic/editorial/broadcasting/political expertise, could guide the thinking of both contemporary and future Austrian generations³⁵⁷.

“The catalog of measures, through which the American way of life was to be made palatable to Europeans, included the foundation of new media outlets, such as the broadcasting station 'Rot-Weiß-Rot', particularly also the education of 'opinion leaders' in the US, as well as a targeted media policy regarding theater, literature, music and especially movies, to the point of distributing propaganda material to diverse civic groups, including trade unions³⁵⁸.”

As already anticipated by the explicit title of Gehlen's aforementioned report, amidst this rather chaotic environment constituted by dozens of shadowy organizations, the membership of which was both secret and constantly in flux, all four occupiers aimed at being the ones to “guide” the development of Austria's future military intelligence agency. This clearly mirrors the narrative of the beginning of the third chapter, which describes the competition between CIA and MI6 for the bid to establish what later became Gladio.



Vienna, “Haus der Industrie”, which during the entire quadripartite occupation housed the Allied Council, [undated]. Original credit: National Archives, Washington D.C. Cited from: Bischof/Leidenfrost (ed.), 1988: Die bevormundete Nation, picture 41.

While all efforts connected to the establishment of an independent Austrian army had been readily blocked by the Allied Council, the military intelligence agency which developed around the figure of Maximilian Ronge³⁵⁹ initially grew as a private organization, without any legal footing. Right after the war, Ronge left Vienna for Salzburg where he felt it to be safer and, together with Andreas Figl, Erwin Lahousen, and Kurt Fechner³⁶⁰, proceeded to establish his own “private” intelligence network around 1948. Walter Blasi

Höttl, Karl Kowarik, and Robert P. J. Verbelen, see Beer 2000, Rund um den “Dritten Mann”, p. 88-9; specifically on Verbelen, see Kopeczek 1992, Fallbeispiele des Kalten Krieges, p. 67-79 and Kopeczek 2000, Die amerikanischen Waffenlager, p. 112-4. For even more information, including many links to primary sources, see Feinstein 2005, The CIA and Nazi war criminals, on nsarchive.gwu.edu, [Link](#).

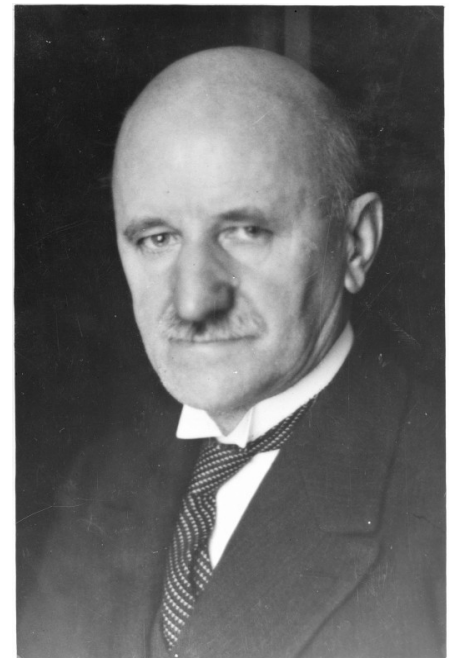
357 Aside from the media outlets directly linked to Washington (such as the broadcasting station *Rot-Weiß-Rot*), throughout the postwar period leading newspapers such as *Wiener Kurier*, *Freie Presse*, *Neuen Zeit* and *Salzburger Nachrichten* were more or less overseen by the Information Services Branch (henceforth ISB), effectively an arm of the intelligence apparatus, particularly of those officers tasked with activities pertaining to the field of so-called “psychological warfare”. See Beer 2000, Rund um den “Dritten Mann”, p. 92-3.

358 Original: “Der Maßnahmenkatalog, um den Europäern die amerikanische Lebens- und Denkensart schmackhaft zu machen, beinhaltete auch die Gründung von Medien, etwa die Betreuung des Senders 'Rot-Weiß-Rot', im besonderen auch die Ausbildung von 'opinion leaders', also Meinungsmacher, in den USA, sowie gezielte Politik am Theater-, Literatur-, Musik- und vor allem Filmsektor bis hin zur Bereitstellung von Propagandamaterial für gesellschaftliche Gruppierungen, nicht zuletzt für die Gewerkschaften.” Konrad/Lechner 1992, “Millionenverwechslung”, p. 18. Historian Siegfried Beer listed Fritz Molden, Gerd Bacher, Alfons Dalma, Hellmut Andics, and Viktor Reimann as those who most frequently have been suspected of collaboration with US intelligence agencies. See Beer 2000, Rund um den “Dritten Mann”, p. 92 and footnote 62.

359 Maximilian Ronge, who in the late Forties went on to lead the build-up of Austrian military intelligence, was a former officer of the Austro-Hungarian imperial forces, who between 1917 and 1918 acted as chief of the intelligence division of the entire army, with the rank of Major-General. See Blasi 2005, Die Anfänge des militärischen Nachrichtendienstes, p. 124. Despite the undoubted proximity between Ronge and the ÖVP, the extent of cooperation between the two information services remains undocumented.

360 Further according to Austrian historian Walter Blasi, Andreas Figl was a former code specialist, who among other things had already worked under Ronge as the head of the “Italian group” of the Austro-Hungarian imperial army's intelligence division. Erwin Lahousen is described as both a brilliant man and a determined patriot, who during the WWII rose through the ranks of the

claimed that, at that time, Ronge's network was one of the few intelligence organizations that actually aimed at serving the Austrian interests. Aside from mentioning that Ronge was in more-or-less regular contact with then-chancellor Leopold Figl, it isn't clear what he specifically meant by referring to otherwise unspecified "Austrian interests". While it remains unclear why this network started its operations in 1948, it should be seen in the context of the Cold War's initial tensions, particularly the developments in Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Berlin, all which happened both close at hand and between 1947-48. Despite the risk of giving foreign agencies a front-row seat at the heart of Austrian covert affairs, Ronge consciously decided to actively pursue the employment of personnel formerly employed by Western intelligence. The main argument for this plan rested on the time and resources that would have otherwise been devoted to the training of the initial staff, and to the "establishment of contacts" with the agencies of the US and its allies³⁶¹. However, given the historical circumstances of postwar Austria, it doesn't seem to have been that difficult to make contact with at least mid-level foreign operatives.



Maximilian Ronge, [undated]. Original credit: Max Fenichel. Source: Österreichische Nationalbibliothek (Austrian National Library), bildarchiv.austria.at. [Link](https://www.bildarchiv.austria.at/).

Throughout the occupation, aside from gathering information, Ronge and his network were deeply involved in the build-up of the *B-Gendarmerie*, planning for the *Aufgebot*, as well as with plans connected to the reestablishment of the Austrian armed forces. Despite his relatively sudden death in 1953, a meeting concerning his succession between him, Fechner and Lahousen had already taken place, in which the latter was announced as Ronge's successor³⁶². Further according to Blasi's narrative, another meeting took place in Salzburg during the first half of 1954, in which a high-ranking US official signed off Fechner's new position. This official – possibly Col. Nixon of USFA – was thereby also confronted with the idea of formally reestablishing Austria's military intelligence agency³⁶³. Due to the sensitivity of the issue at hand, a formal request written by a specific cabinet member (unsurprisingly, Ferdinand Graf) was to be delivered in Salzburg. In commenting on the report which describes this meeting, Blasi concluded:

“The reader of this [...] report can't shake off the impression that representatives of the SPÖ were knowingly kept out of the issue, thereby deliberately excluding an agreement between the two major parties.”³⁶⁴

Ausland-Abwehr, eventually even becoming one of Adm. Canaris' few confidants, and who later was selected by the Allies to testify at the Nuremberg trials. Despite being considered a Jew by some Nazi officials, Kurt Fechner – one of Lahousen's friends from the war – not only managed to avoid imprisonment, but under Lahousen's wing even gained a job at the *Abwehr*, eventually rising to the position of head of the southeastern front's reconnaissance. See *ibid*, p. 127-9.

361 See *ibid*, p. 130-1.

362 According to Blasi's narrative, it was during this meeting that Ronge managed to settle the issue, by announcing that Fechner was to be his successor, rather than Lahousen. The last word on this rather delicate matter rested with Emil Liebitzky – arguably the most senior national security official of the embryonic Austrian defense ministry, who Blasi termed the “gray eminence” of both the *Aufgebot* and *B-Gendarmerie* planning. See *ibid*, p. 135.

363 Aside from Ronge's death, one of the other possible reasons which could have led to the 1954 request for the formal reestablishment of Austrian military intelligence was the then-upcoming conference of foreign ministers, which was planned to take place in Berlin during the early months of 1955. Other explanations revolve around Stalin's death, also in 1953, and the ensuing increase in tensions between Moscow and the rest of the world, including of course Vienna. See *ibid*.

364 Original: “Der Leser dieses Berichtes Paumgartens kann sich des Eindrucks nicht erwehren, dass Vertreter der SPÖ aus dieser

Surprisingly enough, throughout the evaluated sources, the earliest documentable direct connection between either of Austria's intelligence agencies and the CIA dates back to the early 1960s. In a 1961 CIA dispatch, the two StaPo officers code-named GRENGULF 30 and 31 are described as Salzburg Operation Base's (CIA) “only official liaison officers” with the StaPo. Despite the fact that the relationship with these two individuals is described as being already one year old, the contacts “have just started to give us written material and to discuss use of assets.”³⁶⁵

However, what could be abundantly documented even in earlier years were the multiple links which existed with the ORG. It may therefore be argued that the stay behind networks were initially only indirectly linked to local agencies, through Gehlen's organization. In 1949, Gehlen even requested permission to open an outright field office in Austria, but was turned down by his handlers³⁶⁶. Contrary to what was stated by historian Walter Blasi³⁶⁷, the primary sources evaluated by the author point at Walter Kainz as one of the main links between the GNw and the ORG.

Walter Kainz – a Viennese military officer born on September 26th 1914, with a rather long file concerning his activities for the Third Reich³⁶⁸ – begun “working for [ORG] prior to September 1951. Initially a spotter in a DP camp in Graz, he subsequently became a sub-agency leader for Dienststelle 2 [a subdivision of the ORG, ed. r.] which had targets in Austria, Hungary and the Balkans. In June 1954, he was arrested in Vienna, and materials suggesting [ORG] efforts to penetrate Austrian Government agencies were found in his possession.”³⁶⁹ A fragment of a later report described how the initial interception of the mail containing intelligence material happened largely by chance:

“One day while picking up mail at her post office box, a woman found a letter which she discovered contained intelligence material. Her post box and the one maintained by V-14 801 [Kainz, ed. r.] were both registered in the same last name. The woman turned over the letter to one of the local police [officers]. The result was that V-14 801's apartment was raided and his field safe and its contents were confiscated. The safe contained just about every communication sent from headquarters to the field. In addition there were agent lists and lists of prospective recruits [! recruits, ed. r.]. Among the recruits and agents were members of the Austrian Foreign Ministry. Stating it mildly, this annoyed GRENGULF 1³⁷⁰”.

Angelegenheit bewusst herausgehalten und keine Einigung zwischen beider Großparteien gesucht wurde.” Ibid. Despite the apparent discrepancy with the preceding sections of this chapter, this may be explained by the fact that Franz Olah did not reach the upper echelons of the Austrian socialist party until the end of the Fifties, when he became chairman of the ÖGB and second president of the lower house.

365 Chief of Base, Salzburg; May 10th 1961; Dispatch EASA-5457 – Progress Report - Salzburg Operations Base (p. 2 and 4). [Link](#).

366 See Reinhard Gehlen; June 14th 1949; Study – Preparatory measures for the Future Organization of an Austrian IS Under the Predominant Influence of the United States; as attachment to Dispatch MGL-A-23 (p. 4-5). [Link](#).

367 According to Blasi's narrative, the main liaison between the GNw and the ORG was Georg Gaup-Berghausen, who had worked for Ronge ever since 1948 and, according to his own statements, eventually also developed contacts inside the Italian and Swiss general staff, as well as with the latter's intelligence apparatus. See Blasi 2005, *Die Anfänge des militärischen Nachrichtendienstes*, p. 133.

368 For some of the available sources on his Nazi past, see Berlin Document Center (ed.), August 10th 1964; Kainz, Walter. [Link](#).

369 Munich Liaison Base; July 29th 1964; Dispatch EGMA-65013 – Request for BDC Checks on Kainz and Kausch. [Link](#).

370 [author redacted]; April 29th 1955; Extract of dispatch EGLA-13644 – Summary of activities Dienststelle 2. [Link](#). Despite not being absolutely certain, since Oswald Peterlungen was the longtime head of the StaPo, and GRENGULF the CIA's cryptonym for StaPo, it does stand to reason that GRENGULF 1 was Peterlungen's code-name.

The entire affair was further complicated by the fact that sometime after 1951 Walter Kainz had also started working for Maximilian Ronge. Following the interception, Kainz was arrested by Austrian police officials on June 8th 1954. According to a classified cable, dated June 10th:

“[The ensuing] house search uncovered large quantity [of] material, including EEI on satellite targets, Austrian police and Fonoff, reports on approaches by Kainz to GRENGULF [StaPo, ed. r.] personnel. Kainz stated [that he's] being run by Americans. StaPo investigators think [that] Kainz [is being] run by U.S. embassy.³⁷¹”

Because Kainz had been formally established as the liaison officer between Gehlen's organization in West Germany and the Austrian StaPo – code-named GREENSOAP-10 – the message went on to describe how this event would inevitably strain the relationship with Austrian authorities:

It “proves ZIPPER [ORG, ed. r.] [is] operating against [the] Austrian government, in contradiction [with] our assurances to GRENGULF 1” and that it “negates UTILITY's [Gehlen, ed. r.] similar assurances to GRENGULF 1”. The message concluded by stating that the two aforementioned consequences “imply either KUBARK [CIA, ed. r.] dishonesty in GRENGULF 1 dealings or lack [of] control over [ORG] Austrian ops.³⁷²”

Just two months later CIA sources reported that “GRENGULF 1 regards this case as closed” since he had:

“[...] stated that their investigation of KAINZ showed him to be a reliable type of person, serious, intelligent and respectable who made an overall good impression on the Austrian police authorities. He further stated that he had no objections against KAINZ continuing to work for the [ORG] in Austria.³⁷³”

However, in 1959, Walter Kainz was apparently dropped by the ORG for unspecified security reasons – officially “to retain Austrian citizenship and work for the [GNw].³⁷⁴” In any case, in mid-1962, he was reported as having become the “commanding officer of Austrian military intelligence station in Vienna³⁷⁵”, but this too didn't last long. After less than a year, another dispatch reported that Kainz had been transferred to Klagenfurt, “because he carried out certain [unspecified, ed. r.] operation(s) without coordinating with the defense ministry.³⁷⁶” As late as 1971, CIA sources still described Major Walter Kainz as the chief of the “area intelligence office Klagenfurt of the Austrian military intelligence service³⁷⁷”.

In conclusion, despite being unable to exclude the possibility that through such individuals as Peterlungen, Lütgendorf, Gaup-Berghausen, Paumgarten, and Kainz – even prior to the Sixties – some form of official communication on the stay behind issue might have actually taken place between US and Austrian officials, this scenario is not supported by the evaluated sources, be it on a political, military, or even strictly

371 [author redacted] Vienna; June 10th 1954; Message to CIA Director: VIEN 2776 – Zipper/Intel (Walter Kainz). [Link](#).

372 Ibid. [Link](#).

373 [author redacted]; August 13th 1955; Extract of dispatch ECLA-10208 – Regarding KAINZ case. [Link](#).

374 Munich Liaison Base; July 29th 1964; Dispatch EGMA-65013 – Request for BDC Checks on Kainz and Kausch. [Link](#).

375 [author redacted]; July 6th 1962; Dispatch EASA-05681 – Major Kainz Walter. [Link](#).

376 [author redacted]; May 27th 1963; Dispatch EAVA-31734 – GREENSOAP-10. [Link](#).

377 [author redacted]; March 22nd 1971; Dispatch DEF-19124 – KAINZ, WALTER /MAJ/. [Link](#).

intelligence-related level. However, as already explained in chapter two, and as touched upon by Gen. Pleiner, a conversation between two or more spies doesn't necessarily equate to official communications/negotiations³⁷⁸. The theory of non-communication is further supported by the sharp difference from other top-secret plans, such as *B-Gendarmerie* and *Aufgebot*, for which the evaluated sources provide many references to frequent exchanges at multiple levels of formality. In fact, of the only three fragments that the author was able to uncover clearly pointing to this issue, all three suggest rather the opposite. Firstly, according to Robert W. Porter's account of the high-level meetings he participated in in Vienna between the 4th and 6th of July 1948, in which even Frank Wisner (then the head of OPC) also took part, none of the key military plans discussed involved stay behind plans for either guerrilla warfare, or the deployment of Austrian WWII veterans³⁷⁹. Secondly, in the context of the planning for the ICEBERG network³⁸⁰, internal discussions were taking place within the CIA in 1951 on whether to at least inform Vienna of their operations.

“It is hoped that we may be able to generate stay-behind operations in conjunction with the Austrian Ministry of the Interior in return for financial and other assistance. [...] [However, ed. r.] the Austrian political situation has not yet reached the point where Austrian officials can be approached. Preparatory discussions have been held.³⁸¹”

Finally, in an internal message dated January 23rd 1960, the Vienna station reported that local newspapers had published a series of articles connected to the discovery of a large British arms cache, which had already taken place some months earlier, but had only recently come to the attention of local authorities. According to an unspecified British agent cited in the message, the Austrian government requested that the UK embassy reveal the locations of any other such sites. Understandably, Vienna was “concerned [about the] existence [of] other such caches whose contents could find their way to illegal and otherwise undesirable groups and has requested [the] British government to reveal any other such sites.” The message then concluded:

“[We, the CIA, ed. r.] must anticipate [the] possibility [that the] same request [is] put to us. In British case, SMOTH rep. [the aforementioned unspecified British intelligence agent, ed. r.] indicated [that] the only caches in question would be several large ones such as one discovered, and not [a] number of very small caches of essentially ammo equipment. We have two large caches and a considerable number [of] small ammo caches. [We] believe our best course of action in case of Austrian inquiry would be to deny knowledge [of] any of these. Advise.³⁸²”

Having said that, the following chapter moves onto the information available about the earliest examples of possible stay behind networks.

378 See Pleiner 2017, p. A5-6 of the Annex.

379 See copy of: Robert W. Porter, Jr. [undated]; Memo for record – Visit to Vienna, 4-6 July 1948. From Prof. Rathkolb's private archive.

380 The network code-named ICEBERG was constituted by a small group of agents overwhelmingly focused on the aspects of coding, underground radio-equipment caches, and the related wireless transmissions. For more information on this network, as well as on all other parts and units of the US stay behind operations in Austria, see chapter seven.

381 CIA [case officer redacted]; January [day unreadable] 1951; Outline of Stay-Behind Operation (p. 1). [Link](#).

382 Vienna [author redacted]; January 23rd 1960; Message to Director – Discovery of British arms cache (p. 2). [Link](#).

6 Early examples of possible US-linked stay behind networks

“Wos is do los, wos wird do gspüt?

Im gaunzen Haus ka Hitler-Büd!

Des is jo gor net woa,

im Kölla hängen zwoa.³⁸³”

(What's happening, what's going on, y'all?

There are no Hitler-pictures on the wall!

Hold on, that actually isn't true,

for in the basement the pictures are two.)

In contrast to the view expressed on several occasions by the Italian parliamentary investigation commission, it is the opinion of the author of this narrative that distinguishing between the members of overt guerrilla units and the “underground resistance” units of a stay behind network does not make much sense for the period before D-Day. Prior to that moment, a functional distinction between individual operatives could be made, based upon different types of training: “spycraft” (tailing targets, dead drops, covert networking, etc.), coding, weapon handling, sabotage, wireless transmissions, etc. However, given that both covert and overt networks can make use of any of the aforementioned skills, the planned membership of overt and covert groups could well have continued to change relatively frequently up until D-Day. This may have depended on a wide range of factors, from individual cases of illness and cases of “security concerns” to other considerations relating to individual stayability. This concept was further elaborated on by the CIA's Salzburg Operations Base (henceforth SOB) in a late 1953 dispatch:

“There is no clear cut stand on the groups as such that some will be guerrilla and others general resistance groups. The members of some groups realize that they have little or no stayability in the event of Soviet occupation; therefore, they are self-volunteered guerrilla fighters. Others in the group will remain and organize for general resistance actions and be the intelligence net and logistical support for the persons in the hills.³⁸⁴”

Given the rather dynamic nature of stay behind networks³⁸⁵, and the fact that most stay behind networks have never been activated, the postwar context does at times make it difficult to differentiate between crowds of right-wing “firearms enthusiasts” and actual paramilitary units. As indicated by the opening verse, the average Austrian's postwar transition towards the principles of anti-fascism turned out to take longer than some had initially expected. Similarly to the Italian and (West) German case, the social acceptance of the reintegration of former Nazi officials into Austrian society – some times even mid-level decision makers – was further fueled by the race on all sides to employ all key (military, espionage, scientific) Nazi personnel that had survived the Third Reich's collapse³⁸⁶. Meanwhile, just as in the other two aforementioned countries, a whole array of right-wing organizations started popping up in (west) Austria too, some even in the immediate aftermath of the

383 Transcript of a popular Austrian verse from the original eastern Austrian dialect. Austrian scholar of analytical social psychology Karl Fallend described this limerick as an “appropriate metaphor for a [specific] societal orientation. Hitler's images hung deep down in each one's individual basement; often deeper than expected.” (“Ein Kinderreim [...] als treffende Metapher für eine gesellschaftliche Befindlichkeit. Die Hitlerbilder im eigenen Keller hängen tief; oft tiefer als man annehmen möchte.”) Fallend 1997, *Unbewusste Zeitgeschichte in Österreich*, cited from werkblatt.at. [Link](#).

384 Chief of Base (Vienna); October 6th 1953; Dispatch EAVA 4479 – Project GRCROOND (p. 1). [Link](#).

385 As clearly shown in Gladio's case, the dynamism of stay behind networks constitutes the very reasons why the author consistently avoids terming them *structures*.

386 Despite being apparently counter-intuitive, even Soviet intelligence agencies were prone to “forget” the individual past of some very shadowy individuals populating postwar central Europe, in order to then employ them either as covert networks, or even as informants. See Kemmerling 1996, Interview with Christian Stifter, p. 25.

cessation of hostilities³⁸⁷. For example, Austrian researcher Rudolf Jeřábek described the *Republikanische Korps Austria* as having been established around former SS officer Walter Girg in the very first years after the war. By referencing the similarity to the Third Reich's own stay behind planning, commonly referred to as Operation *Werwolf*, Jeřábek argued that this group too was making preparations for a Soviet invasion of the Alpine republic. In fact, following their discovery by the authorities in 1949 and the ensuing investigations, the Girg group was found to be in possession of an unspecified “large amount” of weapons and ammunition. However, shortly before his arrest, Girg managed to evade the authorities by escaping to Germany³⁸⁸.

Within the maelstrom of the Austrian intelligence universe described in the last section of the preceding chapter, a handful of historians have pointed to two groups in particular, arguing that these were the ones which, in contrast to other contemporary intelligence gathering nets, manifested the first telltale signs of stay behind networks³⁸⁹. As already mentioned in its title, this chapter is focused on the description and classification of both the structure and development of these two groups. The first, which became known as the Rössner-Soucek group, arose and fell apart so soon and so rapidly that, by the time Gehlen wrote his overview of Austrian intelligence networks in mid-1949³⁹⁰, most of the group's members were already in prison. The second, which has already been mentioned in the preceding chapter, is commonly referred to as Wilhelm Höttl's intelligence network(s).

The Rössner-Soucek network

This group, which historian Daniele Ganser termed a “fascist stay behind network³⁹¹”, was named after its two leading members: Hugo Rössner and Theodor Soucek. After serving in the Wehrmacht and reaching the rank of Lieutenant, the latter returned to his hometown of Graz and went on to become a merchant. Rössner, on the other hand, had served as an official of the *Sturmabteilung* (original paramilitary wing of the Nazi party) until the end of the war. After having been in hiding for a while, he returned to Austria in 1946 under the alias of “Kurt Müller”. These two individuals did not collaborate from the very beginning; in fact, their covert activities started at different points in time.

According to Austrian researcher Thomas Riegler, Rössner established the “ASV Edelweiß” (Alpine Sport Association Edelweiß), together with several other former Nazis, (such as Amon Göth, Fritz Schiller and Johann Balzer), as a cover organization, with outposts in Linz, Wels, Vöcklabruck, and Mondsee. In a September 1946 meeting with former SS officer Viktor Nagler – who by that time had also started gathering

387 For a good overview of the main right-wing organizations in both Austria and Germany, as well as their development during the Cold War, see Montalcino 1996, *Neonazistische Gründerjahre*, p. 90-101.

388 See Jeřábek 2000, *Zur Tätigkeit von “Partisanen”*, p. 140-2. In contrast to the two examples analyzed in the following sections, no trace of this group's connection to US or Austrian intelligence could be found anywhere in the evaluated sources, thereby causing it to fall outside the parameters set in the second chapter. See Reinhard Gehlen; June 14th 1949; Study – Preparatory measures for the Future Organization of an Austrian IS Under the Predominant Influence of the United States; as attachment to Dispatch MGL-A-23 (p. 9). [Link](#).

389 See, for example: Kopeczek 1992, *Fallbeispiele des Kalten Krieges*; Goda 2005, *The Nazi Peddler*, p. 265-92; Ganser 2009, *Secret Warfare in Neutral Austria*, p. 3-19; and Riegler 2015, “Die Rössner-Soucek-Verschwörung”, p. 44-75.

390 See Reinhard Gehlen; June 14th 1949; Study – Preparatory measures for the Future Organization of an Austrian IS Under the Predominant Influence of the United States; as attachment to Dispatch MGL-A-23 (p. 3-9). [Link](#).

391 See Ganser 2009, *Secret Warfare in Neutral Austria*, p. 10-1.

information and supporters, unsurprisingly also former Nazis – the two decided to merge their groups together, thereby explicitly aiming at the formation of covert networks with “clear priorities”. The first contact with Soucek took place only in the following year, but it did not take long for the men to get to know each other better, as well as to align their respective priorities³⁹².

In the meantime, towards the end of 1946, Theodor Soucek started gathering like-minded supporters as well: in just one year, he had already attracted 19 other former officials of diverse Nazi units or branches. Despite formally rejecting both the Nazi party and its (former) leadership, Soucek's group strongly opposed Austria's postwar anti-Nazi legislation. According to Riegler, while the group's ultimate aim seems to have been the establishment of a fourth Austrian party, it certainly also concerned itself with the growing threat of an open conflict between East and West, indeed creating what they termed a “Selbstschutzgemeinschaft” (self-defense community)³⁹³. However, it should also be noted that the membership of this group didn't just include former Nazis. So much so that – even after the merger with the Rössner-Nagler group – it may be argued that the member who ultimately attained most prominence was in fact a socialist politician: Otto Rösch, a former employee of the British censorship office. Within the combined network, his job was to keep tabs on the rest of the Austrian intelligence world, particularly keeping an eye out for individuals and organizations which might collaborate with the group's aims, such as political parties, sections of the Austrian federal government, and others. Allegedly, it was he who provided some of the special stamps and blank forms which the group later used to produce false documentation and forms of ID. In this context, Thomas Riegler argued that the extent of Rösch's later political exploits within the SPÖ suggests that the socialist party was at least aware, if not outright supportive, of his shadowy dealings with former Nazis³⁹⁴.

The details of the combined network's priorities were worked out at a meeting that took place at the “Roter Krebs” Hotel in Salzburg, between the 7th and 8th of June 1947. On this occasion, Hugo Rössner, Theodor Soucek and Viktor Nagler planned to establish a secretive organization, explicitly modeled on the free-masons or the Jesuits, aimed at reuniting all of the best minds, as well as directing them towards their ultimate goal. According to Riegler, this goal was nothing less than the restoration of national-socialist rule over a united German empire. However, this plan was supposed to be im-



Building of the former Roter Krebs Hotel, Salzburg, [undated].

Original credit: Thomas Riegler. Source: oesterreichterrorismus.blogspot.co.at. [Link](#).

plemented only upon the outbreak of open military hostilities between the US and the Soviets, which was expected to happen sooner rather than later. Until then, the organization was supposed to raise the necessary funds through contraband activities, particularly with saccharine and cocaine, while simultaneously coordina-

392 See Riegler 2015, “Die Rössner-Soucek-Verschwörung”, p. 47. See also Thomas Riegler, August 10th 2015, Die “Soucek-Rössner-Verschwörung”, cited from oesterreichterrorismus.blogspot.co.at. [Link](#)

393 See Riegler 2015, “Die Rössner-Soucek-Verschwörung”, p. 48.

394 See *ibid*, p. 65 and Kopeczek 1992, Fallbeispiele des Kalten Krieges, p. 47.

ting all of the necessary preparations. Aside from spreading into the individual provinces, they also planned to create a central office, charged with supplying all the fake documents necessary to conceal and protect all other branches and units³⁹⁵.

However, just four months later, their plans were abruptly foiled by the StaPo, which had been investigating the organization ever since the beginning of the year. Suspicious comings and goings from and to a Linz coffeehouse eventually spurred police agents to raid the place, thereby uncovering the organization's printing equipment (necessary for producing fake documents and ID), stored in a section of the basement accessible only through a hidden door. Further evidence such as lists, documents and other papers found inside the hideout quickly led to the arrest of most of the network's members. Despite the fact that the ensuing police investigation was not able to document the existence of weapon stockpiles, several of the members of the group were found carrying weapons with them at the moment of their arrest³⁹⁶.

Historian Thomas Riegler has done an excellent job in placing the narrative of the investigations into the Rössner-Soucek group within the context of the power-struggle that was raging with the StaPo. In fact, having started in the summer of 1947 and concluded in March of the following year, these investigations took place exactly during the transition between Heinrich Dürmayer and Oswald Peterlungen at the helm of Austria's only intelligence agency. Riegler describes how the prosecution's key witness (and StaPo informant), Josef Mair, who participated in the crucial meeting at the "Roter Krebs" Hotel in June 1947, wrote a report just two days after the meeting, detailing several of Rössner's military plans. Among other things, this report stated that the plans involved gathering enough weapons and ammunition for all members, and that – instead of stockpiling them – members should always keep them close at hand. Even so, the report mentioned several hiding-spots for either weapons or ammunition, such as in the area of Mount Schlenken near Salzburg. The idea was that of an independent underground resistance group, which would have fought only for itself, and which could count on pre-selected farmers across the Austrian countryside to give them assistance and cover, should hostilities actually break out³⁹⁷. However, given that the source of this report was an informant of what then amounted to a stronghold of communist-minded officials, it should be taken with a pinch of salt.

On January 6th 1948, Austrian interior Minister Oskar Helmer (SPÖ) strongly condemned some of the actions committed by the accused:

"I believe that the arrested individuals should be tried and convicted as soon as possible, and that we cannot allow this to be drawn out any further. Furthermore, their sentences need to be exemplary. The people are demanding that we do this."³⁹⁸.

Just eight days later, Helmer completely turned his first statements around, now publicly arguing that the

395 See Riegler 2015, "Die Rössner-Soucek-Verschörung", p. 47.

396 See *ibid*, p. 46 and 49.

397 See *ibid*, p. 61. On his blog Riegler went so far as to describe these particular activities as Rössner's and Soucek's "subversive anti-democratic efforts". Thomas Riegler, August 10th 2015, Die "Soucek-Rössner-Verschörung", cited from oesterreichterrorismus.blogspot.co.at. [Link](#)

398 Original: "Ich bin der Auffassung, dass in kürzester Zeit die Aburteilung der Verhafteten zu erfolgen hat und diese nicht auf die lange Bank geschoben werden darf. Weiters müssen exemplarische Strafen verhängt werden. Die Bevölkerung verlangt dies von uns." Oskar Helmer, January 6th 1948, cited from Riegler 2015, "Die Rössner-Soucek-Verschörung", p. 49.

defendants “were just a handful of undeviating fools and criminals” who, aside from a little contraband, never got further than the planning-stage of their other activities. However, by March, the number of arrests made in connection with this network alone already amounted to over one hundred. The trial, which began on March 31st, eventually followed Helmer's first suggestion, sentencing Soucek, Rössner and Göth to death, while the court handed other high-ranking members like Franz Klinger, Anton Sehnert and Friedlich Schiller long prison sentences. A year later, then-President Karl Renner (SPÖ) commuted the death-sentences to life imprisonment, but even those sentences were not to last long³⁹⁹.



(from left) *Theodor Soucek, Franz Klinger, Hugo Rössner, Anton Göth, Anton Sehnert and Friedrich Schiller standing trial, late Forties*. Original credit: Landesmuseum Joanneum. Source: Polaschek 1998, *Im namen der Republik*, p. 216.

In 1952, just one year after having been elected to office, Austrian President Theodor Körner (ÖVP) decided to grant pardons to all of them under somewhat mysterious circumstances. According to Daniele Ganser, both Soucek and Rössner insisted during the trial that their operations were being carried out “with the full knowledge and support of the US and British occupation powers⁴⁰⁰”. On the other hand, Riegler concluded that, though possible, a cooperation between this network and the US-led stay behind network was unlikely, particularly because some American officials correctly viewed most of the Rössner-Soucek group's leading figures as mere opportunists⁴⁰¹. Accordingly, despite the sheer amount of bipartisan political backing that this network enjoyed, the cooperation with US or Austrian intelligence remains fundamentally unsubstantiated. Aside from Helmer's rather curious turnaround, further evidence of the SPÖ's backing of this group is quite evident when observing Otto Rösch's later career: first he became undersecretary of defense (1959-66), and later he went on to become a consistent ally of longtime Chancellor Bruno Kreisky (SPÖ), occupying both the post of minister of the interior (1970-77) and that of minister of defense (1977-83)⁴⁰².

As noted by Daniele Ganser, upon their release from prison, most of the network's leaders continued to pursue - in one form or the other – their respective right-wing agendas. Most importantly, Theodor Soucek went on to found a right-wing association called *Soziale Ordnungsbewegung Europas* (European social order movement) in 1957. At the association's 1962 general assembly, only sixteen individuals were present, including Fred Borth (then the leader of Legion Europe, a Europe-wide umbrella organization for right-wingers which had been established in 1959)⁴⁰³. According to the Italian parliamentary investigation commission's report on terrorism in South Tirol, Fred Borth was both an informant for Italian intelligence, as well as an

399 Original: “eine Handvoll unentwegter Narren und Verbrecher”. Oskar Helmer, January 14th 1948; cited from *ibid*.

400 See Ganser 2009, *Secret Warfare in Neutral Austria*, p. 11.

401 See Riegler 2015, “Die Rössner-Soucek-Verschwörung”, p. 62.

402 See Otto Rösch's bio on parlament.gv.at, [Link](#).

403 See Ganser 2009, *Secret Warfare in Neutral Austria*, p. 11 and Franceschini 2003, *Spielwiese der Geheimdienste*, p. 209-11.

associate of BAS members Norbert Burger and Peter Kienesberger⁴⁰⁴. However, prior to pursuing these most interesting connections, the narrative now turns to the second example of possible early stay behind networks in Austria, the one led by Wilhelm Höttl who, among many other things, is usually best known for the role that he played at the Nuremberg trials, in which he was the first to mention the suspiciously round number of casualties among the Jewish population.

The intelligence nets of “Willi” Höttl

“On trial Höttl appeared as the crown witness against other senior Nazis including Adolf Eichman, Hitler's close collaborator for the holocaust. Höttl testified that Eichman had told him in August 1944 to »write a report for Himmler on the total number of Jews killed«. Höttl confirmed that in another report Eichman had »estimated the number of Jews killed at six millions of which four millions were killed in the concentration camps of the East while another two millions were killed through shootings above all by the Security Police SD«, the secret service in which Höttl had served.⁴⁰⁵“



Wilhelm Höttl, 1945. Original credit: unknown.
Source: codoh.com. [Link](#).

In recognition of his key testimony, crown witness Höttl⁴⁰⁶ served only two years in jail for, among several other things, having personally collaborated with the likes of Adolf Eichman

404 See IPICR 1992, doc. XXIII, n. 52, p. 89 and 109. [Link](#). See also Riegler 2015, “Die Rössner-Soucek-Verschörung”, p. 67-8.

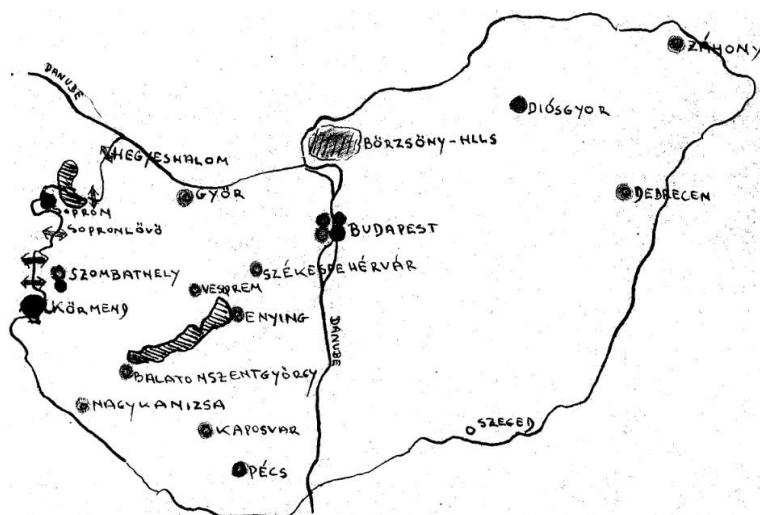
405 Wilhelm Höttl, 1945, cited as is from Ganser 2009, *Secret Warfare in Neutral Austria*, p. 17. For more information on the several problems connected with this figure and with conventional ways of measuring the number of Jewish WWII casualties, see Weber 2001, Wilhelm Höttl and the elusive “six million”, on codoh.com, [Link](#).

406 According to Norman Goda's narrative, Höttl worked during the war towards securing Jewish property confiscated in Austria and Poland for the Hungarian countess Dorothy Pálffy, who at the time acted as one of Höttl's main intelligence sources. Similarly, the related count Fidél Pálffy acted as Höttl's main source in Budapest during the postwar period. After having briefly been reassigned to the Russian front as a disciplinary measure, Höttl started an almost incredible rise through the ranks of the *Reichsicherheitshauptamt* (Nazi internal security intelligence), right after his fellow Austrian Ernst Kaltenbrunner was appointed as the agency's new head; upon his appointment, the latter almost immediately summoned Höttl back from the Russian front. Among other things, Höttl participated in the so-called “rescue” of Mussolini in 1943, as well as in the operation that led to the recovery of Ciano's diplomatic notes, shortly before the latter's execution. Further according to Goda, during the first half of 1944, he actively participated in the reported extermination of some 400,000 Jews deported from Hungary. Höttl's first contact with US officials was established through the then-chief of the OSS station in Bern, Allen Dulles. Höttl repeatedly tried to pose as Kaltenbrunner's peace envoy, and thereby fell right into Dulles' trap, which aimed to drive a wedge between the different Nazi intelligence services. In the last weeks of WWII, Höttl purposefully turned himself in to the 3rd CIC at Kirchdorf, hoping to escape prosecution and imprisonment through his OSS contacts. During his interrogation he described himself as the only person capable of delivering to the US the only surviving intelligence gathering operation in the territories now held by the Soviets, which allegedly reached into Bulgaria, passing through both Hungary and northern Yugoslavia. Since the spirit of wartime camaraderie with Moscow had not yet faded, as soon as the OSS was able to verify that most of the agents referred to by Höttl actually existed, the networks were “rolled up” and disbanded following contact with the Soviet authorities. In fact, Goda concludes that: “Far from dividing the Americans and the Soviets, Höttl spawned rare intelligence cooperation.” See Goda 2005, *The Nazi Peddler*, p. 266-7 and 271-3. For a rather detailed account of Höttl's activities during WWII, see Kopeczek 1992, *Fallbeispiele des Kalten Krieges*, p. 84-91. See also Kopeczek's correspondence with Höttl in *Ibid.*, Annex I, as well as [author and addressee redacted]; December 2nd 1949; Memo – ODI Records on Willi HOETTL (p. 31-3). [Link](#). Besides having already been in contact with Allen Dulles during WWII, declassified documents confirmed that the contact was reestablished in 1948, following Höttl's extraordinarily brief stay in prison. See, for example [author redacted]; September 23rd 1948; *Nachrichtendienstlichen Planungen des Dr. Wilhelm Höttl* (p. 1-2). [Link](#). Apparently, Dulles was thereby simultaneously in contact with one of Austria's most controversial Nazi relics, and with one of the country's most prominent anti-Nazi resistance fighters: Fritz Molden. In fact, as already mentioned in chapter four, soon thereafter Molden even went on to marry Dulles' daughter, Joan Dulles.

and Heinrich Himmler, and was thereby released in late 1947. He was then able to ingratiate himself with the CIC Gmunden field office, which ultimately blocked the attempts that were being made at the time to try Höttl as a war criminal before a People's Court. In particular, he was able to convince the leading officer of the Gmunden office, Thomas A. Lucid, of the value of the contribution he could make to the latter's intelligence gathering efforts⁴⁰⁷. American historian Norman J. W. Goda has even argued that:

“No case illustrates the moral, political, and operational complexities in the postwar intelligence world better than that of Wilhelm Höttl, an SD intelligence officer. Höttl established contacts with the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), the Army Counterintelligence Corps (CIC), the West German Defense Ministry, and even the KGB.⁴⁰⁸”

According to a report written by an unspecified “west-Austrian Sicherheitsdirektion” (provincial security directorate) on Höttl's activities, as of late December 1948, his main contacts in US intelligence were identified as Thomas Lucid, head of CIC in Upper Austria, and George N. Schrantz, of the G2 intelligence division of USFA. Furthermore, while “Willi” might not have planned for an *Anschluss* like in 1938, he reportedly did aspire to enshrine “certain pan-German elements” into the Austrian institutional backbone. The report further states that Höttl's operation was currently receiving a total of 85,000 AS (then corresponding to \$1,700) per month⁴⁰⁹ which, in the context of poverty-stricken postwar Austria, was enough to buy a great deal of goods, services, and acquiescence. According to Austrian historian Arnold



↔ BORDER CROSSING POINTS

- LOCATIONS OF SUBSOURCES FOR 10/7124
- LOCATIONS OF SUBSOURCES FOR 10/7854
- LOCATIONS OF SUBSOURCES FOR 10/7844
- LOCATIONS OF SUBSOURCES FOR 10/4324
- PROPOSED SUBSOURCE FOR 10/7854

Map of the locations of Montgomery's subsources and border crossings. Original credit: unknown. Source : [Counter Intelligence Corps](#); [undated]; Report C-80 – Net project MONTGOMERY (p. 23). [Link](#).

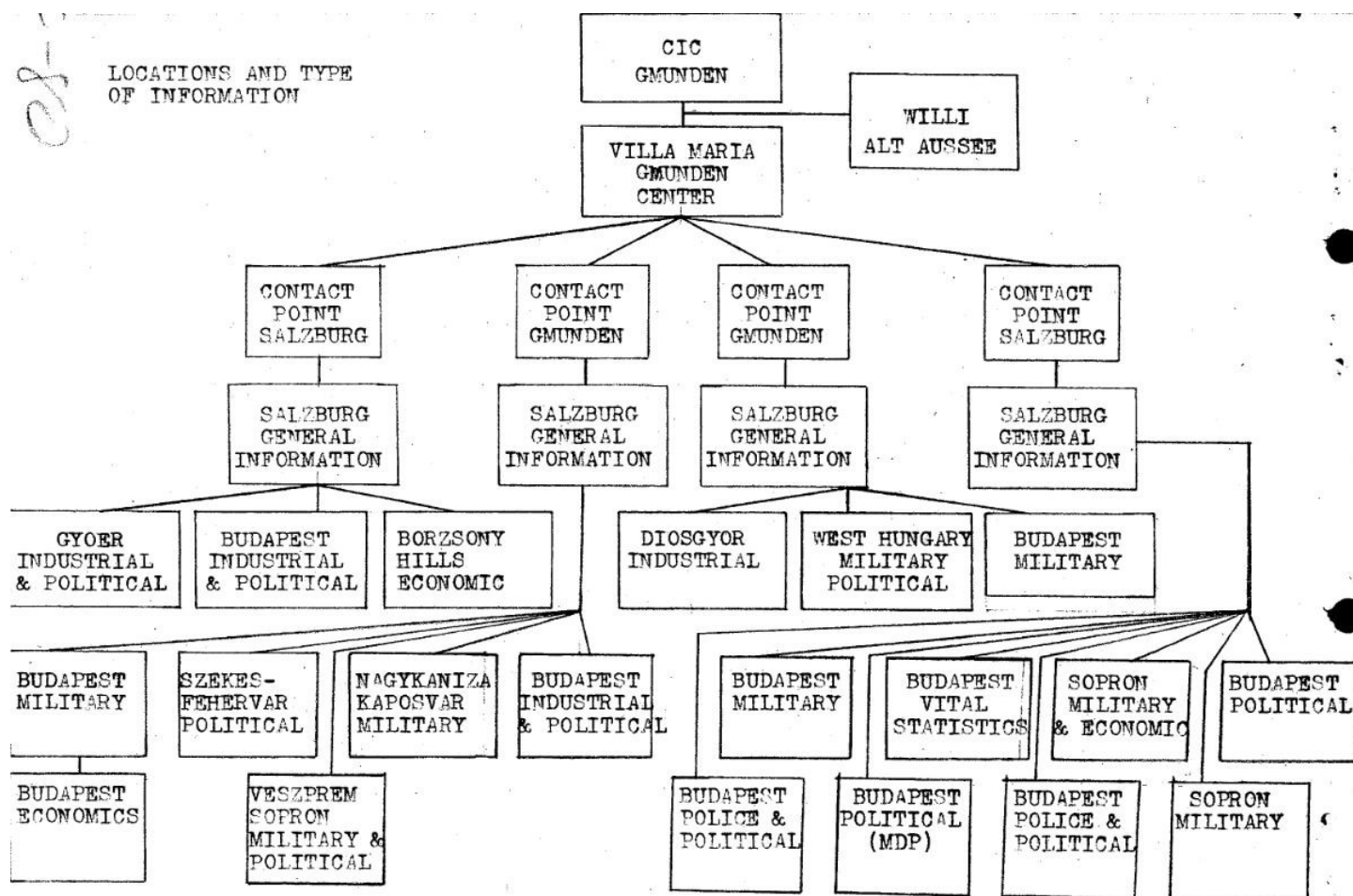
Kopeczek, Höttl participated in the organization of at least one stay behind network, mainly constituted by Hungarian emigrants, who were trained in the mountainous region called *Totes Gebirge*⁴¹⁰. As early as July 1948, together with Erich Kernmayer and Karl Kowarik, “Willi” established and led the first of two elaborate spying networks from the Gmunden CIC field office .

407 See Goda 2005, *The Nazi Peddler*, p. 273 and Riegler 2016, *Strukturen für den geheimen Krieg*, p. 672.

408 Goda 2005, *The Nazi Peddler*, p. 265. In this context, Riegler stated that “Like no-one else, he [Wilhelm Höttl] represents the unholy alliance between western intelligence services and former Nazis in their common fight against communism.” (“Er steht wie kein anderer für die unheilige Allianz zwischen westlichen Diensten und Ex-Nazis im Zeichen des Kampfes gegen den Kommunismus.”) Thomas Riegler; January 5th 2015; *Österreichs kalte Krieger*, cited from [oesterreichterrorismus.blogspot.co.at](#). [Link](#).

409 See [unspecified] Westösterreichische Sicherheitsdirektion; March 9th 1949; Bericht – Die Nachrichtenorganisation Dr. Wilhelm Höttls (p. 1 and 4). [Link](#).

410 See [author redacted]; October 29th 1948; Vorgänge im Kreis Dr. Wilhelm Höttl. [Link](#); Counter Intelligence Corps; [undated]; Report C-80 – Net project MONTGOMERY (p. 2). [Link](#). See also Kopeczek 1992, *Fallbeispiele des Kalten Krieges*, p. 96-7.

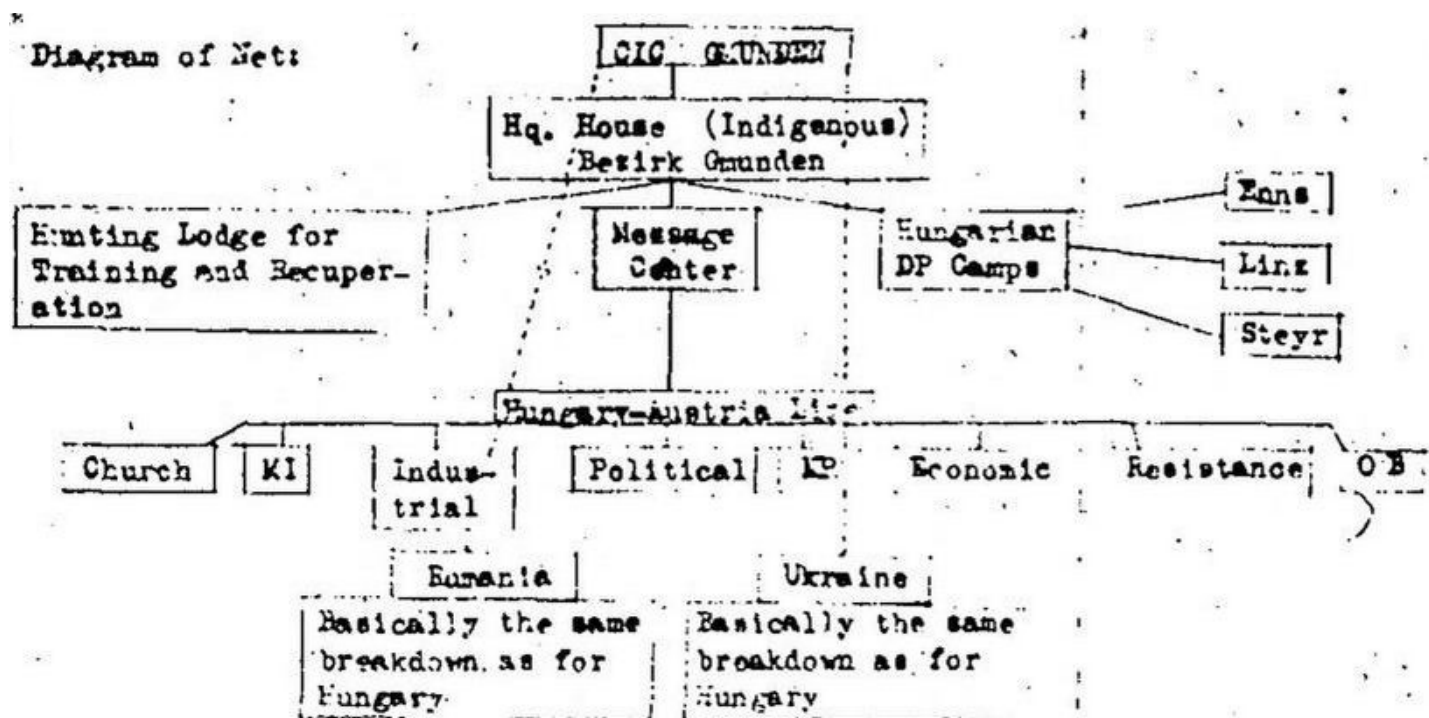


Under the operational leadership of former SS officer Karol Ney⁴¹¹, the network code-named *Montgomery* extended into Hungary and reported on local military and economic activities, counting on the collaboration of several dozen agents, most of whom were members of Ney's Hungarian right-wing paramilitary organization⁴¹². While the network's HQ was housed in a CIC building in Lambach, just 25km away from Gmunden, most of the training activities took place in the aforementioned Totes Gebirge area. While still part of Montgomery, it is likely that Ney was simultaneously in charge of Hungarian agents for French intelligence, which he continued to do even after his dismissal by Höttl for “operational incompe-

411 Karol Ney was a Hungarian artillery officer until 1943, and then became an SS officer due to services rendered. The following year he went on to hunt down Jews, defeatists and saboteurs across Budapest. Apart from his participation in the *Montgomery* net, which started in the summer of 1948, Ney was the head of the “Hungarian Union of Veterans of the War against the Soviet Union” (as termed by Norman Goda), and he used his intelligence assignments to raise funds for his own underground anti-communist project in Hungary. See [author redacted]; October 29th 1948; Vorgänge im Kreis Dr. Wilhelm Höttl (p. 2). [Link](#). He furthermore took part in a series of training exercises around an Austrian Alpine Club hut near Grünau. In other sources, a “Lager” (camp) is mentioned as being near Grünau. The only clear reference to the activities that actually took place within this camp was made in another CIC report of 1948: it was described as a place where Ney's agents “undergo largely unnecessary training sessions, most of which are of an ideological nature, with lectures against Marxism etc.”. (“[...], wo den Leuten eine zum grössten Teil völlig überflüssige “Schulung”, vornemlich ideologischer Art, mit Vorträgen gegen den Marxismus etc. verabreicht werde.”) [author redacted]; November 5th 1948; Vorgänge in der Nachrichtenorganisation Dr. Wilhelm Höttls (p. 1). [Link](#). It does however seem that the facility was closed down following Ney's dismissal in 1948. See Riegler 2016, Strukturen für den geheimen Krieg, p. 673-4 and Goda 2005, The Nazi Peddler, p. 275. For more information on Károl (or Caroli) Ney, see Kopeczek 1992, Fallbeispiele des Kalten Krieges, p. 94-9.

412 In German-language sources, this organization was called “Antibolschewistische Magyarische Hauptkampflinie”, which literally translates to: major anti-Bolshevist Hungarian front.

supplying mostly general – or even false information – thereby leading to a recommendation for discontinuation of support⁴¹⁸.



Organizational diagram of the Mt. Vernon network. Original credit: unknown. Source: [author and addressee redacted]; December 2nd 1949; Memo – ODI Records on Willi HOETTL (p. 9). [Link](#).

The second of Höttl's networks – code-named *Mount Vernon* – functioned primarily as an Austrian intelligence network, but also had a second set of objectives: “an intelligence service, which in case of necessity shall be able to function as an anti-Soviet underground movement.”⁴¹⁹ Despite some differences, such as the fact that virtually all of this net's operatives were Austrian nationals, it too did not survive much more than a year. Mount Vernon's HQ were also located in Gmunden, in “Villa Bauer, Ort 55”, which was formally registered in the name of the chief of operations, Karl Kowarik⁴²⁰. Under the authority of Douglas J. Morrison – the special agent in charge of the CIC Gmunden office, Operation Mount Vernon was formally launched on October 1st 1948. The stated mission of this network was the:

“Penetration of the Central [KPÖ] Committee itself, the COMINFORM and all other Communist

418 See [author and addressee redacted]; December 2nd 1949; Memo – ODI Records on Willi HOETTL (p. 19-20). [Link](#).

419 Original: “[...] eine österreichische Nachrichtenorganisation aufzubauen, die im Ernstfall als antibolschewistische Untergrundorganisation funktionieren soll. ” [author redacted]; September 23rd 1948; Nachrichtendienstlichen Planungen des Dr. Wilhelm Höttl (p. 4). [Link](#). Compare with [author redacted]; October 29th 1948; Vorgänge im Kreis Dr. Wilhelm Höttl (p. 4). [Link](#). In this context, Austrian historian Thomas Riegler termed it both an “underground cadre and an intelligence net in the case of war.” See Riegler 2016, Strukturen für den geheimen Krieg, p. 674.

420 See Counter Intelligence Corps; January 5th 1950; Report MAVA-4460 – Höttl, Wilhelm Vol.4_0002 (p. 17-8 and 20). [Link](#). This report also states that at the time Höttl was not living in either of the two aforementioned villas paid for by the CIC, but in a third one, also located in Gmunden on Alt Aussee 53. In another report from late October 1948, Karl Kowarik – alias *Berger* – is described as having participated in a meeting in Bavaria with an unspecified interlocutor, “presumably to organize the training of his base-leaders, particularly in the fields of transmissions and sabotage tactics.” (“Kowarik ist vor kurzem in Bayern gewesen, vermutlich, um dort Abmachungen betreffend die Ausbildung seiner Stützpunktführer vor allem im Funkdienst und in der Taktik der Sabotage zu treffen.”). See [author redacted]; October 29th 1948; Vorgänge im Kreis Dr. Wilhelm Höttl (p. 4). [Link](#). This same report furthermore described Kowarik as being in contact with Theodor Würner, the then-head of the ÖVP's own intelligence network in Upper Austria, and as having been paid 2000 AS for an unspecified reason. It is furthermore unclear whether payments were made on a regular basis or not.

organizations, espionage of all Soviet activities to include industrial, scientific and military information.⁴²¹”

The available documents suggest that, similarly to Montgomery, this net had a total of eight main sources, which in turn handled nineteen “subsources”, as well as some eight different couriers⁴²². Furthermore, the intelligence received through this unit may be divided as follows: 5% technical; 10% political (general); 15% economic and industrial; 20% military; and 50% political (KPÖ-related). Apparently, in contrast to Kowarik, who spent most of his time at the network's headquarters, Höttl visited the facility “at least” twice a week⁴²³. However, one of the evaluated documents also stated that Kowarik was responsible for having “injudiciously” selected some of the sources and subsources, and particularly for not having consulted the CIC control agent Douglas Morrison in the process. Apparently, Mount Vernon had a monthly budget of 33,000 AS; however, the expense sheet separately estimates a cost of a further 8,000 AS per month for “maintaining 4 radios in Russian occupied zone (expected to be in operation 1 May 1949)⁴²⁴”. Similarly to Montgomery, relatively soon, this network was also accused of providing false information several times in a row, this eventually leading to the recommendation for disbandment⁴²⁵. According to the aforementioned report written by the (unspecified) Austrian security directorate, serious preparations had been going on for months in Germany to “stigmatize “Willi” as a traitor, to systematically destroy all of his political capital among German-nationalist circles, and thereby to destroy his chances of negotiating with the Austrian federal government”⁴²⁶. One of those who probably had at least one hand in the demise of Höttl's intelligence networks was none other than Reinhard Gehlen.

“Dr. Schneider [Gehlen, ed. r.] particularly deplores the support that has been given to Dr. Wilhelm [Höttl] whom he considers to be a man of such low character and poor political record that his use for intelligence activities, regardless of how profitable they may be, is a shortsighted policy by the US. [...] Major Milano stated in the spring of 1949 that this group, now in some way politically connected with Herbert Kraus' 4th party, has received approximately \$200,000 from USFA since the end of the war⁴²⁷. ”

As already mentioned in the preceding chapter, Gehlen even advised the creation of an “inner circle”, where all the major groups would be represented, including Mallner – the head of the ORG's operations in Austria. While advocating the exclusion of three particular networks, mostly staffed by former Nazi intelligence agents, including of course the ones led by Höttl, Gehlen proposed that Erwin Lahousen (a close colleague of Maximilian Ronge) be made the chief of such an “inner circle”. He also suggested that this “common representation” be funded to the tune of \$10,000 a month, in order to “exercise a certain control of its

421 Counter Intelligence Corps; January 5th 1950; Report MAVA-4460 – Höttl, Wilhelm Vol.4_0002 (p. 30 and 52-3). [Link](#).

422 See *ibid*, (p. 57-61). [Link](#).

423 See *ibid*, (p. 64-5). [Link](#).

424 *Ibid*, (p. 16; 19; and 21). [Link](#).

425 See [author and addressee redacted]; December 2nd 1949; Memo – ODI Records on Willi HOETTL (p. 18). [Link](#). See also Riegler 2015, “Die Rössner-Soucek-Verschwörung”, p. 51 and Thomas Riegler, August 24th 2015, Ein vergessener Spionage-“Hotspot” des Kalten Krieges: Gmunden-Altmünster; cited from [oesterreichterrorismus.blogspot.co.at](#). [Link](#).

426 [unspecified] Westösterreichische Sicherheitsdirektion; March 9th 1949; Bericht – Die Nachrichtenorganisation Dr. Wilhelm Höttls (p. 4). [Link](#).

427 Chief of Station (Karlsruhe); June 21st 1949; Dispatch MGL-A-23 – ODEUM Interest in Austrian Intelligence Circles (p. 1). [Link](#).

intelligence activities by allocating intelligence missions accordingly.⁴²⁸ Shortly prior to the disbandment of both of Höttl's networks in the second half of 1949 which, as already stated, was largely due to a decline in the quality of the information they gathered⁴²⁹, both “Willi” and Kernmayer participated in a:

“secret meeting between high-ranking members of the Austrian People's Party [ÖVP, ed. r.] and former Nazis in Gmunden on May 27, 1949, the object of which was to form a cooperative relationship in connection with the forthcoming elections. Höttl left the meeting with the assignment of disrupting the political activities of Dr. Albert Kraus, the Chief of the Association of Independents [VdU, ed. r.], who himself was the chief of four nets working for the CIC.⁴³⁰”

Austrian security authorities interpreted it otherwise, arguing that his immediate goal was to achieve legal status by working for US intelligence, but that Höttl was also preparing for the Allied withdrawal from Austria, by gathering supporters of the “nationalist potential”, thereby aiming to establish a political formation large enough that it would have become impossible to ignore⁴³¹. Apparently, it was Kernmayer who, against “Willi's” initial opposition, energetically pushed to involve their organization in the political affairs relating to Austria's right-wing party (VdU)⁴³². Norman Goda further contextualized the spy's downfall by stating that this meeting happened more or less during the period when “the CIC began to lose patience with Höttl and his networks, [...], when Höttl insisted that some of his subordinates be protected from Austrian court proceedings.⁴³³” Following the reported decline in quality of the gathered intelligence, a mid-level meeting took place in August 1949 at the 430th CIC detachment, which in turn soon led to the termination of both of Höttl's networks. In an undated memo for the record, James V. Milano stated that: “The problem which climaxed in the discontinuance of HOETTL's activities was the Oberweis meeting between the People's Party [ÖVP, ed. r.] and the Nazi element, in which HOETTL was the main aspirant, and of which he failed to notify his CIC superiors”. Milano further accused Höttl of paying too much attention to his political dealings, and thereby too little to his intelligence duties, drastically affecting the quality of the reports generated: “His recent reports (six months) have been extremely poor and have been on a steady decline.” Milano also mentioned that the monthly costs of \$2,600 were not justified by the information gathered⁴³⁴.

428 Reinhard Gehlen; June 14th 1949; Study – Preparatory measures for the Future Organization of an Austrian IS Under the Predominant Influence of the United States; as attachment to Dispatch MGL-A-23 (p. 4-5). [Link](#).

429 See Riegler 2015, “Die Rössner-Soucek-Verschwörung”, p. 51 and Thomas Riegler, August 24th 2015, Ein vergessener Spionage-“Hotspot” des Kalten Krieges: Gmunden-Altmünster; cited from oesterreichterrorismus.blogspot.co.at. [Link](#).

430 Goda 2005, The Nazi Peddler, p. 276.

431 See [unspecified] Westösterreichische Sicherheitsdirektion; March 9th 1949; Bericht – Die Nachrichtenorganisation Dr. Wilhelm Höttls (p. 3-4). [Link](#).

432 [author redacted]; September 5th 1949; Stillegung des Nachrichtenapparats Dr. Wilhelm Höttls (p. 2). [Link](#). This report then went on to state how, immediately following the sudden disbandment of both of Höttl's nets, Kernmayer suspected the move to have been orchestrated by the ÖVP. In particular, it seems that he identified Leopold Figl, Karl Gruber and Ferdinand Graf as those who “used their American connections to discredit Höttl and particularly Kernmayer in their eyes”. However, given that this argument largely rested upon their involvement with the VdU, it only goes to show an example of the contradictions which usually take place in this weird stratum of society.

433 Goda 2005, The Nazi Peddler, p. 277. Goda mentions Dr. Hubert Hueber (probably Hüber), a former Gestapo chief in Salzburg, and Höttl's former secretary for the Mt. Vernon operation Helmuth Hecke. Astonishingly enough, while the former was protected, the CIC refused to do so in the case of the latter.

434 See James V. Milano; [undated]. Cited from Counter Intelligence Corps; January 5th 1950; Report MAVA-4460 – Höttl, Wilhelm Vol.4_0002 (p. 96). [Link](#). According to a dispatch from late March 1948, Milano played at least an advisory role in the CIA's “penetration” of the Rot-Weiß-Rot radio station, which is filed under the activities of the stay behind network ICEBERG. For more information, see chapter seven and Vienna Station; March 30th 1948; Message to Washington – Vien-1347. [Link](#).

“Due to the nature of his contacts and because of his background, we are in agreement that we do not believe that he will return and work for the Russians. We do believe that there is a possibility that he might try to ingratiate himself with either the British or French. [...] Another factor which was instrumental in the elimination of these projects was that HOETTL [...] was never operationally honest with his Headquarters – i.e. it was practically impossible to learn the extent of contact and dealings of his sources as well as their identity.⁴³⁵”

When in the second half of 1949 the CIC finally decided to drop both of the described networks altogether, the move more or less coincided with a large generational turnover within the Austrian detachment. Some 50 officers were replaced by other, mostly younger, colleagues. In particular, nine of the CIC officials with whom Höttl had most contact were among them. While the source does not make an explicit link between “Willi” being dropped and the large personnel turnover, it does seem to suggest it implicitly⁴³⁶. Unsurprisingly, when Höttl tried to appeal against the decision to dismiss him to James Milano by way of numerous letters, his efforts were in vain⁴³⁷. Even less surprisingly, “Willi’s” former associates and colleagues very soon started showing up at the CIC’s door, offering to work – either individually or in groups – for as little as a third of their earlier salaries⁴³⁸. By 1950, Höttl was in indirect contact with French intelligence, to whom he proceeded to resell some of the same reports he had produced for the CIC. He soon entered into permanent employment through the French agent Raimund Strangl, and continued to deliver low-quality information, either copied from newspapers or from clear Hungarian radio broadcasts⁴³⁹.

In 1952, against the explicit concerns voiced by both the CIC and the CIA, Höttl managed to become part of one of the major “semi-private” intelligence services competing to become the official West German intelligence agency, and one of the main competitors of the Gehlen organization, the Friedrich-Wilhelm-Heinz-Amt, named after its chief officer. Höttl’s intelligence career then finally ended on October 2nd 1952, when even Heinz dropped him for supplying false reports⁴⁴⁰.

“In the end, U.S. intelligence agencies determined to crush him professionally and to bury all evidence of contact with him once the possibility was clear that he was working for the Soviets and that his past association with the United States could become public knowledge.⁴⁴¹”

In conclusion, due to the unspecific character of some of the available sources, the author was unable to conclusively determine whether – prior to their discovery/disbandment – either of the networks analyzed in this

435 James V. Milano; [undated]. Cited from Counter Intelligence Corps; January 5th 1950; Report MAVA-4460 – Höttl, Wilhelm Vol.4_0002 (p. 96-7). [Link](#).

436 [author redacted]; September 5th 1949; Stillegung des Nachrichtenapparats Dr. Wilhelm Höttls (p. 1 and 3). [Link](#).

437 See [author and addressee redacted]; December 2nd 1949; Memo – ODI Records on Willi HOETTL (p. 3). [Link](#). For the rest of Höttl’s letter, see Ibid. page 4.

438 See *ibid*, (p. 1 and 3). [Link](#).

439 See Goda 2005, *The Nazi Peddler*, p. 277-8 and Riegler 2015, “Die Rössner-Soucek-Verschörung”, p. 52. For a different interpretation on the background of Höttl’s intelligence demise, see Thomas Riegler; November 11th 2015; Die “Netze” des Dr. Höttl, cited from oesterreichterrorismus.blogspot.co.at. [Link](#).

440 See Goda 2005, *The Nazi Peddler*, p. 280-1.

441 *Ibid*, p. 265. For more information on the sources claiming Höttl to be also a Soviet agent, see *ibid*. p. 277, 279, 281-4. For more on the alleged Soviet connection to Taras Borodajkewycz, see [unspecified] Westösterreichische Sicherheitsdirektion; March 9th 1949; Bericht – Die Nachrichtenorganisation Dr. Wilhelm Höttls (p. 8). [Link](#).

chapter had already established their respective stay behind operations. As clearly demonstrated by the Gladio case, some of the stay behind networks may turn out to be mainly plans on paper, and not much else. After having copiously contextualized this rather atypical historical phase, without further ado the narrative of the following chapter jumps straight into the heart of this research's main topic: the documented cases of CIA-led stay behind networks in Austria.

7 Documented cases of US-led networks

Regretfully, aside from referencing the multiple contributions made by Austrian scholars, as well as both Olah's and Molden's own statements, this chapter is overwhelmingly based upon American primary sources. In part, this is due to the several instances in which officials of various ranks and affiliations have documentably destroyed unspecified amounts of primary sources relating to national security and/or intelligence-related matters. During the early Sixties, Franz Olah proceeded to shred all of the papers concerning his covert activities, in the archives of both the trade unions and the ministry of the interior. In the course of the transition from GNw and its successor organizations, this agency too went ahead in destroying a “large” number of files and documents. Finally, as already mentioned at the beginning of chapter four, the same happened again in 1990, when the ministry of the interior performed a second purge of all of the primary sources, this time extending it to include all those dating back to before 1972⁴⁴². Given the sharp disparity between the amount of available US and Austrian sources, the author is left with a moral duty to explicitly remind the reader of this fact.

Contrary to what was stated by Swiss historian Daniele Ganser, who argued that *ÖWSGV* is the code-name of the Austrian stay behind network⁴⁴³, the evaluated sources clearly indicate the cryptonym to be *GRCROOND*. Perhaps the best description of both the plan and priorities of this network can be found in an early 1954 report (i.e. half-a-dozen years after its original establishment). In some aspects, the similarities to the Gladio case are very striking.

“Mission: To develop and strengthen the Austrian paramilitary program along the following lines: to develop the existing and potential paramilitary assets of 1) a labor union having assets situated throughout Central and Eastern Austria [GRDAGGER, ed. r.], 2) detached indigenous groups in the Salzburg-Tirol areas [GRLAUNCH, ed. r.], and 3) individual assets (indigenous) located throughout Austria; to select and cache/equip suitable operational bases from which these groups may operate during hostilities; to establish an Evasion [&] Escape line from Eastern to Western Austria with feeder lines from the Czech and Hungarian borders and connecting links to the Swiss, Italian and German borders.

Plan: To spot and recruit sufficient personnel to build the nucleus and skeleton groups needed to achieve peacetime development of the objectives outlined in [the] mission; to spot and earmark for emergency recruitment those remaining personnel needed to activate the paramilitary program at full strength in the event of hostilities.⁴⁴⁴

In contrast to some of the leading figures of the American intelligence establishment, who expected their covert networks to supply the maximum support from the onset of the hypothetical hot war, in a mid-1953

442 For more information on these instances, see Konrad/Lechner 1992, “Millionenverwehlung”, p. 13; Kopeczek 2000, *Die amerikanischen Waffenlager*, p. 110; Thomas Riegler, October 1st 2015, “Sorry guys, no gold” on oesterreichterrorismus.blogspot.co.at. [Link](#); Riegler 2016, *Strukturen für den geheimen Krieg*, p. 676; Pleiner 2017, p. A6-7 of the Annex; and Kemmerling 1996, *Explosive Erdlöcher*, p. 13.

443 See Ganser 2009, *Secret Warfare in Neutral Austria*, p. 12. The acronym stands for: “Österreichischer Wander-, Sport-, und Geselligkeitsverein”; which in turn may be translated as: Austrian hiking, sport, and sociability association. This front was created by Franz Olah to mask some of his own group's activities, rather than being the entire network of which his group was only one (major) part. For more information on the *ÖWSGV*, which appears to have been primarily used as a cover for the W/T training and setting up of the unit's own radio transmitting network, see Konrad/Lechner 1992, “Millionenverwehlung”, p. 64. For Oliver Rathkolb's overview of Olah's covert activities and the *ÖWSGV*, see Rathkolb 1997, *Washington ruft Wien*, p. 204-6.

444 [case officer redacted]; January 1st-31st 1954; Status report – Project *GRCROOND*. [Link](#). See also Riegler 2015, “Die Rössner-Soucek-Verschwörung”, p. 59.

dispatch, SOB⁴⁴⁵ corrected this aspect of HQ's original estimation by arguing:

“[...] the statement is made that the scheme of paramilitary pre-D-Day development is to provide maximum unconventional support for overt military operations during initial phases of hot war, when further on in the paragraph the statement is made that it will take two to six months to organize and expand from the nucleus after D-Day. It should be made a matter of record that the only way a resistance organization can survive and operate is if it is given time to organize securely, and this at present is planned only after the event of hostilities; consequently, the maximum effort of unconventional support cannot be given in the initial stages⁴⁴⁶.”

The same report then went to describe the amount of information that US military personnel would have obtained from the CIA prior to being sent to Austria on whatever kind of mission:

“Information as to guerrilla and/or underground organization locations will not be given to military personnel in pre-flight or combat briefings in order for evaders to establish contact due to the possibility of exposure of the locations to the enemy through interrogation or captured military personnel. The amount of information to be given to airmen in pre-flight briefings is a decision to be made at that specific time guided by the tactical situation. Detailed methods to be used for evaders and escapers entering the E&E lines have yet to be determined.⁴⁴⁷”

The Austrian stay behind network was composed by four main covert units: aside from the two explicit paramilitary ones (GRDAGGER and GRLAUNCH), which are the subject of the central sections of this chapter, the network also had an E&E line, as well as a compartmentalized group of radio operators, known as ICEBERG. Given that the first two units mentioned are both more problematic and more interesting, a larger degree of attention was given to the corresponding sources available by tackling both of them in separate sections. On the other hand, ICEBERG and the E&E line form the joint subject of the following section⁴⁴⁸. However, since a significant amount of relevant information has surfaced in connection with the underground caches, and given that the overwhelming majority of such depots' locations were not known to specific units/agents, prior to moving onto the description of the units themselves, the rest of this opening section focuses on the CIA's caching efforts in Austria.

Most of the modest scholarly attention on the topic of the US underground caches has been focused on a 1959 CIA dispatch, which lists a series of locations along with the corresponding years of emplacement.

445 Tactical supervision for most of the network was the task of Salzburg Operations Base (SOB), which, according to a background review of the base's history, dated May 10th 1961, was originally established in “c. 1947”, and provisionally closed following the signing of the Austrian Treaty in 1955. The Austrian networks developed during this period were then maintained by two CIA officers operating out of the Munich Operation Base (henceforth, MOB), but under the supervision of the chief of the Austrian CIA station. Together with this element of supervision in Vienna, these two aforementioned officers soon became known as the Austrian Rear Base (henceforth, ARB). Since, “for a variety of reasons” the ARB's administration proved to be “difficult”, in September 1958 the ARB agents were physically relocated to Berchtesgaden (on the very south-eastern border of Germany, just 25km away from the city of Salzburg) but technically reassigned to SOB. See Chief of Base, (Salzburg); May 10th 1961; Dispatch EASA-5457 – Progress Report - Salzburg Operations Base (p. 1). [Link](#).

446 Chief of Base (Vienna); October 6th 1953; Dispatch EAVA 4479 – Project GRCROOND (p. 1). [Link](#).

447 Ibid, (p. 1-2). [Link](#).

448 In contrast to what is suggested by Thomas Riegler, according to the evaluated sources, none of the arms and explosives caches emplaced in Austria had been originally earmarked for either ICEBERG or the E&E line. See Riegler 2015, “Die Rössner-Soucek-Verschwörung”, p. 58.

According to this list, 12 locations are identified by the year 1951, 14 by the year 1952, 3 by the year 1953, and 35 by the year 1954⁴⁴⁹. As noted by both Oliver Rathkolb and Thomas Riegler, a comparison between this list and the depots uncovered in 1996 does show a number of direct matches⁴⁵⁰.

“Complete reports are now at Headquarters on the 1954 caching program carried out in Austria from 30 June to 21 September. During this period, 45 caches were emplaced in 35 locations by USFA personnel under the supervision of two SOB officers. All the caches were believed to be placed in a secure and effective manner and it is thought that they will remain so for an indefinite period, barring accidental disclosure.”⁴⁵¹

Unsurprisingly, none of the evaluated sources give clear indications on the budget-related aspects of the CIA's Austrian caching program. In fact, all financial information is completely redacted in most cases like personal data. However, one possible means of funding this endeavour was the money which, as early as the late Forties, Washington had hurried to appropriate to finance Austria's military needs⁴⁵². One of the available sources – a mid-1953 dispatch – clearly states that some of the equipment cached in 1952 was borrowed from the United States Forces in Austria (USFA).

<i>Network name</i>	<i>operators</i>	<i>W/T caches</i>
GRLAUNCH	3	6
GRDAGGER	3	4
E&E line (4 in training)	1	2
“blind sets”		5
<i>Distribution of W/T caches and trained operators among the network's main networks, as of late 1955. Source: [case officer redacted]; November 1955; Status report – Project “GRCROOND” (p. 3). Link.</i>		

“As regards [the] equipment to be given back to USFA to replace what was borrowed for the 1952 cachings, 150 pistols were obtained from EUCOM thru [!through, ed. r.] the German Mission, 4,000 lbs of C-3 are enroute from USA to Austria, and USFA G4 has agreed at the undersigned's request to forego replacement of the 300 rounds of 60 mm mortar ammunition.”⁴⁵³

Aside from the reference to the US's diplomatic mission in (West) Germany, this same report further documents the possibility that a certain share of the equipment cached in Austria might have come from Germany, and maybe even vice-versa. Under the heading “uncached equipment (Germany)”, the report went on to state:

“The recovery of 47 caches is now completed. Much of the material [which had been] cached in sandy ground, is in good condition, but the balance, which was in clay, was under water for the most part. [...] The equipment is being given to the army for reconditioning, after which the Austrian Mission will send a man up

449 Chief of Base (Salzburg); April 27th 1959; Dispatch EASA 5184 – Inventory of SOB Arms Caches (p. 2-5). [Link](#). This report goes on to specify that, of all the caches, while the two located in Hochschwab and Sengsengebirge were large (intended for upwards of one hundred men), all others are described as being relatively small, thereby clearly correlating with the source quoted at the end of chapter five, see *ibid.* (p. 1) and Vienna [author redacted]; January 23rd 1960; Message to Director – Discovery of British arms cache (p. 2). [Link](#).

450 See Rathkolb 1998, *Österreich in den strategischen Planungen der USA*, p. 27 and Riegler 2015, “Die Rössner-Soucek-Verschörung”, p. 60. However, what these two respected authors failed to highlight is that the 1959 list does not account for the caches emplaced thereafter. For a documented example of cache emplacement post 1954, see chapter nine.

451 [case officer redacted]; October 1954; Status report – Project “GRCROOND” (p. 2). [Link](#). Sure enough, one of those 45 caches was accidentally discovered just one year later, partly because in the summer of 1955 a second cache had been emplaced in the very same location, just a few hundred meters away. For more information on this particular incident, see chapter nine.

452 See for example the copy of: Joint Strategic Plans Committee; October 31st 1949; Report to the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JSPC 876/53) – Military Aid Program for Austria (p. 4 and p. 8-9). From Prof. Rathkolb's private archive. This report details how the JCS had endorsed the Air Force's proposal calling for \$65 million in specific military aid to be granted to Austria towards the funding of its defense. Not one of the other evaluated sources corroborated the possibility of the stay behind network having been funded through these military grants.

453 CIA [author redacted]; June 24th 1953; Dispatch EAVW-1466 – GRCROOND - Paramilitary (p. 3). [Link](#).

to look it over and select the items they may wish to store in Austria for eventual use⁴⁵⁴. ”

As already touched upon by the aforementioned source, running a caching program does not merely involve the burying of the depots. For instance, the rudimentary conservation methods initially employed by CIA/USFA staff to prepare the equipment ended up causing several large recovery actions, as well as causing said methods to gradually improve. This appears to be a reasonable explanation for the weaponry's different states of conservation, as discovered in 1996. According to the available sources, this process started as early as in 1953⁴⁵⁵. According to the GRCROOND project status report from early 1954:

“Plans are being made to recover paramilitary equipment presently in 24 caches throughout Austria and replace it with new equipment more suitably prepared for caching by an improved dipping process. The new equipment will be cached by a cleared team of US Army personnel under the supervision of CIA staff employees in the old sites but in different pits; the recovered equipment will be reconditioned and returned to stock.⁴⁵⁶”

Apparently, by the spring of 1955 the US caching program started to perceive the first effects of both the scope and longevity of its own efforts. Despite SOB's recommendation to emplace further (20) ten-man caches and (5) five-man caches, the (redacted) case officer concluded: “However, in view of the inability of HQ logistics components to provide cache material to the field with less than five months prior notification of details, it was determined by HQ to restrict 1955's summer caching efforts to inspection of 1951, '52, and '53 caches, recovery of those inspected and considered no longer useful, and reconnaissance of areas for 1956 planned cache emplacement.⁴⁵⁷” Four years later, SOB planned to bury at least half of the depots it had planned for the 1959-60 period, which amounted to: 8 arms, 4 sabotage, 6 wireless transmissions (W/T) and 12 survival (smaller caches mostly filled with rations and other supplies). The plan it submitted to HQ sought to carry out this part of the job in just two weeks, between the 16th and 30th of August. According to the case officer's estimation, these depots would be necessary to complete the stockpiles needed for just thirty/sixty days of the stay behind network's operations, after which it would need to be resupplied. The author of the report then went on to specify that this estimation only covered the personnel assigned to “Unconventional Warfare areas” 1 through 5 and 7 (the total number of such areas being eight, this probably equates to most of eastern and central Austria), because areas 6 and 8 were planned for the two years after that⁴⁵⁸.

454 Ibid. [Link](#).

455 “Recovery of military caches laid down in 1951 and 1952, for the purpose of ascertaining [their] condition, repacking so as to avoid deterioration, and caching of repacked materials. One 1951 cache recently recovered by SOB, which is now preparing a detailed report on the subject, showed serious [signs of] deterioration in some of its elements because of water leakage. It is apparent that faults in the outer wrapping of the packing boxes was the primary factor in this unfavorable development, and it can be expected that all or most of the other military caches will be affected similarly. Recovery and repacking will be a major effort for SOB, but an admittedly necessary one.” Chief of Mission (Austria); September 29th 1953; Dispatch EAVA-4421 – Program for Preparation for Wartime Operational Activity in Austria (p. 9-10). [Link](#).

456 [case officer redacted]; January 1st-31st 1954; Status report – Project GRCROOND. [Link](#).

457 [case officer redacted]; March 1955; Status report – Project “GRCROOND” (p. 1). [Link](#). For each of the caches they buried, the CIA compiled detailed descriptions of both the location of emplacement and the route to get there. This was precisely the (only) kind of information that US Ambassador Swanee Hunt handed over to the Austrian government in 1996. Only one of the evaluated sources, a report written by officer Johann Kleber, who in mid-1955 was the acting commander of the Gendarmerie station of Faistenau (Salzburg), suggests that US Army personnel did also emplace caches in 1955. For more information on the report, and on the incident which it detailed, see chapter nine.

458 This report also mentioned SOB's suggestion that the arms caches be of the five-men type buried in 1954, the sabotage depots be similar to those cached in the year after, and that the W/T sets be of the RS-6 type with nickel-cadmium battery. The author of

In a message dated August 7th 1959, the Vienna station was informed that “for this time” HQ had opposed the emplacement of arms and sabotage caches, while approving the W/T caches. However, the suggestion was also made to “defer caching until [the] agents [that are] currently undergoing training [...] have reached [the] status [of] operational readiness”, thereby allowing for the emplacement of complete caches, instead of “bare RS-6 and battery⁴⁵⁹”. However, other sources identify a specific dispatch (EAVW-13423), dated September 10th 1959, as the order that imposed a significant reduction of the cultivated networks⁴⁶⁰, making it rather unlikely that any of the aforementioned proposals were actually implemented. It seems that, more or less from this point on, while SOB started to tackle other intelligence tasks, the activity of the stay behind network started to decline significantly.

“In August 1960, SOB responsibilities were somewhat increased to reflect the concept of spreading KU-BARK [CIA, ed. r.] facilities and assets geographically. By this time we had begun to engage in operational activity other than GRCROOND, entered into official liaison, and had taken over some of the [Austrian] Station's PBRAMPART [EUCOM's G2 intelligence subdivision, ed. r.] responsibilities. The intention of creating and sustaining a permanent operations base in this area with responsibility for all KUBARK operations in Western Austria was expressed in a new charter formulated in EAVA-27084, dated 7 April 1961.⁴⁶¹”

Despite the fact that some of the W/T caches were reportedly emplaced by Austrian nationals, it stands to reason that most of those containing weapons and explosives had been buried “under Army cover⁴⁶²”. A rather detailed description of this process was uncovered in another CIA dispatch from 1959; however, it should be borne in mind that at least two of the caches had already been discovered by then, undoubtedly causing the involved officers to revise their emplacement procedure.

After having completed the necessary reconnaissance of the sites, a total of one case officer and three assistants (low-ranking US soldiers from Germany in plain clothes) would need just one station wagon and one rented transport vehicle. After having picked up three or four caches (depending on the type and therefore amount of equipment) earmarked for a certain general area, both vehicles would drive to a site on or close to the highway and within the main flows of tourist traffic, where one of the caches would be transferred to the car. The officer and two assistants would then drive this to the cache area, while the third would remain with the truck the whole time. Upon arrival, a bottom-less tent would be erected over the prospective location for the hole, complete with sleeping bags and other camping material for cover, and while the cache itself remained in the car, the assistants would start to dig. The surplus earth would then be carried out of the tent inside backpacks, to be placed first in the car, and only later to be dumped at another site. Upon completion of the

said report then went on to remind HQ that – aside from some rations and “survival equipment” contained in the large Sensesgebirge cache – “no survival caches as such have yet been buried in Austria.” Chief of Base (Salzburg); June 30th 1959; Dispatch EASA-5212 – Caching Program for Summer 1959 (p. 1). [Link](#).

459 See Frankfurt [author redacted]; August 7th 1959; Message to the Director Vienna – OOLONG GRCROOND. [Link](#)

460 Despite the fact that the author of this narrative was not able to track down this particular dispatch, several references are made to it in other sources; see for example Chief of Base, Salzburg; May 10th 1961; Dispatch EASA-5457 – Progress Report - Salzburg Operations Base (p. 1-2). [Link](#).

461 Ibid, (p. 1). [Link](#).

462 “The caches not placed in under Army cover are known to at least one if not more indigenous personnel. At least five W/T caches [have been] buried by indigenous persons.” Chief of Base (Vienna); October 6th 1953; Dispatch EAVA 4479 – Project GRCROOND (p. 2). [Link](#).

hole, the cache material would be carried (with backpacks and nondescript containers) from the car into the tent and the ground, and later buried and camouflaged by using a layer of metal scraps. Once this was done, the car would return to the transport vehicle for the next cache. When the last transported cache had been picked up, the truck-driver would then head back for more supplies, and so on⁴⁶³.

ICEBERG and the E&E line

In an interesting internal background review from mid-1949, CIA officials described the development of the *ICEBERG* network to the acting chief of station (Vienna) as follows:

“In the Spring of 1948, when the program was initiated, crisis in Central Europe appeared to be imminent to many. Consequently, emphasis was placed on the immediate need to provide communications without reference to the expendability of the networks involved. Now, however, there seems little likelihood of an immediate crisis. As a result the program is up for review and revision to meet the requirements of the present situation. There is a general agreement in this office, after discussions with [...] and other persons concerned, that the current need is to work out a set of guiding principles upon which to base an ICEBERG program, taking advantage of the prolonged armistice (to apply a minimum interpretation of current events).⁴⁶⁴”

The idea of recruiting “sleeper radio operatives” in Vienna was first proposed as early as in September 1947. On September 25th, Richard Helms – then head of “special operations” and a future director of the CIA – approved the initial request, adding that this could be extended to “one or two others”, and that the “sets [are] to remain sleeper until emergency⁴⁶⁵. By early 1948, the evaluated sources indicate that the discussions had reached the point of openly calling for the establishment of specific training programs for “Austrian agents for possible W/T Works as »Stay Behinds«”⁴⁶⁶. By the end of February, the Vienna station communicated its frustration at the apparent lack of progress:

“We appreciate the difficulties you have been faced with in arranging a training schedule for German-speaking W/T operators. At the same time we are concerned at the possibility of any delay in the training of W/T operators since we are particularly anxious to organize a number of stay-behind networks in Austria as soon as possible. This is one of the most important missions assigned to the Vienna station by Washington.⁴⁶⁷”

Only towards the end of March was the name *ICEBERG* first assigned to these efforts, while in late June

463 For the eventuality that the authorities found the hole, or started asking questions of any of the individuals involved, the prepared cover story would have revolved around a camping trip among friends, or an amateur fossil-recovery expedition. See Chief of Base (Salzburg); June 30th 1959; Dispatch EASA-5212 – Caching Program for Summer 1959 (p. 2-3). [Link](#).

464 CIA [author redacted]; July 15th 1949; Dispatch to Vienna MAV-W-1291 – ICEBERG (p. 1). [Link](#).

465 [author redacted]; September 11th; Message to Washington Vien 693 – Sleeper radio station, Vienna. [Link](#) and Richard Helms; September 25th 1947; Message Wash 6955 – no title. [Link](#)

466 Chief of Station (Heidelberg); January 22nd 1948; Message to Vienna Mission – Training Program of Austrian Agents for possible W/T Works as “Stay Behinds” (p.1). [Link](#). The report goes on to briefly describe four candidates who had already been spotted: two 27-year-old male students (veterinary and electrical engineering), both former Wehrmacht veterans with some radio training; a 41-year-old ex-policeman with some radio experience, who “has worked for this mission [...] as a body-guard to one of our principal agents”; and a 32-year-old female secretary, who was formerly employed by the Austrian foreign office and had “limited” radio experience. Ibid. (p. 1-2)

467 Chief of Station (Vienna); February 25th 1948; Dispatch MAVA-964 – Training Program for W/T Stay-Behind Agents in Austria. [Link](#).

Major Milano was reportedly engaged in spotting possible operators for the network⁴⁶⁸. Most of the evaluated sources indicate that, at least for the first years, the W/T training course took place in Germany, under the supervision of the Karlsruhe station⁴⁶⁹. However, the first actual caches were emplaced only at the beginning of the following year: by the end of January 1949, 14 SSSTR-1 transponders sets had been issued to the CIA's Vienna station. While ten of them were buried in the Vienna area, the rest were sent to the Salzburg base. As usual, all the specific data concerning either exact locations or names of agents was redacted⁴⁷⁰. In an operation outline dated January 1951, which stated that “the Austrian political situation has not yet reached the point where Austrian officials can be approached”, the structure of the network is described as follows:

“In some cases, the radio operator will be a lone wolf reporter, but in most a circuit will consist of at least one W/T operator tied in through appropriate cut-outs, dead letter drops, and couriers to a principal agent, who in turn will operate either as a lone wolf or as a chief of a network of sub-agents and informants. It is not known how many circuits OPC will plan for the [...] project, for which it is primarily responsible and for which it will provide equipment, financial and material assistance.”⁴⁷¹

In a rather comprehensive report from mid-September 1953, the base scenario seemed now to be the partition of the Alpine republic, rather than the full-scale withdrawal planned for just a few years earlier.

“The purpose of the Vienna Operations Base Iceberg Program is to select, train, and place W/T [wireless telegraphy, ed. r.] operators and other kinds of stay behind agents in strategic positions in Eastern Austria (Vienna and the Soviet-occupied Provinces) to become active only well after outbreak of hostilities and the loss of this area to hostile forces. These agents will collect and transmit via W/T intelligence on military, political and economic targets, as well as operational support data. They may report observations of bomb damage in reply to specific queries from the W/T base, but they will not engage in combat OB [order of battle, ed. r.] reporting nor in resistance or sabotage activities”⁴⁷².

This report further stated that, as of September 1953, there were six fully trained and equipped Iceberg agents in and around Vienna. Divided into two teams, one for Vienna and the other for Wiener Neustadt, these agents were to report back on the following in the case of Soviet aggression: road and rail movements towards the south and south-west; order of battle of Soviet forces; operational intelligence on documents, travel, and mail controls; bomb damage; other openly available information, as well as small amounts of industrial intelligence. Particular targets were Wiener Neustadt's airfield and the KPÖ's “puppet government” in Vienna which would supposedly have been established in such a case⁴⁷³. However, as already noted by Austrian scholar

468 “Major Milano of USFA's ODI staff is currently engaged in recruiting possible radio operators who have [!are] not under Russian surveillance and who have never been implicated in any “resistance” activity heretofore.” Chief of Station (Karlsruhe); June 24th 1948; Dispatch MGK-A-1669 – ICEBERG Discussions at Vienna, June 14 (p. 1). [Link](#).

469 See Chief of Station (Karlsruhe); April 26th 1949; Message to Vienna MGK-A-9892 – ICEBERG. [Link](#).

470 See Austrian Desk; January 31st 1949; Memo to CCD – Status of ICEBERG Operations in Austria. [Link](#).

471 See [case officer redacted]; January [day unreadable] 1951; Outline of Stay-Behind Operation (p. 1). [Link](#). The report further stated that by then the network consisted of only two trained W/T operators, with a further two currently undergoing training, two untrained and one spotted, out of a “total requirement” of 35. Of the 70 different radio transmitting devices that were “contemplated”, 10 SSSTR-1s, 10 RS-1s, and 5 SSP-11s are described as “required for FY 1951”, but only 5 SSSTR-1s are listed as already present at the Vienna station. Ibid. (p. 1-4).

472 Chief of Base (Vienna); September 15th 1953; Dispatch EAVA-4111 – VOB Iceberg Program, Semi-Annual Status Report (p. 1). [Link](#).

473 See *ibid*, (p. 1-2). [Link](#).

Thomas Riegler, East German intelligence was well aware of the identities of the West German stay behind radio operators, meaning that immediately after D-Day the former would have most likely proceeded to eliminate all of the latter⁴⁷⁴. It stands to reason that the same could have been potentially true for Austria as well. This is particularly true for any agents who had had some kind of rank or official position in any military or intelligence related office, agency or department of the Third Reich. Of course, while on the one hand, recruiting WWII veterans did allow some of the training to be foregone and the individual's commitment to "anti-communism" to be validated, such veterans would clearly have been the very first targets of the repression enacted by the Viennese "puppet government". The evaluated sources suggest that, during this very same period, i.e. mid- to late 1953, the CIA was instead pushing to increase the number of "leadership type" agents across all of the stay behind networks⁴⁷⁵.

As already mentioned in chapter three, aside from the wireless radio transmissions, another core task of stay behind networks was to organize the Escape & Evasion (E&E) lines, which were not only to be used for Allied military personnel (particularly commandos, spies, and downed pilots) but also for civilian officials (politicians, scientists, business leaders, etc.) and enemy deserters⁴⁷⁶. Similar to the networks dedicated to the relaying of information, the E&E lines only made sense in the context of an inter-Allied "neutral" plan of cooperation. As already described in the opening section of this chapter, the Austrian E&E network ran from both the Hungarian and Czech borders across the entire country to the opposite borders with West Germany, Switzerland and Italy. Each individual agent or small group of agents was responsible for a relatively large section of a certain route, thereby making the transfer of "bodies" from one side to the other a sort of relay race. By the second half of 1953, officials in Washington were pushing to train all prospective agents in some basic skills, the bare essentials necessary to become part of the E&E line. This included "tradecraft", intelligence reporting, and W/T training. However, depending on the individual agent, they could also be trained in:

"E&E theory and organization; clandestine communications, including S/W; guerrilla organization and tactics; sabotage techniques; air navigational assistance, visual and electronic; and practical field training in arms and demolitions. In addition, promising agents in this category might be provided funds for taking specialized training available overtly, foreign languages, operation of motor vehicles etc.⁴⁷⁷"

According to the evaluated sources, despite being already led by one Organizer, i.e. a unit leader, by early 1954 this network composed mostly of individuals or small groups of agents was given a second Organizer.

"Evasion and Escape: A second, compartmented Organizer is being cleared and will be recruited to carry out peacetime development along the northern route of the central section of the E&E line. The present Organizer is continuing with his duties of developing the southern route: both Organizers will spot a number of individuals in their assigned territories who will form a pool from which assets will be drawn during hot-war

474 See Thomas Riegler; January 5th 2015; Österreichs kalte Krieger, cited from oesterreichterrorismus.blogspot.co.at. [Link](#).

475 See Chief of Mission (Austria); September 29th 1953; Dispatch EAVA-4421 – Program for Preparation for Wartime Operational Activity in Austria (p. 5). [Link](#).

476 According to Austrian historian Siegfried Beer, both of the two most salient early cases of Soviet intelligence officers deserting to the West happened in Vienna: Peter Popov and Peter Deriabin. See Beer 2000, Rund um den "Dritten Mann", p. 76.

477 See Chief of Mission (Austria); September 29th 1953; Dispatch EAVA-4421 – Program for Preparation for Wartime Operational Activity in Austria (p. 6). [Link](#).

to activate the complete section.⁴⁷⁸”

By the time quadripartite occupation forces were concluding their withdrawal from the Alpine republic, this network was described as constituting 11 active agents and 15 “reserves”, but plans had been made to recruit some thirty more⁴⁷⁹. After that, the evaluated sources provided next to no specific information on this organization's further development. According to the only other relating fragment uncovered by the author, which dates back to 1961, some of the former (and possibly current) operatives of the E&E lines were being tasked with intelligence gathering tasks, particularly in Linz, Salzburg and Innsbruck.

“Special coverage on behalf of ODACID [state department, ed. r.] at the direction of [the] Chief of Station [unreadable], is provided primarily by [unreadable] and [unreadable] in the field of local and national reporting. We feel that reporting on the South Tirol problem is being adequately provided by Greashare-6. Our informal contacts [...] are also of some use in this direction.⁴⁸⁰”

However, before moving onto the South Tyrolean issue, which is the topic of the following chapter, the next sections are focused on the two covert guerrilla units established by the CIA in Austria.

GRLAUNCH

Contrary to what has been stated by Thomas Riegler, Olah's so-called “Sonderprojekt” (special project, i.e. GRDAGGER) was not the only US-led stay behind unit specifically aimed at covert guerrilla warfare⁴⁸¹. His assumption was mostly based on the fact that next to no scholarly research had yet been conducted on the GRLAUNCH unit. Regretfully, the degree of detail regarding the leader of this unit – code-named GRLAUNCH-1 – provided by the evaluated primary sources, does not allow us to conclusively establish his identity. However, the few details that were uncovered during the research may be summarized as follows.

He is described as having been born in 1922, and as having “extensive family ties” in Tirol, which suggests an Austrian national of Tyrolean origin. During WWII he served in the *Wehrmacht* as a tank officer who, among other things, also fought on the dreaded eastern front. He started leading the GRLAUNCH organization as late as 1950, apparently entering into direct contact with the CIA two years later⁴⁸². This discrepancy is probably due to the fact that he was initially run by another “principal agent”, or by another division, and/or department, and/or agency.

“The P/A [principal agent, ed. r.], GRLAUNCH-1, is a head-strong individual with Monarchist leanings. He desires to carry out more activities in preparation for the war, i.e., recruit additional personnel, lay down caches of weapons and supplies, etc. than KUBARK [CIA, ed. r.] is willing to have him do, but case officer believes GRLAUNCH-1 is well aware he would not receive the support he is presently obtaining from anyone else but our organization and consequently, he will continue to carry out case officer instructions.⁴⁸³”

478 [case officer redacted]; January 1st-31st 1954; Status report – Project GRCROOND. [Link](#).

479 See [case officer redacted]; November 1955; Status report – Project “GRCROOND” (p. 2). [Link](#).

480 Chief of Base, Salzburg; May 10th 1961; Dispatch EASA-5457 – Progress Report - Salzburg Operations Base (p. 5). [Link](#).

481 See Riegler 2016, Strukturen für den geheimen Krieg, p. 671.

482 See Chief of Base (Salzburg); November 30th 1958; Dispatch EASA-5143 – Status of SOB U/W Staybehind Assets (p. 13). [Link](#).

483 Chief of Base (Munich); July 5th 1957; Dispatch EGMA-27648 – GRCROOND Project Review (p. 2). [Link](#).

In a mid-1958 report, he is described as currently living in Munich, and it is stated that: “he has received little formal tradecraft training, has absorbed considerable knowledge through his six years association with [the CIA]. He is a very able man possessing strong leadership qualities and should, with little additional instruction, be fully capable of satisfactory performance⁴⁸⁴”.

Contrary to the small amount of information available on its leader, the unit GRLAUNCH is well documented among the evaluated sources.

“The original GRLAUNCH organization was “chartered” as a guerrilla unit with some two dozen sub-units of varying strength and capability throughout Tirol and Salzburg provinces. Though GRLAUNCH-1 understands his wartime E&E, intelligence gathering responsibilities, etc., he is by training and orientation best suited to guerrilla activity and could possibly be well utilized in this capacity.⁴⁸⁵”

During the first two or three years of operations, training for the GRLAUNCH agents was organized in the form of short modules which took place during the week-ends, probably in southern Germany. However, by mid-1953, this was less of an option.

“The idea of practical week-end training – such as [...] utilized in LAUNCH – is out; the Frankfurt/Main training sites and facilities are out or on the way out, and we don't have the necessary facilities in Austria yet. [...] suggests that it would be wise to investigate the possibility of setting up training facilities under the sponsorship of USFA at a base or bases of theirs. The field will look into this.⁴⁸⁶”

During this very same period, the first signs of attrition between the CIA and GRLAUNCH started to surface. It is unclear whether this was at least partially due to the new *unconventional warfare requirements*, issued by SHAPE and EUCOM in August 1953, or whether the two events only happened to coincide. In any case, a substantial number of the original 21 members of the organization were dropped during the summer⁴⁸⁷.

“The receipt during August 1953 of SHAPE and US EUCOM unconventional warfare requirements has demonstrated very clearly the need for flexibility; with the exception of a requirement for a guerrilla area in the Hochschwab, the SHAPE and US EUCOM requirements do not coincide with the operations we have developed to date.⁴⁸⁸”

One of the main ways which this report proposed in order to align current operations with these new

484 Chief of Base (Munich); July 2nd 1958; Dispatch EGMA-35530 – Obtaining Small Arms for ARB Staybehind Agents (p. 1). [Link](#).

485 Chief of Base (Salzburg); November 30th 1958; Dispatch EASA-5143 – Status of SOB U/W Staybehind Assets (p. 13). [Link](#).

According to another report, from its actual 21 members, this network was expected to expand almost ten-fold a few weeks/months after D-Day: “It is estimated that [GRLAUNCH, ed. r.] will expand into resistance groups totaling about 200 persons within six months after the start of war.” [case officer redacted]; November 1955; Status report – Project “GRCROOND” (p. 2). [Link](#). See also [case officer redacted]; September 1955; Status report – Project “GRCROOND” (p. 2). [Link](#).

486 CIA [author redacted]; August 27th 1953; Memo for the GRCROOND record – Austrian PM activities [rest redacted]. [Link](#).

487 [case officer redacted]; March 1955; Status report – Project “GRCROOND” (p. 2). [Link](#).

488 Chief of Mission (Austria); September 29th 1953; Dispatch EAVA-4421 – Program for Preparation for Wartime Operational Activity in Austria (p. 1). [Link](#). “The military U/W requirements call for guerrilla forces areas in two places, the Hochschwab (already planned for under GRDAGGER) and the Greiner Wald, 40 miles NE of Linz; in this latter area it appears to be a question of GRDAGGER or probably nothing. These U/W requirements also include a number of sabotage, attack and assistance targets in Soviet Zone locations; while it is possible that we may be able to develop individual agents for operations against these targets, given sufficient time, it is far more likely that we shall have to depend very largely on GRDAGGER for whatever operations are carried out against them.” Ibid. (p. 3)

requirements, was predicated upon a “shift away from group operations”: “[...] we mean those undertaken with indigenous persons in which the size, structure and degree of independence of the group serve to reduce the elements of KUBARK [CIA, ed. r.] control to general guidance, liaison and material support; the chief example on the local scene is, of course, GRLAUNCH.⁴⁸⁹” In a September 1953 dispatch the Austrian mission clearly stated how disappointed it was with this particular unit.

“In brief, we no longer consider this project as a reasonably dependable asset on which KUBARK [CIA, ed. r.] war planning can properly be based, although we recognize the possibility that elements of it may still exist and be available for operational use when war begins. [...] In conclusion, however, we emphasize again that we cannot continue to count on GRLAUNCH in our minds as a paramilitary asset, and we expect that our future relations with the project will be fundamentally different from those which we shall maintain with GRDAGGER in this sphere.⁴⁹⁰”

Aside from an unspecified number of earmarked caches, both W/T and otherwise, the GRLAUNCH unit had access to a special covert stockpile of weapons and other equipment until 1955, which until the signing of the State Treaty was housed at Camp Rum, a USFA base in Innsbruck⁴⁹¹.

In January 1956, just a few months after the actual quadripartite withdrawal, the Austrian mission reported that GRLAUNCH-1 had expressed the desire to renew contact with the 21 members of his PM group during the summer. HQ instead directed the case officer of GRLAUNCH-1 to “keep him occupied” with reconnaissance tasks linked to the E&E line, in order to “keep alive the wartime potential of the organization”. The main reason behind Washington's refusal was “because of a long and dangerous history of security weakness.⁴⁹²”

“The Austrian State Treaty has had some effect on the GRLAUNCH organization insofar as some members feel that, with the establishment of an Austrian Army, no further purpose is served by GRLAUNCH. GRLAUNCH-1, the project principal agent, has not dissuaded these individuals from this belief in the hope that they will assume that GRLAUNCH no longer exists, thereby reducing further the possibility of security problems⁴⁹³.”

By December of the same year, the network's leader submitted another, very similar request, which was unsurprisingly described as “not desirable at the time.⁴⁹⁴” The aforementioned “security problems” were further elaborated in a dispatch from 1957, which in no uncertain terms described GRLAUNCH-1 as incautious in his dealings with possible recruits:

“GRLAUNCH-1 [...] [has] not always conducted [his] spotting and recruiting activities in the most secure manner. [...], case officer believes that GRLAUNCH-1 has often gone beyond the bounds of operational

489 Ibid, (p. 2). [Link](#).

490 Chief of Mission (Austria); September [day unreadable] 1953; Dispatch EAVA-4042 – Field Comments on GRCROOND Project Outline (p. 2). [Link](#).

491 “PM equipment – weapons, demolitions, etc. – which has been in storage at Camp Rum, Innsbruck for several years and earmarked for wartime issue to KUHOOK assets, principally the GRLAUNCH organization, is no longer considered to be necessary as supplies or suitable for issue.” [case officer redacted]; March 1955; Status report – Project “GRCROOND” (p. 1). [Link](#).

492 [case officer redacted]; January 1956; Status report – Project “GRCROOND” (p. 1-2). [Link](#).

493 [case officer redacted]; August 1955; Status report – Project “GRCROOND” (p. 2). [Link](#).

494 See [case officer redacted]; December 1956; Status report – Project “GRCROOND” (p. 1). [Link](#).

security in the course of spotting personnel for wartime requirement and work. GRLAUNCH-1's feelings that additional personnel should now be recruited for eventual wartime use have led him to commit these errors in security. Case officer believes this tendency on the part of GRLAUNCH-1 to talk too freely with persons he believes to be reliable must be considered a damaging aspect to this operation. [...] There are no known instances of security compromise but present case officer must assume that general knowledge of GRLAUNCH-1's involvement in this KUBARK [CIA, ed. r.] activity is probably spread among quite a number of unauthorized persons (in the form of wives, relatives, friends, and friends of friends).⁴⁹⁵

Apparently still unsatisfied with his current level of engagement, on July 27th 1957, GRLAUNCH-1 reportedly stated that “he planned to make *other arrangements* if case officers continued to restrict his activities.” In a later meeting the restrictive policies were reaffirmed, but the agent did not mention these other arrangements again. Internal discussions of the issue led to a consensus regarding the identity of the only other possible source of backing for his UW activities: the West German BND. The fact that at the time the entire network only had two fully trained W/T operators seems to have weighed heavily on HQ's considerations, and HQ ultimately sought to terminate the entire organization just to get rid of GRLAUNCH-1⁴⁹⁶.

Despite this conclusion, the first measure to be actually implemented was a restriction of his network's area of operations to just Tirol⁴⁹⁷. The sources dating back to the summer of the following year still refer to him as an American agent, even mentioning the provision of some funds to be specifically used to acquire a legal sidearm⁴⁹⁸. The actual disbandment of the unit seems to have taken place only around the turn of the decade: between October 1959 and April 1960, a total of nine meetings with GRLAUNCH's main agents (1, 2, and A/9) took place, reportedly terminating the agency's association with all of them⁴⁹⁹.

GRDAGGER

As already alluded to on several occasions in the context of the shift away from “group operations”, one of the aforementioned dispatches from late September 1953 stated with the utmost clarity what were considered to be the chief operational difference between GRLAUNCH and GRDAGGER.

“Possibly the most distinctive feature of this program is in its shift away from “group” operations, except insofar as existing operational commitments necessitate the maintenance of relations with PM groups (and with the notable exception of GRDAGGER, which, for reasons explained below, we believe continues to offer genuine potential). [...] Case officer control over the operation is dissipated as the group grows, especially since the Principal Agent's control itself is weakened the more persons he has under him in a covert relationship [such as in the case of GRLAUNCH, ed. r.]. This is, of course, less true in the case of GRDAGGER, where the Principal Agent's control is founded chiefly on the overt and not covert organizational struc-

495 Chief of Base (Munich); July 5th 1957; Dispatch EGMA-27648 – GRCROOND Project Review (p. 5). [Link](#).

496 See Chief of Base (Munich); September 23rd 1957; Dispatch EGMA-28948 – VOB-ARB discussion of 5 and 6 August 1957 (p. 2). [Link](#).

497 See Chief of Station (Vienna); September 19th 1957; Dispatch EAVA-17667 – ARB's Present Assets and Future Activity (p. 3). [Link](#). Aside from having family ties there, this region is also where GRLAUNCH-1 was supposed to evacuate to in the event of Austria being invaded or otherwise dragged into a military confrontation. See Chief of Base (Munich); July 2nd 1958; Dispatch EGMA-35530 – Obtaining Small Arms for ARB Staybehind Agents (p. 1). [Link](#).

498 See *ibid.* [Link](#).

499 See Chief of Base (Salzburg); May 5th 1960; Dispatch EASA-5320 – GRCROOND Progress Report (p. 1). [Link](#).

ture [i.e. the trade unions, ed. r.]. [...] The nature of the [1953] SHAPE and US EUCOM requirements in effect makes GRDAGGER loom all the more largely in our PM [paramilitary, ed. r.] picture, but our utilization of the GRDAGGER organization for stay-behind work especially calls for a broadening of our relationship with the Principal Agent in this field, during which he will quite naturally renew his demands for training of a nucleus of his personnel in PM subjects.⁵⁰⁰”

Franz Olah⁵⁰¹ – code-named *GRDAGGER I* – was among those few stay behind leaders that would have been evacuated immediately upon Soviet invasion of Austrian territory. In any other “emergency situation”, he would have been escorted to the Rot-Weiss-Rot: “The US Headquarters told me, should the situation require it – be it day or night – a military jeep would pick me up and transport me to the broadcasting station. Should the Soviets isolate either Vienna or the entire eastern sector through direct intervention, I would've been flown out by a US military airplane, to allow me to coordinate the resistance after studying the situation. Nobody gave me orders. However, there is no doubt that the USA was our strongest support, even our ally.⁵⁰²” It seems that the importance of Olah's overt power and influence cannot be overstated; in fact, by 1955, some of the CIA officers even stopped framing his organization as primarily a guerrilla warfare unit.

“GRDAGGER is a labor union with Hqs. in Vienna and local units throughout eastern and central Austria.⁵⁰³”

Aside from his weirdly named leisure association (ÖWSGV⁵⁰⁴), Olah used at least another couple of fronts to mask his paramilitary activities. However, in contrast to the former, both ATLANTA and OMNIA were limited liability corporations which, among other things, he used to give his associates a credible cover, take out loans, rent both vehicles and spaces, etc. According to Austrian historian Manfred Lechner, his three main associates in these covert activities were Josef Las (funding and accounting), Walter Jeschko (W/T training and equipment), and Heinrich Dauer (weapons and explosives). Other activities of this group included either producing or gaining access to high-quality fake IDs and other travel permits, which allowed them to

500 Chief of Mission (Austria); September 29th 1953; Dispatch EAVA-4421 – Program for Preparation for Wartime Operational Activity in Austria (p. 2-3). [Link](#). The aforementioned section of the dispatch concluded by stating: “We consider it unlikely that it will be possible to reach satisfactory agreement with the Principal Agent regarding operational exploitation of elements of the GRDAGGER organization who will stay behind in the Soviet Zone (and we feel quite sure that he will have such personnel for his own purposes), until we have met his reasonable training requirements.” Ibid. (p. 3).

501 “Our confidence with respect to GRDAGGER, as opposed to other PM groups, is based on its special qualities. The Principal Agent's organization has a completely valid peacetime *raison d'être*, a cordial relationship with powerful elements in the Government, and a legitimate anti-Communist which provides motivation and “cover” for much of the work done in KUBARK [CIA, ed. r.] interest. Moreover, the Principal Agent has strong political reasons for desiring to make a name for himself as a resistance leader if war should come.” Ibid. (p. 5). [Link](#).

502 Original: “Vom US-Hauptquartier wurde mir gesagt: Wenn es die Lage erfordere – egal zu welcher Tages- oder Nachtzeit –, werde mich ein Militärjeep abholen und zum Sender bringen. Sollten die Sowjets durch eine direkte Intervention Wien bzw. die Ostzone isolieren, so würde mich ein US-Militärflugzeug vorerst einmal in den Westen ausfliegen, um mir es zu ermöglichen, nach Prüfung der Lage Widerstandsaktionen in Gang zu bringen. Ich empfang von niemandem Befehle. Aber kein Zweifel – die USA waren unsere stärkste Stütze, ja unsere Verbündete.” Olah 1995, Die Erinnerungen, p. 146. This is supported by some of the evaluated sources: “It is planned that the chief organizers of the GW and the E&E organizations will be evacuated in wartime and manage their nets from a safe area.” [case officer redacted]; November 1955; Status report – Project “GRCROOND” (p. 3). [Link](#). For more information on the Rot-Weiss-Rot broadcasting studio, see the following section.

503 [case officer redacted]; March 1955; Status report – Project “GRCROOND” (p. 2). [Link](#).

504 The organization's statute from 1952 stated the following: “The goals pursued by the association are the enhancement of the physical forces of the working individual through hiking and sport, as well as the fostering of contacts among members through convivial gatherings.” (“Der Verein verfolgt den Zweck, durch Wandern und Sport die physischen Kräfte des arbeitenden Menschen zu stärken und durch gesellige Zusammenkünfte den Kontakt der Mitglieder untereinander zu fördern.”) cited from Thomas Riegler, October 1st 2015, “Sorry guys, no gold” on oesterreichterrorismus.blogspot.co.at. [Link](#).

roam more or less freely across a country split by four military occupiers⁵⁰⁵. As already mentioned at the beginning of this section, given that the new 1953 unconventional warfare requirements made Olah's organization "loom all the more largely", he was then able to extract from his handlers a commitment towards training some of the men he had chosen.

"GRDAGGER 1 was originally promised that a small group of his men, especially selected, would be given instruction in small arms and demolitions, so that they could in turn instruct other members of the organization in the utilization of the equipment that has been cached for them. It was agreed that this commitment must be honored, in CIA interest as well. A proposal will be made to GRDAGGER 1 that a group of about four men be given thorough classroom instruction, probably with Major Josst, and that an effort will be made to provide practical work on the range at some military installation.⁵⁰⁶"

Since the training was also supposed to include visits to the firing range, and given that the possibility of using German facilities had already been explored and deemed unfeasible, the CIA case officers requested official assistance from USFA. In a subsequent dispatch, dated September 29th 1953, the training modules for this unit are described as including: "weapons familiarization and firing, use of demolitions, use of specialized sabotage devices, employment of air navigational aids (for assisting bombing raids and guiding air troops), and PM theory and practice.⁵⁰⁷" The evaluated sources strongly suggest that this organization received direct financial assistance from the CIA to the tune of one million AS per year, disbursed in equal quarterly payments⁵⁰⁸. Despite the plurality of sources, including from within the CIA itself, that had been arguing against the probability of a communist putsch in Vienna since at least mid-1948, the CIA's stay behind planning for Austria seems to



Franz Olah, 1953. Original credit: Franz Blaha. Source: Österreichische Nationalbibliothek (Austrian National Library), bildarchiv.austria.at. [Link](#).

505 See Konrad/Lechner 1992, "Millionenverwechlung", p. 65-6. For more information on the companies' loan and accounting history, see *ibid.* p. 69-85.

506 CIA [author redacted]; June 24th 1953; Dispatch EAVW-1466 – GRCROOND - Paramilitary (p. 2). [Link](#). This contrasts quite sharply with what is stated by Olver Rathkolb in his 1997 book: "The Olah-project rather suggests a CIA-connection through union funds, i.e., Franz Olah directly received the funds he needed to purchase the appropriate weaponry. Whether some of the weapons were supplied by the US Army is hard to say at the moment. Olah's constant references to cash resources seem to rather point towards acquisition." ("Das Olah-Projekt suggeriert eher den CIA-Kanal über Gewerkschaftsmittel, d.h. Franz Olah wurden direkt finanzielle Mittel zur Verfügung gestellt, um entsprechende Waffen ankaufen zu können. Ob hingegen seitens der US-Armee auch Waffen geliefert wurden, läßt sich derzeit nicht sagen. Olahs ständige Hinweise auf Geldmittel deuten eher in Richtung eines Ankaufs.") Rathkolb 1997, Washington ruft Wien, p. 206.

507 See Chief of Mission (Austria); September 29th 1953; Dispatch EAVA-4421 – Program for Preparation for Wartime Operational Activity in Austria (p. 3). [Link](#).

508 See [case officer redacted]; October 1954; Status report – Project "GRCROOND" (p. 2). [Link](#). Most of the few scholars who have researched this topic have either stated that Olah received the funds for his covert activities through his contacts in the large American unions AFL and CIO, or through the Austrian unions. As late as 2016, Austrian scholar Thomas Riegler still spoke of a "good probability" that Olah had received money directly from the CIA. See Sensenig 1985, Gewerkschaftspolitik im Kalten Krieg, p. 208; Svoboda 1990, Franz Olah: Eine Spurensicherung, p. 28; Kopeczek 1992, Fallbeispiele des Kalten Krieges, p. 53; Rathkolb 1997, Washington ruft Wien, p. 206; Kopeczek 2000, Die amerikanischen Waffenlager, p. 111; Riegler 2016, Strukturen für den geheimen Krieg, p. 676.

have started shifting its expectations only by the time of the actual formalization of the State Treaty.

“The Field has proposed, and Headquarters concurs, that in view of the changed situation in Austria, some basic discussions should be undertaken with GRDAGGER 1 regarding the future program of GRDAGGER. The following are the main policy issues to be discussed with GRDAGGER: (a) strong arm squads are no longer necessary within the GRDAGGER complex, because of the improbability of a Communist putsch or Communist demonstrations of significance; (b) current PM assets of GRDAGGER should be maintained because of the possibility of Soviet aggression; development of additional PM assets will depend on political developments in Austria; (c) GRDAGGER 1 be approached with the idea of his organization accepting responsibility for sabotage of targets which would retard Soviet Forces in the event of aggression; (d) 5 or 6 GRDAGGER agents be given PM training each year; (e) the GRDAGGER organization be utilized to a greater extent to combat Communist Party activities in Austria; (f) GRDAGGER 1 intensify his propaganda efforts in fields where his personal political views coincide with the Agency policy [...]; and (g) that Agency subsidy to the GRDAGGER organization be reduced approximately one half.⁵⁰⁹”

In a later section of the same report, the case officer described what may reasonably be interpreted as Franz Olah's reaction to the proposed shift in priorities.

“During the reporting period [June 1955] GRDAGGER 1 has stated to the case officer that he is receiving money from other sources in addition to that received from the Agency. It is believed that this other source is either the Socialist Party of Austria or the Austrian Trade Union Federation. It may well be that Agency support of GRDAGGER 1 is known to GRDAGGER's high level associates in the Socialist Party of Austria.⁵¹⁰”

In August, the CIA officers proposed to train five members of the organization in a 12-day “PM course”. In fact, at least two courses had already been held by the following month: one lasting just three days and the other twelve. One source also noted how “CIA staff employee instructors” took part in said courses⁵¹¹.

“In general, we are maintaining the status quo of GW [guerrilla warfare, ed. r.] organizations. The GRDAGGER organization consists of 20 persons who could reasonably be expected to become immediate wartime nuclei for guerrilla warfare. We estimate that the GRDAGGER organization will expand to approximately 250 persons six months after war starts. GRDAGGER is formed of members of an SPOe oriented trade union of 40,000 members, many of whom can be considered as potential candidates for resistance groups in time of war.⁵¹²”

On February 13th 1962, CIA agents drove from Salzburg to Bad Toelz in southern Germany to discuss with US-Army Majors Martin and Parker the two following issues: the continued furnishing of “backstopped, covering documentation for SOB field exercises in the Bad Toelz area”; and the request that the 10th Group of Green Berets train several of SOB's agents in unconventional warfare and guerrilla tactics. It was further decided that the training program should include: weapons familiarization, including unexpected weapons;

509 [case officer redacted]; June 1955; Status report – Project “GRCROOND” (p. 1-2). [Link](#).

510 Ibid, (p. 2). [Link](#).

511 See [case officer redacted]; August 1955; Status report – Project “GRCROOND” (p. 2). [Link](#) and [case officer redacted]; September 1955; Status report – Project “GRCROOND” (p. 2). [Link](#).

512 [case officer redacted]; November 1955; Status report – Project “GRCROOND” (p. 2). [Link](#). This and other sources thereby clearly contradict some of Arnold Kopeczek's findings, which stated that at its peak Olah's “special project” counted some 2,700 members.

demolitions with live shots; land navigation and orientation; air supply, including live drops; and unspecified survival techniques for alpine regions⁵¹³. Given that by that time GRLAUNCH had already been completely disbanded, it stands to reason that this training was intended either directly or indirectly for GRDAGGER.

As noted by Austrian scholar Arnold Kopeczek, despite this remaining unsubstantiated by primary sources, it is likely that the largest of the caches emplaced by the CIA in Cold War Austria, the one located near Mariazell (northern Styria), had been explicitly earmarked for GRDAGGER. This is supported by the fact that this depot was the only one among those uncovered in 1996 that did not have a vertical structure, as well as by the unparalleled quantity of weaponry and equipment stored inside. There may very well have been other earmarked depots, given that the organization had reportedly spread out across most of the country, stretching from Wiener Neustadt to Tirol⁵¹⁴. According to Olah's own narrative, in the interest of keeping all his weapons' conservation and viability in check, a professional armorer employed by the provincial government of the city of Vienna spent considerable amounts of time doing just that, as well as helping to train the organization's members. Not only did the local Viennese government exempt the armorer from his regular job, but it also continued to pay his salary throughout all these periods. These payments were then later formally reimbursed by the ÖGB. According to Manfred Lechner – one of Olah's biographers – when asked about the exact purpose of the many weapons he admitted having access to, the former minister of the interior usually explained their primary objective was the defense of “important buildings, public buildings, union buildings and government buildings etc. where the executive branch [...] couldn't have intervened.” Then he would usually add that former ÖGB chairman Böhm, former interior minister Helmer, and former vice-chancellor Schärf had all been informed of the covert project. That is, “without knowing the exact details⁵¹⁵”.

Regretfully, despite a number of later reports and dispatches concerning the Austrian stay behind network, none of those evaluated suggest other changes in the rather strange relationship between Olah and his CIA handlers. Moreover, no information was uncovered as to the total amount of funding received by GRDAGGER, or when exactly the unit was finally disbanded. By referencing the aforementioned Lechner, Arnold Kopeczek concluded that despite only 10 million AS in transactions being documented, the total funds received must have been considerably higher than that. Further according to Olah's own statements, unspecified foreign financiers handed him two million AS as late as 1963, i.e. during or immediately prior to his tenure as interior minister. Moreover, the organization was completely disbanded only in 1967, but no information was given as to whether the relationship with CIA fell apart⁵¹⁶.

“The Americans supplied what were then state-of-the-art weapons, still in their original packaging [...] Olah was one of the main actors. It is constantly necessary to highlight the fact that, in a worst-case scenario, he would have been the decisive figure. I am further convinced that Olah did not embezzle trade-union money, but rather received it from the Americans .”⁵¹⁷

513 See [author and addressee redacted]; March 14th 1962; Memo of conversation – The subject of having the 10th Special forces train selected KUBARK Austrian Staybehind Agents in UW and Guerrilla tactics was discussed and agreed upon (p. 1-2). [Link](#).

514 See Kopeczek 2000, *Die amerikanischen Waffenlager*, p. 110-1.

515 Franz Olah, cited from Lechner 1991, “Millionenverwechslung”, p. 82.

516 See *ibid*, p. 68 and Riegler 2016, *Strukturen für den geheimen Krieg*, p. 678.

517 Original: “Die Amerikaner haben für damalige Verhältnisse die modernsten Waffen original verpackt geliefert [...] Olah war einer der Hauptverantwortlichen. Das muß man immer wieder betonen, daß im Fall des Falles wharscheinlich er der

Excursus: Fritz Molden and psychological warfare

“Who controls the past controls the future: who controls the present controls the past⁵¹⁸”.

As already mentioned in chapter five, the propaganda efforts related to the Marshall plan established in all recipient countries a number of organizations tasked with the detailed management of local public opinion. As practiced by Paul J. Goebbels, and noted by brilliant novelist Eric A. Blair – widely known as George Orwell – the actual content of the message is of secondary significance. In fact, in order to establish itself as the dominant norm, this message only has to be repeated over and over again from practically all sources of information. While these basic concepts apply to any propaganda measures, this is even more important in the context of a country which has just lost a disastrous war, and is currently occupied by the four major victors. However, as already described in chapter three, during the late Forties and Fifties US intelligence officers and diplomats engaged in a whole plethora of other measures which, despite bordering on the definition of propaganda, actually had an even broader scope.

According to Italian historian Mario Del Piero, the traditional definition of *psychological warfare* is commonly defined in opposition to “normal” warfare: while the latter aims at defeating the enemies by inflicting physical damage, the former seeks to conquer the foes' *hearts and minds*. He even argued that in the upper echelons of the US government “the pedagogic belief that it was possible to influence and condition political allegiances, private and public behaviors, and even individual and collective identities was largely a product of the time”. His argument also rests on the argument that the successful rigging of the first postwar parliamentary elections in Italy was widely interpreted by decision-makers as proof of “America's ability to influence the domestic affairs of other nations through the use of unconventional instruments⁵¹⁹”.

“But the absolute nature of the bipolar conflict combined also with the substantial opaqueness and ambiguity of the concept of psychological warfare in transforming it into a sort of catchall formula. [...] Psychological Warfare was therefore most of the time understood as synonymous with covert operations.⁵²⁰”

In Austria these efforts usually encompassed the entire media landscape, but focused most on those outlets able to regularly perform mass communication. One primary example of the combination between both covert and overt operations involving a broadcasting organization was the Rot-Weiss-Rot radio station. Aside from being overtly run by and for the Americans, during the early part of 1948, the CIA and CIC cooperated in covertly installing two rebroadcasting devices inside the radio station's own system. The devices were allegedly only to be used in the event of rapid evacuation, at which point they would have enabled signals originating from agents' much smaller hand-held transmitters to reach the command post in Salzburg, or even further away than that. These devices constituted the core reason why, in the event of hostilities of the kind in which Austria would have been able to remain “neutral”, Olah and other resistance leaders would have been brought to this

entscheidende Mann geblieben wäre. Ich bin auch überzeugt, daß Olah kein Gewerkschaftsgeld unterschlagen hat, sondern diese Mitteln von den Amerikanern bekam.” Wilhelm Höttl [undated], cited from Zellhofer 2003, *Diener zweier Herren*, p. 94.

518 George Orwell (1948-9), “1984”, edition published in 2016 by Enrich Spot Ltd. Hong Kong, p. 282.

519 Del Piero 2001, *The United States and “Psychological Warfare”*, p. 1304-6. See also Ganser 2006, *The CIA in Western Europe*, p. 764.

520 Del Piero 2001, *The United States and “Psychological Warfare”*, p. 1305.

very station.

“[We] discussed the problem with Major James Milano [...]. Milano stated [that] he [is] fairly positive [we] can obtain wiring diagram and other necessary technical info. [He] believes [he] can arrange for one of his own ODI [CIC, ed. r.] technicians to install [the rebroadcasting] device. [He] suggests [we] secure [the] cooperation [of] col. Eberle [who is] in charge of Rot-Weis-Rot which [Milano] believes [we] can obtain without disclosing details [of the] operation. Milano points out to proceed without at least Eberle's formal clearance[, it] might [otherwise] appear [like an] attempted penetration [of an] American installation. General Hickey severely reprimanded Milano on two previous occasions for American IS penetration [of] American offices.⁵²¹”

According to the primary sources evaluated by the author, Austrian WWII veteran and resistance fighter Fritz Molden⁵²² did not play a crucial role in the US-led stay behind networks. This is further supported by the fact that less than a year after the earliest traces of the “sleeper radio operators” appear, Molden had to “flee to America”. Admittedly, this stands in rather stark contrast with some of the findings of Austrian historian Siegfried Beer.

“From September 1944 onward, the Viennese native Fritz Molden [...] became the single most important liaison between the Austrian resistance (“05”) and the Allied powers. Through the foundation of Austria's Provisional National Committee (POEN) – both in Vienna and some of the provinces – he managed to establish a trans-partisan representation body which, after all, most of the Allied powers took seriously during the early part of 1945⁵²³.”



Fritz Molden, 1963, cropped version. Original credit: Fritz Kern. Source: Österreichische Nationalbibliothek (Austrian National Library), bildarchivaustria.at. [Link](#).

It is however reasonable to assume that, aside from having access to a substantial amount of classified information, he did have more than one opportunity to suggest to the CIA which “trustworthy” patriots it could expect to perform as expected. He admittedly met Olah during his stay in the United States, a time during which he reaffirmed his personal contact with Allen Dulles, who in the matter of five years became director of the CIA. Molden was therefore in a very good position to help place Olah at the very top of the combined anti-

521 Vienna Station; March 30th 1948; Message to Washington Vien-1347 – not title (p.1). [Link](#). In an early April follow-up dispatch, Richard Helms explained to the field that he had already informed both Col. Eberle and Gen. Bixel “of our desire to install two small mechanical devices for emergency use only, in the event of forced evacuation of Americans from Vienna.” Richard Helms; April 5th 1948; Message to Vienna Wash-4971 – no title (p.1). [Link](#).

522 According to South Tyrolean scholar Christoph Franceschini, even during the last year of WWII, in his capacity as a member of the resistance organization 05, Molden worked as an informant for the OSS – code-named K47 – and one of his tasks was to report on the political situation in South Tyrol. See Franceschini 2012, *Zwischen Rom, Wien und Langley*, p. 449.

523 Original: “Ab September 1944 wurde der von OSS als “K-28” geführte Wiener Fritz Molden zum wichtigsten Verbindungsmann des österreichischen Widerstandes (“05”) zu den Alliierten. Es gelang ihm, in Wien wie in einigen Bundesländer mit der Gründung des Provisorischen Österreichischen Nationalkomitees (POEN) ein überparteiliches Vertretungsorgan zu schaffen, das immerhin von den meisten der späteren Besatzungsmächte im Laufe des Frühjahrs 1945 ernst genommen wurde”. Beer 2000, *Rund um den “Dritten Mann”*, p. 82.

communist efforts of both unions and intelligence in postwar Austria. As already mentioned in chapter four, soon after his return to the Alpine republic, Molden inherited both control and ownership of one of the largest and most influential newspapers of the country: *Die Presse*⁵²⁴, as well as a couple of smaller publications. This event was in turn soon followed by the release of SHAPE's new unconventional warfare requirements, which called for a shift towards the recruitment of “leadership type” agents.

“We believe that a singularly valuable activity will be the development of stay-behind “leadership type” agents, similar to ICEBERG agents, but of even higher caliber. These are individual agents who appear reasonably likely to be able to remain in place during wartime and who possess leadership qualities in sufficient degree to render them suitable for the postwar organization of E&E nets, sabotage teams, guerrilla units, or intelligence nets. We will seek to recruit such agents in a variety of locations, including Vienna, Linz, Salzburg, and the urban areas of eastern Austria. An important qualification in the selection of such agents will be relative flexibility and mobility during the training phase, so as to permit extensive and detailed coverage of all subjects.⁵²⁵”

The Italian parliamentary investigation commission's report on the acts of terrorism in South Tirol identified Fritz Molden in no uncertain terms as a member of the Austrian stay behind network. Unsurprisingly, it then went on to accuse him of having orchestrated several propaganda efforts against Italy in the context of the small bilingual region⁵²⁶. In any case, by mid-1953 internal documents listed him among the agency's “Psychological and Paramilitary Operations Staff” in Austria, under “direct officer supervision”, right before GRDAGGER 1.

“GRSPINAL 1: Principal Agent, in charge of editorial and business management of two daily newspapers and one weekly illustrated review.⁵²⁷”

By September of the same year, the CIA was already writing rather detailed reports on the day-to-day operations of the newspaper *Die Presse*. Aside from noting that the business report on the accounting would be sent to Washington separately, a dispatch dated November 19th 1953 referred to the paper with the code-name GRSPINAL 2.

“With the exception of the Gruber matter, GRSPINAL2 has produced no problems and appears to be running smoothly. Drs. Otto SCHULMEISTER and Milan DUBROVIC have proven themselves to be satisfactory editors, and the Sanierung, which took place on 1 July 1953, has improved the financial position of the newspaper. In January 1953 [!1954, ed. r.] [...] plans to raise the price of GRSPINAL 2 to S. 1.00 and at the same time increase the number of pages.⁵²⁸”

524 Originally established in 1848, *Die Presse* was acquired in 1946 by Ernst Molden, who had already served as its political editor between 1924 and 1938. He re-established and ran the paper until his only son, Fritz, returned from the US in 1953. The paper still exists today and could be said to be still one of the most influential on the Austrian market.

525 Chief of Mission (Austria); September 29th 1953; Dispatch EAVA-4421 – Program for Preparation for Wartime Operational Activity in Austria (p. 5). [Link](#). See also Thomas Riegler; January 5th 2015; Österreichs kalte Krieger, cited from oesterreichterrorismus.blogspot.co.at. [Link](#).

526 See IPICR 1992, Doc. XXIII, n. 52, p. 24 and 84, [Link](#).

527 See Chief of Base (Vienna); September 23rd 1953; Dispatch EAVA-4333 – KUGOWN Agent Training (p. 1-2). [Link](#).

528 See Chief of Base (Vienna); November 19th 1953; Dispatch EAVA-5018 – GRSPINAL Progress Report 1 September - 15 November 1953 (p. 2). [Link](#).

According to a heavily redacted memo dated July 25th 1955, Molden and his new CIA handler had already met in New York two years earlier. However, their first meeting as case officer and agent only took place on July 6th 1955⁵²⁹. Regretfully, other than these few fragments, the evaluated sources did not provide any further details on Molden's relationship with the CIA. Austrian historian Oliver Rathkolb was nonetheless able to document some of the efforts which surrounded the organization of the 1959 Vienna Youth Festival⁵³⁰, in which Molden turned out to be a key player. This festival, which took place between July 24th and August 4th, had originally been promoted by Chancellor Raab himself who, against the widespread concerns of Interior Minister Helmer, was adamant in wanting to at least demonstrate to Moscow his goodwill. Bruno Kreisky – then the newly appointed foreign minister – seemed however to be more interested in seizing the opportunity to produce some effective propaganda, as well as to gather some intelligence:

“[Kreisky, ed. r.] sees great opportunities in organizing personal contacts, inviting participants to workers' apartments, scheduling attractive events (with speakers who cannot easily be dismissed as “reactionary”) whenever the festival's schedule leaves a free moment, seeing to it that at any public demonstrations the streets are not lined with Communist fellow-travelers but with Socialist youth and worker groups carrying appropriate signs and slogans, distributing leaflets, perhaps even a regular festival daily paper in several languages etc. He also thinks that some kind of surveillance and intelligence squads should be prepared. They could possibly profit from official records available to the Austrian police on the basis of participant registration. These are only some hints. The possibilities are obvious.

Now if anything along these lines were organized as a recognizable American “psychological warfare” effort it would be dead right away. My friend [Kreisky, ed. r.] thinks he and his friends could organize everything with a fund of \$ 200,000 approximately put at their disposal, supervised, of course, by an appropriate liaison committee, but without attracting any attention. Of course he cannot approach anyone officially or unofficially in any direct manner⁵³¹”.

According to Rathkolb's narrative, in preparation for the aforementioned covert activities Kreisky organized a meeting at the Bristol Grand Hotel of Merano (Italy). The gathering was probably held towards the end of October 1959 and was attended by: Jackson, Dohrn, Kreisky, Christian Broda, Peter Strasser, Fritz Molden and Georg Fürstenberg. Apparently, the last two individuals had to reassure Jackson and other US officials that neither Kreisky nor Broda nor Strasser – who were suspected of being anti-American – would seize the chance to campaign against its internal political enemy, i.e. the ÖVP⁵³². Rathkolb also states that supplementary funds for the operation were provided by Margarethe Ottlinger, who after returning from her Soviet imprisonment went on to become a ÖMV (major Austrian oil corporation) director. Towards the end of the festival, the Soviet

529 See CIA [author redacted]; July 25th 1955; Memo VIM/14975 – Meeting with [redacted] on 6 July 1955 (p. 1). [Link](#).

530 The complete name of the festival was: “VII. Weltfestspiele der Jugend und Studenten in Wien” (7th world-festival of youth and students in Vienna).

531 Klaus Dohrn, July 21st 1958, message to Charles D. Jackson; cited from Rathkolb 1997, *Washington ruft Wien*, p. 207. According to Rathkolb, while on the one hand it is impossible to ascertain whether Kreisky knew that the funds for these anti-communist activities originated from the CIA, both Dohrn and Jackson were very well aware of the money's true origin. Ibid. p. 208. Dohrn was both a journalist and friend of Kreisky's; Jackson on the other hand was a then-psychological warfare “heavy-hitter” of the Eisenhower administration, as well as a former deputy chief of the inter-Allied psychological warfare division. See Del Piero 2001, *The United States and “Psychological Warfare”*, p. 1322.

532 The US' skepticism towards Christian Broda and Peter Strasser was mostly due to the fact that prior to becoming leading socialist politicians, both of them had been card-carrying members of the Austrian communist party (KPÖ). Georg Fürstenberg on the other hand was a banker who, similarly to media mogul Molden, seemed to be able to mitigate the concerns raised by American officials. See Rathkolb 1997, *Washington ruft Wien*, p. 209.

ambassador submitted a formal complaint to Kreisky's office deploring the huge amount of “subversive” literature circulating throughout the event: in total, the operation had distributed some 400,000 copies of a specially produced daily in seven languages and some 36,000 books (40 titles). Most of the selection, printing, and editing for these publications took place under purview of publishing expert Fritz Molden. Among other things, Jackson also organized a short visit by four other US propaganda heavy-hitters, with the purpose of leading the debate over the “Independent Service for Information on the Vienna Youth Festival”. Among them was Zbigniew Brzezinski, a member of Harvard's Russian research center, and future national security adviser to President Carter⁵³³.

By the time of the festival, Molden had gone on to establish a publishing company and several other daily newspapers, such as the *Bild-Telegraf* and the *Express*; in both of these cases he picked as chief editor Gerd Bacher, who in turn later became one of the leading figures of the Austrian media landscape. Austrian researcher Markus Perner went so far as to term Molden's holdings as “one of the largest press empires in the country⁵³⁴”. Bacher was later appointed five times to the post of general manager of the Austrian public broadcasting corporation (ORF), and even acted brief as chief editor for first the *Kurier*, and then for *Die Presse*.

“The catalog of measures, with which the American way of life and of thinking were to be made palatable to Europeans, included the foundation of new media outlets, such as the broadcasting station 'Rot-Weiß-Rot', particularly also the education of 'opinion leaders' in the US, as well as a targeted media policy regarding theater, literature, music and especially movies, to the point of distributing propaganda material to diverse civic groups, including trade unions⁵³⁵.”

Despite the fact that in the mid-Sixties the majority of shares in Molden's *Die Presse* were sold to the Austrian federal economic chamber (WKÖ), he had in the meantime managed to establish Otto Schulmeister as his rightful successor at the helm of the newspaper. Although this remains unsubstantiated, it seems however unlikely that the new owners left Schulmeister as chief editor without having any idea of his own connections to the intelligence services. By keeping his position for more than ten years, he thereby went on to become one of the most acclaimed editors of the industry: the “doyen of Austrian journalism⁵³⁶”.

During WWII Schulmeister joined the *Wehr-*

533 See *ibid*, p. 210-1. Shortly before becoming Carter's national security adviser, Jackson was a member of the Trilateral Commission, originally a US-European-Japanese think tank.

534 See Perner 2003, Südtirol, p. 114.

535 Original: “Der Maßnahmenkatalog, um den Europäern die amerikanische Lebensweise näher zu bringen, beinhaltete auch die Gründung von Medien, etwa die Betreuung von ‘opinion leaders’, also Meinungsmacher in den USA, vor allem Filmsektor bis hin zur Bereitstellung von Propagandamaterial für Gewerkschaften.” Konrad/Lechner 1992, “Millionenverwechslung”.

536 “Schulmeister wrote argumentative editorials which closely followed the interests, he urged his editors to establish their own contacts with the CIA (men's circle) – and he divulged to the Agency information stemming from the CIA and ambassadors of eastern countries.” (“Schulmeister gestaltete die ‘Herrn der Zeitungen’, drückte Geschichten, wenn sie dem US-Standpunkt schaden, durch, und ließ stationierten Vertretern der US-Regierung der so genannten Herren der Zeitungen österreichischen Politikern und Botschaftern des Ostblocks preis.”) Christa Zöchling, April 18th 2009, cited from *profil.at*. [Link](#). In this article, Austrian journalist Christa Zöchling went on to insist that, while not actually being on the CIA's payroll, Schulmeister was recommended to the agency directly by Molden. For the sake of clarity, the sources evaluated by the author of this narrative neither corroborate nor contradict the version of events stated by Zöchling.



Otto Schulmeister, 1963. Original credit: Erich Lessing. Source: Österreichische Nationalbibliothek (Austrian National Library), [bildarchiv.austria.at](#). [Link](#).

macht and was soon assigned to the propaganda group of his unit: the *Persian Korps*. According to Reinhard Gehlen's 1949 report on Austrian intelligence organizations, Otto Schulmeister was then a member of the Catholic Church's own information gathering net, together with Father Marcel von Cutsem, Father Ludwig Frodl and Otto Mauer, the net being headed by Jesuit Father Hug Montjoye⁵³⁷. "Subject is said to be a staunch Catholic with contacts in the Vatican." In a dispatch dating back to the immediate aftermath of quadripartite withdrawal, Schulmeister was identified as having been a "top-level source" of Otto Bolschwing, a former SD officer, who back then was in turn one of Gehlen's main Austrian sources⁵³⁸. In an agent data sheet dated August 3rd 1973, aside from noting that the first direct contact with the agency dated back more than ten years, Otto Schulmeister – code-named *GRCAMERA 1* – then-chief editor of *Die Presse*, is candidly described as follows:

"GRCAMERA/1 is used as a direct channel for planting CIA inspired stories or editorials in his paper and for suppressing stories inimical to U.S. interests."⁵³⁹

The last documentable trace of Schulmeister among the CIA's primary sources dates back to June of 1983, where he was still described as a "worthwhile contact, who might agree to write an occasional article on issues of interest to us"⁵⁴⁰.

In conclusion, the evaluated sources suggest that, despite not being directly comparable to Franz Olah's involvement, Fritz Molden's tasks figured prominently among the CIA-led Austrian stay behind network's "peacetime" covert activities. As already mentioned, the Italian parliamentary investigation commission accused him of deploying his media empire to spread a biased version of the news from South Tirol. As another documentable result of his "advocacy", Molden was eventually awarded the honorary rank of Major of the *Schützen* of *Passeiertal*, the same group of which Georg Klotz was also an officer⁵⁴¹.

"From the beginning of the Sixties [Fritz Molden] took a keen interest in the South Tyrolean issue through his Viennese newspaper. By publishing factious information – inaccurate at best, unsubstantiated at worst – he immediately revealed his intransigence and tendentiousness, thereby soon becoming a reference which tended to misrepresent the actual local situation. [...] According to information gathered at the time through foreign sources, of a more-or-less official character, Fritz Molden was identified as being also a member of the *Berg Isel Bund* steering committee of both Vienna and Lower Austria. This was the very same organization which the terrorist *BAS* cells that operated in South Tirol were reporting to [...]"⁵⁴².

537 See [author redacted]; [undated]; Memo – USAGE Status as of 15 June 1951 (p. 6) [Link](#) and Reinhard Gehlen; June 14th 1949; Study – Preparatory measures for the Future Organization of an Austrian IS Under the Predominant Influence of the United States; as attachment to Dispatch MGL-A-23 (p. 7). [Link](#).

538 See CIA [author redacted]; December 9th 1955; Dispatch EAVW-6855 – Traces on Dr. Otto Schulmeister (p. 1-2). [Link](#).

539 See [case officer redacted]; August 3rd 1973; Agent data sheet – Otto Schulmeister / GRCAMERA/1 (p. 1). [Link](#). For more information on two examples of how Schulmeister was "used by the CIA", one dating to when Molden was still in charge and the other from 1973, see Chief of Station (Austria); September 13th 1963; Dispatch EAVA-32297 – DIZTAG/GREENGULF/GRCAMERA. [Link](#) and [author redacted]; June 30th 1971; Dispatch EAVA-44945 – Austrian newspaper article on Victor Louis. [Link](#).

540 See [author and addressee redacted]; June 1983; Telepouch report 140541Z – Austrian contacts. [Link](#).

541 See IPICR 1992, Doc. XXIII, n. 52, p. 84, [Link](#). Georg Klotz was one of the leading members of the violent secessionist organization *Befreiungsausschuss Südtirol* (South Tyrolean liberation committee, BAS) and one of the main proponents of guerrilla warfare. For more information on this topic, see the following chapter.

542 Original: "Fin dai primi anni sessanta si interessò della questione altoatesina attraverso il suo giornale di Vienna, rivelandosi subito per la sua intransigenza e tendenziosità con notizie faziose, inesatte e talvolta anche infondate, un punto di riferimento

On the basis of the testimonies of multiple witnesses and of material evidence, particularly Luis Amplatz's last will and testament, an inquiry was opened against Molden and other Austrian figures in February 1965. The charges were quite serious: Sec. 241 (attack against the territorial integrity of the state) and Sec. 305 (association to commit political conspiracy) of the Italian penal code. In July 1971, both the prosecutor and the judge from Bolzano agreed to halt all proceedings against Molden and the other Austrian nationals involved. While on the one hand the judge had found the accusations as per Sec. 241 to be unsubstantiated, the second charge was withdrawn due to the enactment of an amnesty relating to political conspiracies⁵⁴³. As already mentioned on several occasions, the following chapter will look into the Cold War history of the small bilingual borderland.

8 The connections between stay behind and South Tyrolean terrorism

“Not one underground weapons depot was found in the Austrian province of Tirol. This is particularly interesting in light of the following coincidence: during the early Sixties, the US government seemed certain that its nuclear stockpiles in Europe would be able to stop a Soviet military advance, and while Washington started winding up its [Austrian, ed. r.] stay behind network, the so-called *Bombenlegerkampagnen* [bombing campaigns, ed. r.] began to push for South Tirol's independence from Italy⁵⁴⁴.”

tendente a sviare la reale situazione locale. [...] Secondo notizie pervenute a quel tempo da fonti estere, più o meno ufficiali, il Molden Fritz fu ritenuto anche membro del direttivo del Berg Isel Bund di Vienna e della Bassa Austria, sodalizio a cui fecero riferimento le cellule terroristiche operanti in Alto Adige aderenti al B.A.S. [...]” Ibid. [Link](#).

543 See *ibid*, p. 85, [Link](#).

544 Original: “Im Bundesland Tirol wurde kein einziges Waffendepot gefunden. Dies ist insofern von besonderem Interesse, da mit dem Ende des Gladio-Konzepts der Amerikaner Anfang der 60er Jahre, als deren atomare Aufrüstung in Westeuropa es ihnen

For the sake of overall clarity, this first section is designed to provide an overview of some of the salient developments that have characterized the disputes over the small borderland since WWII. The narrative of the rest of this chapter is then split into four sections: while sections two and three focus on the history of the BAS and its multiple connections to Austrian intelligence, policymakers and the CIA, sections four and five explore the links which existed between the Italian stay behind planning and South Tirol's violent Cold War history.

Following the establishment of the Italian fascist government of Benito Mussolini, the already uncertain situation of recently acquired South Tirol took a turn for the worse, in particular for the German-speaking population. Up until the rise of Austro-fascism in 1934, many of the Alpine republic's policymakers had consistently exerted all the pressure they could muster in order to shield the German-speakers as much as possible. To a certain extent, this did block Mussolini's attempts to openly persecute them, particularly when compared to the post-1934 situation. In an ultimately fruitless attempt to gain an ally strong enough to withstand pressure from Hitler, Austrian Chancellor Engelbert Dollfuß chose to desist from all Austrian claims to be South Tirol's *Schutzmacht* (protecting power), and embraced Mussolini's policies. Following the German "annexation", tensions started to rise again due to the open repression of German-speakers, but when it became convenient a year later for Hitler to have Rome on his side, he quickly went ahead and signed the Pact of Steel⁵⁴⁵.

As part of their new alliance, Hitler and Mussolini signed a treaty in 1939 which laid the groundwork for the relocation of Italy's German-speakers to the Third Reich. The Treaty set the last day of 1939 as the deadline by which every one of them had to choose whether to move or to stay: over 80% chose to leave. By September 1943 – when German troops invaded northern Italy following its armistice with the Allied powers – only around 30% of the German-speaking population, or some 75,000 South Tyroleans, had actually moved out of Italy (*Optanten*), thereby losing their Italian citizenship. By that time, British strategists had already spent a considerable amount of time planning for the future of both the Bolzano and Trieste regions. According to Austrian historian Gerhard Steinacher, they eventually argued in favor of anything that would help keep Italy in the Allied camp, especially to avoid jeopardizing their strategic access to the Indian Ocean through the Mediterranean⁵⁴⁶. On the other hand, by 1944, De Gaulle's French Committee of National Liberation had formally declared its support for Austria's annexation of both aforementioned regions. Steinacher argued that the French exiles were thereby aiming to stretch Paris's postwar political influence across the entire Danubian valley, by re-establishing a *free* Austria under French influence⁵⁴⁷.

sicher erscheinen ließ, daß ein Durchmarsch sowjetischer Truppen zumindest atomar gestoppt werden konnte, gleichzeitig die sogenannten Bombenlegerkampagnen in Südtirol für die Unabhängigkeit dieses Teiles von Italien begannen." Kopeczek 1992, Fallbeispiele des Kalten Krieges, p. 55.

545 Despite the fact that the term *Schutzmacht* only started to be used in the context of South Tirol after WWII, it may well be argued that certain Austrian officials had attempted to do more or less the same thing since the Twenties. See Perner 2003, Südtirol, p. 112. For more information on some of the fascist intelligence services' operations, see Franzinelli 2003, In den Fängen der OVRA, p. 37-74; specifically on South Tirol, see Steuer 2003, Die Agenten Roms, p. 75-114.

546 See Steinacher 2003, Keeping the Brennero Italian, p. 117-9. Given this relatively early and specific interest, it stands to reason that the SOE (British wartime intelligence) had collected a substantial amount of intelligence on the regions' political history and developments. Regrettably, 90% of all of the SOE's primary sources regarding either Italy or Austria have since been destroyed. See *ibid.* p. 116

547 See *ibid.* p. 128. Once it became clear that both of the mentioned regions would remain part of the Italian territory, the *Direction Générale d'Études et des Recherches* (DGER, a French intelligence agency) started massively supporting the embryonic stages of the Südtiroler Volkspartei (largest local party, right-of-center, henceforth SVP), which was actually founded inside the very same Villa (Malfè-Ravanelli, in Bolzano) that had housed the DGER up until that point. See *ibid.* p. 130-2.

Both the State Department in 1943 and the Allied Control Commission for Italy in 1944 expressed their support for the annexation of South Tirol, both on linguistic and military/logistic grounds. However, in order to avoid having to take a clear stand before the end of hostilities, Washington planners eventually decided to “freeze” the issue temporarily, by placing the region under military administration. Yet once the fighting finally stopped, strategic cold-war thinking started to magnify Italy's role within Allied planning, eventually leading to the London Conference of September 14th 1945, where the Allies unanimously voted to maintain the country's current borders⁵⁴⁸. According to Austrian historian Oliver Rathkolb, aside from the country's strategic role as NATO's south-eastern flank, there was a second important consideration at play: the “American citizens of Italian extraction”. Their electoral relevance, particularly in important swing areas such as New York City, seems to have weighed heavily on Washington's final position on this particular issue⁵⁴⁹.

“The care taken not to upset the delicate electoral balance in the US, as well as Italy's geostrategic significance within NATO have always quashed any spark of hope of obtaining US support in negotiating with Italy legitimate rights of minorities. Washington even refused to act as a mediator, in order to avoid having to take a stand on the matter.”⁵⁵⁰

On September 5th 1946, the Austrian foreign minister Karl Gruber and Italian Prime Minister Alcide De Gasperi signed the first Treaty regarding the status of the disputed region, which later became simply known as the Gruber-De Gasperi agreement. Despite the bylaw that allowed all of the *Optanten*, as well as their children, to return and regain Italian citizenship, and despite the legal declaration of equality, the measures which sought to protect the rights of the minority failed to do so. This in turn eventually led to the outright rejection of the agreement by the German-speakers. Not only were they systematically outvoted on important regional issues by the Italian-speaking majority, but Rome also practiced both immigration and economic policies which further increased pressure on the minority⁵⁵¹.

Following the rejection of the De Gasperi-Gruber agreement, the situation continued to deteriorate, particularly due to Rome's insistence on wanting to incentivize the relocation of Italian speakers in South Tirol. This was coupled with aggressive propaganda campaigns which, unsurprisingly, only helped to fuel resentment even further, thereby preparing the ground for violent groups⁵⁵². Between 1955 and 1957, the SVP underwent a generational reform/takeover, which eventually culminated in a speech by the new leader (Silvius Magnago) at

548 See *ibid*, p. 132-5.

549 See Rathkolb 1997, *Washington ruft Wien*, p. 159. This is supported by a mid-1946 article published by the New York Times, which quoted the union official Luigi Antonini in his warning to President Truman. See [author unspecified] New York Times; June 27th 1946, “Justice for Italy asked of Truman – Antonini warns of retaliation by 6,000,000 voters if that nation is 'double-crossed'”, see (abstract) at [nytimes.com](https://www.nytimes.com), [Link](#)

550 Original: “Die innenpolitischen Rücksichtsmaßnahmen und die geostrategische Bedeutung Italiens im Rahmen der NATO ließen zu keinem Zeitpunkt auch nur einen Funken an Hoffnung, daß berechtigte Forderungen nach Minderheitenschutz aktiv von den USA gegenüber Italien mit vertreten wurden. Selbst eine Vermittlertätigkeit wurde abgelehnt, um in der Öffentlichkeit keine Position zu diesen Fragen beziehen zu müssen.” *Ibid*, p. 163.

551 See Franceschini 2012, *Zwischen Rom, Wien und Langley*, p. 433 and IPICR 1992, Doc. XXIII, n. 52, p. 106. [Link](#). In his memoirs, Bruno Kreisky termed this agreement “one of our weakest moments ever”. Bruno Kreisky 1988, *Im Strom der Politik*, Vol. 2, p. 152; cited from Gehler 2012, Bruno Kreisky, p. 176. According to Christoph Franceschini, the great majority of the so-called *Optanten* returned some time after the war. See Franceschini 2012, *Zwischen Rom, Wien und Langley*, p. 433, footnote 3.

552 See Franceschini 2003, *Spielwiese der Geheimdienste*, p. 190; see also CIA Office of current intelligence; November 23rd 1957; Current Intelligence Bulletin (p. 12). [Link](#). For more information on Italy's postwar propaganda efforts in the region, see Trafojer 2003, *La Voce del Padrone*, p. 161-86.

Castle Sigmundskron on November 17th 1957. His vision of administrative separation from Trent, in order to achieve a smaller but more German-speaking South Tirol, took almost fifteen years before eventually leading to the second statute of autonomy. For some, however, despite being a step in the right direction, this new policy was still not enough⁵⁵³.

Aside from the growing linguistic tensions, the development of local violent groups was also fueled by the longstanding local tradition of the *Schützenverbände*. Among many other notable things, these traditional riflemen's associations were used by the Third Reich as its foot soldiers in the “last German-controlled bastion” in Italy⁵⁵⁴. Soon thereafter, several intelligence agencies, including the Italians, started to show considerable interest in the idea of employing these groups in an anti-communist function. According to Christoph Franceschini, the SIFAR (Italian military intelligence), for instance, did at least plan to enlist some of these groups into a defense network, code-named *Operation Friedrich*. Following the quadripartite troops withdrawal, even some Austrian strategists started to entertain similar thoughts. Eventually, the issue was addressed by the informal bilateral meetings that had started to take place, but not in a simple, direct manner. Via the rather strange route of the (north) Tyrolean veteran associations, especially the “Kaiserjägerklubs” and Franz Pellet, Italian and Austrian military officers started to attend semi-official gatherings by 1956. One of the key figures in these meetings was former OSS agent Christoph H. von Hartungen⁵⁵⁵, who often acted as an interpreter on these occasions. One of these meetings took place in 1957, when Gen. Lorenzotti met the Austrian colonel Otto Seitz; also in the photo is the Italian Captain von Hartungen⁵⁵⁶.



United against the eastern threat: Hartungen (left), Seitz (2nd from right), Lorenzotti (right), [undated]. Original credit: Franceschini's private archive. Source: Franceschini 2003: Spielwiese der Geheimdienste, p. 192.

During this very same period of time (1955-57), the first acts of violence started to take place: 17 minor attacks were perpetrated by the *Stieler group*. Since they didn't cause any serious material damage, they therefore failed to gain traction in the mainstream media. Nevertheless, they definitely fitted into the wider pattern of growing local tensions. Moreover, despite being operationally independent from the BAS, both Luis Amplatz and Georg Klotz did take part in some of their activities, though they managed to avoid being tried and

553 See Franceschini 2003, *Spielwiese der Geheimdienste*, p. 190-1. See also IPICR 1992, Doc. XXIII, n. 52, p. 107. [Link](#).

554 See Steinacher 2003, *Keeping the Brennero Italian*, p. 136-7.

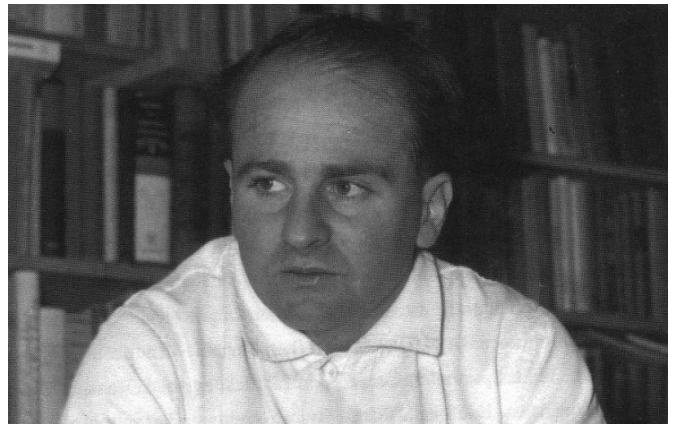
555 During the war, Christoph von Hartungen had already been an American informant, particularly to the OSS, responsible among other things for keeping tabs on and maintaining contact with the main Italian partisan networks. According to Steinacher, Hartungen was the OSS's single most important source concerning the situation at Italy's northern border. Immediately after the war, he apparently returned to the Italian army with the rank of captain, and soon resumed his intelligence work in South Tirol. After the Austrian State Treaty, he eventually also developed contacts in the re-established ÖBH (Austrian armed forces); among many other individuals, he had also met Georg Klotz, one of the early and most fiery leaders of the BAS. Hartungen apparently died in an accident under somewhat mysterious circumstances at the beginning of August 1959. See Steinacher 2003, *Keeping the Brennero Italian*, p. 138-9 and 149-50. See also De Hartungen 1995, *Conservare il Brennero all'Italia*, p. 158-161 and Steinacher 1996, *Die Zukunft Südtirols*, p. 5978-81.

556 See Franceschini 2003, *Spielwiese der Geheimdienste*, p. 192-3.

convicted with the other members of this group⁵⁵⁷. According to Franceschini, Italian intelligence agencies started to perceive the rising tensions in the region as their first real possibility to test and deploy their newly expanded bag of tricks, only this time in a real-world scenario. In fact, he went as far as to state that during the Sixties South Tirol became a sort of training ground, “in which they tested all those methods which would later make up Italy's bloody and traumatic reality, commonly labeled *strategia della tensione* (strategy of tension).” Furthermore, South Tirol also became the primary arena in which Italy's various other intelligence services battled against both SIFAR and each other for supremacy over covert operations, leading at times to outright catastrophic results⁵⁵⁸.

The Befreiungsausschuss Südtirol (BAS) and its connections

Within this organization, Fritz Molden was not the only one with documented ties to American intelligence. Wolfgang Pfaundler, born in Innsbruck in 1924, had also served in the *Wehrmacht* “in a non-combatant role”, and had thereby even served on the eastern front. According to a 1950 internal message addressed to the OPC, at the end of WWII he joined the resistance in Tirol “probably with the Molden group”⁵⁵⁹. By 1948, he was reportedly working for a group which was providing information to both French intelligence and the ORG⁵⁶⁰. By 1950, despite



Wolfgang Pfaundler, [undated]. Original credit: unknown. Source: unsertirol24.com. [Link](#).

being listed among the direct contacts or “headquarters staff” of Otto Bolschwing, his capacity was a somewhat informal (and unpaid) one. As already mentioned in chapter seven, Otto Bolschwing was a former SD officer who then went on to work for the Americans and for Gehlen and who, according to a 1951 declassified report, had contacts stretching into at least nine other Austrian intelligence nets⁵⁶¹. Despite his close relationship to the ORG, on October 6th 1950 a request was forwarded to Washington, seeking to obtain clearance for Pfaundler's association with the agency. However, by the end of November, his connections to Bolschwing seemed to outweigh any potential gain, leading to the order to drop him as an current/future asset. Conversely, a message dated from the very next day conferred on Pfaundler operational clearance for both Austria and Germany. Only

557 See IPICR 1992, Doc. XXIII, n. 52, p. 107. [Link](#) and Peterlini 2011, Feuernacht, p. 34-5.

558 Original: “Einer Traininghalle, in der man alle jene Methoden testete, die später unter dem Signum “strategia della tensione” (Strategie der Spannung) zur blutigen und traurigen Realität Italiens werden sollten.” Franceschini 2003, Spielwiese der Geheimdienste, p. 188. For more information on the almost childish bickering among the different Italian intelligence agencies, see also *ibid.* p. 188-90.

559 CIA [author redacted]; September 18th 1950; Vien 4382 – Identity 2. [Link](#). This report went on to state that no connections with Molden were currently documented, and that Pfaundler was a “known pro-American”.

560 See CIC Sitrep; September 1st 1948; cited from Chief of Base (Salzburg); September 27th 1950; Dispatch SLZ/3393 – Name Checks (p. 2-4, here p. 3). [Link](#).

561 The net Pfaundler was part of is described as “CC net – USAGE [Bolschwing, ed. r.] headquarters staff, or direct USAGE contact”, but Pfaundler's “position strictly speaking as staff personnel is uncertain”, due to him being “a relative of USAGE by marriage and [...] an unpaid source”. Among the personnel listed in one of the other nets, described by the same report as “Socialist party net, covering all of Austria”, was Rupert Zechtl (code-named SS 8). [author redacted]; [undated]; Memo – USAGE Status as of 15 June 1951 (p. 6 and 8-9). [Link](#). See also CIA [author redacted]; October 25th 1950; Message Vien 4525 to OPC – Wolfgang von Pfaundler. [Link](#).

on December 18th was the clearance actually withdrawn and the subject reportedly dropped. During this rather short period, he was, for example, used as a source for a report on the Austrian lawyer – and former Nazi intelligence agent – Wolfram Bitschnau⁵⁶².

The next earliest dispatch that the author was able to uncover dates back to mid-1960; in it, Pfaundler is described as a “rabid defender of the South Tyrol cause” as well as one of its (modest) financial backers. In another dispatch, dated November 23rd, he is described as a vocal advocate of the idea of a guerrilla movement also supported from abroad, to the point of insisting that the organization be called *Fremdenlegion Südtirol* (foreigners' legion South Tyrol) instead. As noted by Thomas Riegler, the details included in this report do suggest that the CIA had access to inside information, either through Pfaundler, Molden, Fred Mayer, and/or someone else⁵⁶³.

While the postwar SVP maintained a large degree of continuity with its prewar leadership, most of which was ultimately pro-Italian, the situation changed rather radically in the second half of the Fifties. As already mentioned, a younger, more radical generation of South Tyroleans took over power within the SVP in 1957. However, for some, this younger generation of the SVP leadership still wasn't radical enough; such people ended up gathering in and around the BAS, which originated during the very same period. For just over two years, the organization limited its activity to civil disobedience and political activism, basically writing letters to politicians and other important figures across Europe, in order to raise awareness of the South Tyrolean issue. Josef “Sepp” Kerschbaumer – the founder and first leader of the organization – best embodied this early phase of the BAS. Devoutly Catholic, Kerschbaumer was firmly opposed to any bloodshed, as indicated by the fact that during the “Night of Fire”, he remained at home, praying to God that nobody would be injured, or worse. However, among the other members, this was the exception rather than the rule. The group was politically heterogeneous in all senses, with the sole common feature being a widely-shared anti-communism. Among others, it included both former anti-Nazi resistance members and former Nazi soldiers and other right-wing oriented figures, as well as bourgeois conservatives, thrill-seeking amateurs and profiteers⁵⁶⁴.



Josef “Sepp” Kerschbaumer, [undated].
Original credit: unknown. Source:
wikipedia.org. [Link](#).

562 See CIA [author redacted]; October 6th 1950; Memo A and B – J.G.-1893. [Link](#) and [Link](#); CIA [author redacted]; November 27th 1950; Agent Status Report 99-CWAWU – Wolfgang Pfaundler. [Link](#); OPC [author redacted]; November 28th 1950; Memo – Wolfgang von Pfaundler (p. 1). [Link](#); CIA [author redacted]; December 18th 1950; Memo – Wolfgang von Pfaundler. [Link](#); Chief of Foreign Division M; December 1st 1950; Dispatch EGK-7039 – Wolfram Bitschnau. [Link](#).

563 See [case officer redacted]; May 25th 1960; Dispatch EAV-06621 – Wolfgang Pfaundler. [Link](#). The later report quantifies this contribution as 400,000 AS, but adds that he didn't want it to become known to Austrian authorities. See [case officer redacted]; November 23rd 1960; Dispatch EAV-6988 – Developments in the South Tyrol (p. 1 and 3). [Link](#). Austrian scholar Thomas Riegler concurred with the interpretation that Pfaundler was knowingly relaying inside information from the BAS, only not directly to the CIA, but rather through former OSS agent Fred Mayer. Riegler stated that by the time of Meyer's approach in 1959, when he explicitly asked Pfaundler about the latest regarding the BAS, the latter was already being watched by the StaPo, which in turn documented these meetings and classified the latter as just another US agent. See Thomas Riegler, February 12th 2017: “Pfaundler, Molden & die CIA”, cited from salto.bz. [Link](#).

564 See Franceschini 2012, *Zwischen Rom, Wien und Langley*, p. 433-4. Other initially important members included Karl Tietscher and Josef Crepaz. According to South Tyrolean historian Hans Karl Peterlini, while the organization was originally created in 1956, the name “Befreiungsausschuss Südtirol” started to be used only during the following year. See Peterlini 2011, *Feuernacht*,

From the very beginning, Kerschbaumer structured the organization on a regional basis, the aim being to entrust the members with the establishment of the individual cells covering the different counties. After having already met Pfaundler on a preceding occasion, the BAS leader received both Pfaundler and Molden in his home during the Easter holidays of 1958; they immediately offered to help out. After this, Pfaundler started to establish a BAS cell in Northern Tirol, on the Austrian side of the border. In sharp contrast with the large majority of the South Tyrolean BAS members,



Kurt Welser, [undated]. Original credit: unknown.
Source: suedtiroler-freiheit.com. [Link](#).

most of the people who gathered in the Austrian cell came from either an intellectual background, or some other middle to higher stratum of bourgeois society. Apart from Molden, the cell eventually also included Heinrich Klier (author and entrepreneur), Kurt Welser (merchant), Eduard Widmoser (Berg Isel Bund chairman), Helmuth Heuberger (music professor), Gerd Bacher (co-founder of the Express newspaper with Molden), Max Lersch (journalist employed by Molden), and Aloys Oberhammer (then leader of the Tyrolean ÖVP and member of the provincial cabinet). It seems that, from the very beginning, Norbert Burger was also “part of the surroundings” of this group centered in Innsbruck⁵⁶⁵.

Between 1959 and 1961, over four metric tons of conventional (non-plastic) explosives were smuggled into the region through the Austrian border; at least one ton more was purchased in Trentino. However, the smuggling was not limited to explosives and detonators: unspecified quantities of pistols, rifles, and submachine guns were also smuggled in, only to be then buried across the region. Though contrary to the vision preached by Kerschbaumer, these weapons were necessary to carry out Georg Klotz's plan, supported by both Pfaundler and Molden, of actual guerrilla warfare. Since some of the members were WWII veterans or *Schützen*, not all of them needed much training in the handling of weapons and explosives, though most of them did. In charge of this training was Kurt Welser, the BAS's own “blaster-in-chief” who, aside from giving theoretical lessons across South Tyrol, also organized training sessions in Northern Tirol and Mittenwald (Germany), during which live explosions were practiced. By late 1960, the BAS had some 200 “trained” members and large quantities of underground arms and explosives caches⁵⁶⁶.

p. 30.

⁵⁶⁵ Among this circle of people, Franceschini identifies Pfaundler, Molden and Heuberger as the BAS's “ideologues”. Furthermore, while Pfaundler, Bacher, Lersch and Molden took care of the public relations aspects of the campaign, Molden was arguably the group's main financial backer, together with Widmoser. Long before coming into contact with the Austrian BAS cell, Norbert Burger had already started building his own organization of right-wingers, which stemmed mostly from ultra-conservative student organizations such as the Viennese *Olympia*, or the *Brixia* of Innsbruck. According to Franceschini, despite it being a somewhat separate group, most of the attacks perpetrated by Burger's organization had been cleared beforehand with the Austrian BAS cell. See Franceschini 2012, *Zwischen Rom, Wien und Langley*, p. 434-7 and Perner 2003, *Südtirol*, p. 114-5. Hans Karl Peterlini was able to document a second main source of the organization's funding: the sitting Tyrolean provincial administration. Thanks to the minutes of selected meetings of said provincial cabinet – of which Aloys Oberhammer was a ranking member – it has been documented that taxpayer money was “slipped out of the books”, thereby bypassing all checks and controls, even by the *Rechnungshof* (general accounting office). Aside from Oberhammer (ÖVP), these efforts were also supported by Rupert Zechtl (SPÖ), who was a former contact of Otto Bolschwing (ORG), and soon to become a member of the Tyrolean cabinet. Unsurprisingly, even the FPÖ is described as having been both privy to and supportive of the BAS's funding efforts to a significant extent. See Peterlini 2011, *Feuernacht*, p. 66, 75 and 159.

⁵⁶⁶ See Franceschini 2012, *Zwischen Rom, Wien und Langley*, p. 437; Peterlini 2011, *Feuernacht*, p. 65 and Thomas Riegler; February 27th 2017; Was wusste Bruno Kreisky? Cited from thomas-riegler.net. [Link](#). Despite the undoubted contributions made

The methodological rift between Kerschbaumer and Klotz had always existed, but was further expanded by the support that Koltz's harder line started to receive around 1959 from the influential Austrian cell of the BAS, especially from Molden and Pfaundler. By 1959, Georg Klotz and Luis Amplatz were ready to “blast the region out of Italy”, but this contrasted with Magnago's and the SVP's growing tendency towards autonomy, rather than independence. For this reason, ever since the first bombs started to go off, the target was



Georg Klotz, [undated]. Original credit: unknown.
Source: unsertirol24.com. [Link](#).

never just the Italian authorities, but also the SVP and its negotiation policy, at least to an indirect extent. The two types of targets which the BAS always preferred to attack were either fascist statues/monuments, or the construction sites of social housing projects. When finished, the apartments inside these buildings were awarded to “needy” citizens, the vast majority of whom normally turned out to be Italians immigrating from other regions. It is therefore no wonder that the BAS often targeted these buildings, not just as a symbol of the progressive *Italianization* of the region, but also as a practical way of halting the construction process in selected areas. These initial attacks did not, however, succeed in attracting the desired public attention to the group's cause, with this fact further exacerbated by the sudden unavailability of one of the group's main propagandists: Wolfgang Pfaundler⁵⁶⁷.

“[...] [I]n February 1961 a tumor the size of an infant's head was removed from the abdomen of Wolfgang Pfaundler. He then went to Germany to recuperate. While he was there in March 1961 the famous explosives cache was found in the apartment rented by him in Innsbruck's Haydnplatz. Upon his return from Germany in March Pfaundler voluntarily appeared at police headquarters for questioning. He claimed at that time that the explosives found in his apartment were not his but had been placed there by Italian agents. In view of Pfaundler's delicate state of health he was not arrested⁵⁶⁸.”

Despite having exited the inner circles of the BAS “during the crucial meeting of December 1960⁵⁶⁹”,

by Kurt Welser in training the organization's members, it remains uncertain whether he alone was able to train so many operatives.

567 See Franceschini 2003, Spielwiese der Geheimdienste, p. 193 and Franceschini 2012, Zwischen Rom, Wien und Langley, p. 438.

568 See [case officer redacted]; August 10th 1961; Dispatch EAV-7601 – Recent Developments in the South Tirol Crisis (p. 2). [Link](#). For more information, see also [case officer redacted]; August 3rd 1961; Dispatch EAV-7584 – Background of the Wolfgang Pfaundler arrest (p. 2). [Link](#). According to Riegler, this episode constituted the final blow to Pfaundler's career as a BAS leader. See Thomas Riegler, February 12th 2017: “Pfaundler, Molden & die CIA”, cited from salto.bz. [Link](#).

569 Csépai 1996, Interview with Fritz Molden, p. 34. Christoph Franceschini argued that this rather sudden exit, together with that of both Gerd Bacher and Max Lersch, was not the result of moral concerns. He rather suggested the possibility that it might have been because of an order from the Americans, arguing that this would correlate with their strategic effort to install a US Army missile base in the region (base of Naz-Sciaves), which remained in operation well into the Eighties. See Franceschini 2012, Zwischen Rom, Wien und Langley, p. 450. Conversely, Hans Karl Peterlini explained the simultaneous departure from the BAS of Molden, Bacher and Lersch as a combination of mainly two factors: firstly, Molden's press empire (which was currently paying the salaries of the other two as well) was undergoing some unspecified frictions and a financial crisis; secondly, Peterlini argues that Molden might have understood that the BAS's political support in Vienna was actually weaker than he had anticipated. This interpretation, however, seems to conflict with several other passages of the same book, where Kreisky, Oberhammer and other political representatives are described as both willing and committed to the BAS cause. See Peterlini 2011, Feuernacht, p. 71. It should also be noted that the Viennese media mogul had furthermore been publicly called out as the group's main puppeteer on December 21st. On that day the *Spiegel's* Austrian correspondent Inge Cyrus published an article entitled: “Freikorps Fleischmarkt” (Freedom corps on Fleischmarkt, a clear reference to the address of Molden's publishing company). Inge Cyrus, Freikorps Fleischmarkt, December 21st 1960, published in “Der Spiegel”; cited from Peterlini 2011, Feuernacht, p. 85.

Molden was invited to the StaPo offices and “interrogated” by Oswald Peterlungen himself. A 1962 CIA dispatch stated that, while Molden had not yet been officially summoned as a witness in Pfaundler's trial regarding the explosives cache, the defense attorney was in contact with him and was preparing to do so, should the case be “raised to the political level”. Further according to the dispatch, Justice Minister Christian Broda (SPÖ) believed that the case should be tried at the lowest criminal level possible, precisely to avoid any political implications. “However, there are elements within the government, from both parties, who wish to push the case as a sop to the Italians.” The dispatch concludes that, should this latter group prevail, Molden will be forced to take the stand in defense of Pfaundler, testifying to the fact that “the conspirators were in close touch with Foreign Minister Bruno Kreisky and Ludwig Steiner every step of the way.”⁵⁷⁰

The climax of the sabotages was reached during the night between the 11th and 12th of June 1961 – the so-called *Feuernacht* (Night of Fire). All in all, during this one night the BAS carried out 49 different attacks on 37 electricity pylons, 8 railways, 2 high-pressure lines, 1 dam, and 1 tree (near Salurn). The attacks managed to destroy seven of the nine overhead power lines connecting South Tirol to major north-Italian cities, damage eight power plants, and significantly reduce the ensuing output of Bolzano's industrial area, sometimes to as low as 20% of total capacity. The total damage was estimated at around 3 billion Lire. However, because some of the explosions failed, thereby leaving some of the pylons standing, the BAS was unable to achieve its original goal, which was to completely cut off Bolzano's industrial power supply and thereby cause catastrophic damage to the local steel industry. The following morning, an innocent bystander named Giovanni Postal attempted to remove one of the unexploded devices, causing it to explode and thus becoming the BAS's first recorded casualty. Just nine days after the massive series of attacks, one of the highest public authorities in Bolzano announced that 89 people had already been arrested in connection with the attacks; among them was Kerschbaumer⁵⁷¹.

“Arrests in the South Tirol in late July 1961 have severely crippled the underground BAS. [...] Many BAS arrestees have broken down under Italian interrogation and have made possible the arrest of other BAS activists and the discovery of numerous explosives caches.”⁵⁷²

On the one hand, by September 1st, Italian officials had convened the joint Italian-South Tyrolean commission, which later became known as the “Neunzehnerkommission” (commission of the nineteen) and

570 See [case officer redacted]; April 20th 1962; Dispatch EAV-8135 – Background of the Wolfgang Pfaundler case (p. 3). [Link](#). According to Hans Karl Peterlini, Pfaundler eventually managed to be acquitted from the charges because, during a later visit to the apartment in question, the police failed to prevent him from mixing his old fingerprints with new ones, thereby enabling him to claim that he had never touched any of it. See Peterlini 2011, *Feuernacht*, p. 83. For more information on the topic of Kreisky's involvement, see the following section.

571 See Franceschini 2012, *Zwischen Rom, Wien und Langley*, p. 440. Not only the SIFAR, but all other Italian police forces and agencies were caught off guard by the “Night of Fire”. Despite the fact that most Italian decision-makers involved did know that something was afoot, none expected the BAS to be even remotely capable of targeting almost 50 different objectives on the same night. This was in fact a completely different kind of terrorist operation, unprecedented in the history of the region and perhaps even of the entire country. See Franceschini 2012, *Zwischen Rom, Wien und Langley*, p. 442. Given the amount of both tactical and sabotage training that was necessary to pull off such a complex covert action, made all the more difficult by Kerschbaumer's priority of avoiding all bloodshed, it stands to reason that the aforementioned Kurt Welser could not have provided all of this training by himself. This is further supported by the fact that Welser was also intimately involved in the smuggling operations of both weapons and explosives, which in itself is already a very time-consuming activity. See Peterlini 2011, *Feuernacht*, p. 75-6. For a full view of the note with which the BAS claimed responsibility for the attacks of the *Night of Fire*, see *ibid.* p. 130.

572 [case officer redacted]; August 10th 1961; Dispatch EAV-7601 – Recent Developments in the South Tirol Crisis (p. 2). [Link](#).

which eventually led to the initial draft of the “Paket” in 1964. On the other, following the “Feuernacht”, the Italian security apparatus unleashed the full weight of its power against the BAS. Some 24,000 soldiers and 10,000 Carabinieri agents were sent to the region, thereby setting off a wave of arrests and repression. Right after the bombings, SIFAR's new priority became the infiltration of the leading circles of the BAS, which they actually managed to accomplish as early as the late summer of the same year. Around the turn of the year between 1961 and 1962, it became known that Italian police and other security officers had systematically tortured the apprehended BAS members, eventually causing two of them to die of the injuries thereby inflicted. This caused the remaining BAS members to erase what few traces of Kerschbaumer's vision were left and to embrace the violence. Starting from 1963, BAS attacks no longer shied away from shedding blood. In fact, one of their most commonly deployed tactics soon became the ambush of Italian security agents, either with cross-fire or with explosives. By late 1963, out of the original 200 BAS members, only a few dozen were still active. The fight continued at a reduced, but bloodier rate⁵⁷³.

During early 1962, partly as a consequence of the pressure from Italian security forces, the BAS underwent a change of leadership. The transition saw Kerschbaumer, Klotz and Amplatz take a step back and effectively leave the helm to Günther Andergassen, who at the time worked as a musician and conservatory professor in Innsbruck. In a rather spectacular and widely publicized police operation, Italian authorities were able to arrest Andergassen inside a Venetian hotel on April 1st 1964. The widespread coverage of the arrest, along with the publication on April 10th of the official report on the events of the “Night of Fire”, ended up heavily influencing the current public debate on South Tirol's status. This in turn led to a negative impact on both the trial of the arrested BAS members, as well as on the Kreisky-Saragat negotiations⁵⁷⁴. In his concluding overview Franceschini argued that, while Italian authorities were initially caught by surprise by the BAS's growth and cell-like structure,



Alois “Luis” Amplatz, 1959. Original credit: Eisenstecken. Source: wikipedia.de. [Link](#).

foreign intelligence agencies such as the BND and the CIA actively contributed to this expansion by various means. Furthermore, the Austrian StaPo monitored quite closely the entire build-up phase, which took place between 1957 and 1961. Italian security forces managed to successfully infiltrate almost all cells by 1964, which is also when – after General De Lorenzo's aborted coup d'état, also known as “piano solo” – the struggle entered into an even bloodier and uglier phase⁵⁷⁵.

Following a specific 1964 order by the Austrian ministry of the interior, both Luis Amplatz and Georg Klotz relocated from Innsbruck to Vienna. There they found themselves practically surrounded by a web of

573 See Franceschini 2003, *Spielwiese der Geheimdienste*, p. 194; Franceschini 2012, *Zwischen Rom, Wien und Langley*, p. 441; Riegler 2013, “Wir setzen uns rein...”, p. 166-7; and Thomas Riegler; February 27th 2017; *Was wusste Bruno Kreisky?* Cited from thomas-riegler.net. [Link](#).

574 See Franceschini 2003, *Spielwiese der Geheimdienste*, p. 194-9. Compare with Peterlini 2011, *Feuernacht*, p. 321-2.

575 It is slightly surprising that the situation did not escalate even further, given that at the time the Austrian minister of the interior was none other than Franz Olah.

Italian agents and informants who had been waiting for them to arrive. Through some of these agents, Italian security authorities lured them both back into the country. Before heading back to Italy, the 38-year-old and healthy father of three Luis Amplatz decided to write down a last will and testament on August 14th, which was then deposited at the office of a public notary⁵⁷⁶. On the night of September 7th 1964, Christian Kerbler (an Italian agent) emptied the entire magazine of his pistol into Amplatz and Klotz – three bullets each – immediately killing the former, but only injuring the latter, who eventually managed to escape to Austria and survived to tell the story. As convincingly argued by Franceschini, there remains little doubt about the identity of those who ordered this attack: the ranking police and intelligence officials of Bolzano's *Questura* (Italian district police command). Among other things, the murder weapon was a 9mm Beretta (serial number 616534), which has been positively identified as having been part of an official delivery to the Italian army⁵⁷⁷.

“Following the murder of Luis Amplatz in the autumn of 1964, any remaining inhibitions disappeared. On the one hand, by enlisting the help of informants, Italian authorities perpetrated a number of attacks for which BAS members were then incarcerated. On the other, concrete plans were made for direct strikes against individual BAS targets, such as the attempted kidnappings of Norbert Burger or Peter Kienesberger⁵⁷⁸.”

On December 16th 1964, the foreign ministers of both countries met in Paris to finalize what later became known as the “Südtirol Paket” (South Tirol's reform package), or the Kreisky-Saragat agreement. The draft was finalized without the modifications requested by the South Tyrolean representatives. On January 8th, the text of the agreement was submitted to the combined leaderships of the Tyrolean ÖVP and SVP for final approval. At their meeting, which lasted over five hours and in which some 40 people participated, the reform package was eventually rejected (particularly due to the missing elements they had requested) and is described by Italian scholar Federico Scarano as Kreisky's own “South Tyrolean Waterloo”⁵⁷⁹.

During the entire history of the BAS, which according to most observers lasted at least a decade (1956/7 to 1967), the attacks either claimed by or attributed to the group caused a total of 15 fatalities among Italian security officers, as well as the deaths of four BAS members and two civilians, while these attacks also led to a total of 60 cases of non-fatal injuries. However, the overwhelming majority of all these casualties were caused in just the last three years. It may be argued that the most important example of such later attacks took place on June 25th 1967 at a border crossing known as *Porzescharte* or *Cima Vallona*. This attack killed four Italian officers in a rather skillfully designed explosive ambush. The Austrian government reacted by stationing three ÖBH battalions close to the Tyrolean border with the task of assisting the customs personnel already present

576 The transcription of this document was first published in full on January 14th 1965, on p. 3 of the *Arbeiter Zeitung* (major socialist Austrian daily). The article included a photo of the public notary's stamps and signature, authenticating Luis Amplatz's testament. See [arbeiter-zeitung.at](#), [Link](#).

577 See Franceschini 2012, *Zwischen Rom, Wien und Langley*, p. 444-7 and Franceschini 2003, *Spielwiese der Geheimdienste*, p. 216-22. This version of events was largely confirmed by the Italian parliamentary investigation commission's report; see IPICR 1992, Doc. XXIII, n. 52, p. 70-81 and 109-10, [Link](#). Compare with Gehler 2012, Bruno Kreisky, p. 191.

578 Original: “Im Herbst 1964 wurde Luis Amplatz ermordet. Damit fielen endgültig die Hemmschwellen. Zum einen gelang es, mit Hilfe von Spitzeln Attentate zu verüben, für die BAS-Leute dann eingesperrt wurden, zum anderen plante man direkte Aktionen gegen einzelne BAS-Exponenten wie etwa die versuchten Entführungen von Norbert Burger oder Peter Kienesberger.” Franceschini 2003, *Spielwiese der Geheimdienste*, p. 223.

579 See Scarano 2016, *La diplomazia italiana*, p. 77.

there. While this measure didn't manage to seal off South Tirol completely, it did make it significantly harder to cross the Austrian border, also on a psychological level, since the soldiers had been given permission to open fire. Despite the fact that the actual details of the attack remain unclear to this very day, by blaming the attack on the BAS the Italian government capitalized on the bloodbath just three days afterwards, by claiming it justified Rome's veto of Austria's accession to the European Economic Community (henceforth EEC)⁵⁸⁰.

This in turn helped plunge bilateral relations between Rome and Vienna to a new low point in modern history. The situation finally started to improve only in 1969, when the SVP leadership approved (with a rather low margin) the revised version of the Kreisky-Saragat “Paket”. During the following round of official negotiations, those held in 1969 between Aldo Moro (DC) and Silvius Magnago (SVP), an agreement on the new statute of autonomy was finally reached. Despite the fact that the agreement was formally signed only on November 10th 1971, shortly after the joint announcement, Rome had effectively already withdrawn its veto from the EEC issue in 1969⁵⁸¹.

In conclusion, it may be argued that, while almost all of the 1964-67 attacks still need much more research, Fritz Molden played a documentably crucial role in the leadership, funding and related propaganda efforts of the BAS. He was consistently aided in his tasks by two former ORG agents: Wolfgang Pfaundler (who was also a former CIA agent) and Rupert Zechtl. As already mentioned earlier, the reasons behind Max Lersch's, Gerd Bacher's and Fritz Molden's sudden exit from the organization in late December 1960 are still up for debate. Furthermore, while the evaluated sources do not suggest that Kurt Welser – the group's own blaster-in-chief – was a member of the Austrian stay behind network as Molden was, it remains uncertain whether he alone was able to provide all the training necessary for the first attacks, up to and including those of the “Night of Fire”. If it is considered that GRLAUNCH, the CIA's second paramilitary stay behind network, was both based in Tirol and definitively disbanded only in early 1960, it becomes very plausible that some training was provided to the BAS by former stay behind operatives, perhaps even some weapons and munitions too. Despite being a reasonable possibility, this does not imply that it must necessarily have been Fritz Molden who was in charge of this organizational crossover. This becomes particularly evident when considered in the context of the “tri-partisan” political backing that the underground group enjoyed during the initial period, as demonstrated by the fact that a significant amount of its funding was drawn from Tyrolean taxpayers through the provincial cabinet. Given the amount of US intelligence penetration into the South Tyrolean organization, it is likely that Langley provided the group with direct support, maybe even of a financial nature. However, for the sake of accuracy, it should be noted that this theory is not supported by any of the evaluated sources. In the end, Molden was most surely not the only influential Austrian figure privy to both the BAS's planning and to some of the CIA's covert activities in Austria, as exemplified by the case of Bruno Kreisky, the very subject of the following section.

580 See Thomas Riegler; February 27th 2017; Was wusste Bruno Kreisky? Cited from thomas-riegler.net. [Link](#). See also Riegler 2013, “Wir setzen uns rein...”, p. 167 and Peterlini 2011, *Feuernacht*, p. 400-1. For more information on the attack and Kienesberger's trial; see Speckner, Hubert (2013): “Zwischen Porze und Roßkarspitz...: der “Vorfall” vom 25. Juni 1967 in den österreichischen sicherheitsdienstlichen Akten” Gra & Wis Publisher, Vienna.

581 See Gehler 2012, Bruno Kreisky, p. 191; Riegler 2013, “Wir setzen uns rein...”, p. 167 and Thomas Riegler; February 27th 2017; Was wusste Bruno Kreisky? Cited from thomas-riegler.net. [Link](#).

Excursus: Bruno Kreisky

“Imagine this: an incumbent foreign minister repeatedly welcomes some of the leaders of an underground organization, which is currently engaged in preparations for multiple bombings in one of the neighboring countries – and the meetings aren't even hidden, since they take place at his office or at his home. The meetings are usually followed by a visit to a restaurant. Bruno Kreisky did all that during the South Tyrolean conflict of the early 1960s – the very same Kreisky who in 1970 started his long reign as Austrian chancellor.”⁵⁸²



Bruno Kreisky, [undated]. Original credit: Walter Henisch / APA. Source: [diepresse.com](https://www.diepresse.com/). [Link](#).

According to Austrian historian Michael Gehler, in the autumn of 1958, Kreisky sent a request to the secretary-general of the SVP Hans Stanek, explicitly asking that the situation “be somehow dramatized”, and that the South Tirol situation be portrayed both as “an international trouble spot”, as well as an “Austrian problem”⁵⁸³. Just two weeks after being appointed foreign minister, on August 1st 1959, Bruno Kreisky traveled to Innsbruck to take part in a high-level meeting with politicians of both North and South Tirol. On that day, to get back to Vienna, he got a lift in the car of Wolfgang Pfaundler, who many years later refused to admit having spoken openly about his guerrilla warfare plans with the minister, but said that: “We spoke to each other in such a way that we didn't even have to mention things to be able to understand each another anyway.”⁵⁸⁴ In any case, Pfaundler then sought and obtained a meeting between Georg Klotz and Kreisky. It may even be argued that he did this to provide Klotz with an advantage over Josef Kerschbaumer, who, in contrast to the former, was still firmly opposed to any form of bloodshed. In the end, while Klotz met Kreisky as early as the beginning of January, Kerschbaumer's meeting with the foreign minister only happened in late November of 1960.

Of the diverging accounts available concerning what transpired in that first meeting, South Tyrolean scholar Hans Karl Peterlini described the one delivered by Klotz's daughter, Eva, to be more reliable than – among others – the memo for the record that Kreisky wrote over two years after the event. This memo had been

582 Original: “Man stelle sich vor: Ein amtierender Außenminister empfängt mehrmals Anführer einer Untergrundbewegung, die gerade im benachbarten Ausland Sprengstoffattentate vorbereitet – und er trifft sie keineswegs im Verborgenen, sondern in seinem Amtssitz und bei sich zuhause. Abschließend geht's einmal in eine Gaststätte. All das hat Bruno Kreisky während des Südtirolkonflikts in den frühen 1960er Jahren getan – ausgerechnet jener Kreisky, der 1970 zum langjährigen Bundeskanzler auf-rückt.” According to Austrian scholar Thomas Riegler, Kreisky had two major reasons for taking such a keen interest in the South Tirol issue: from a personal point of view, his own experience of incarceration and exile made him more responsive to the problems faced by the South Tyroleans; but on the political side, by taking such a stance on a topic usually closer to conservative interests, the SPÖ managed to cement its credibility beyond social and interior issues. Further down, Riegler stated that Kreisky's influence on postwar Austrian was so great that his era is sometimes referred to as the era of the *Sonnenkönig* (sun king). Ibid. [Link](#).

583 Original: “Entgegen der These von Oliver Rathkolb, wonach es keinerlei Hinweise gebe, wonach Kreisky grünes Licht für An-schläge und Bombenattentate gegeben habe, kann man festhalten, dass von ihm bereits im Herbst 1958 die Aufforderung an den SVP-Generalsekretär Hans Stanek erging, die Lage in Südtirol 'irgendwie zu dramatisieren' und es 'als internationales Unruhe-herd' und 'Problem Österreichs' darzustellen.” Gehler 2012, Bruno Kreisky, p. 178. Gehler then argued that this might well be considered at least as an indication that Kreisky might have actually contributed to the escalation of the problem even prior to the turn of the decade. It should however be pointed out that the author of this narrative was unable to either verify the source cited by Gehler, nor to otherwise support this specific point of his narrative.

584 Original: “Wir haben so miteinander geredet, dass wir die Dinge nicht aussprechen mussten, um uns trotzdem zu verstehen.” Wolfgang Pfaundler (undated), cited from Peterlini 2011, *Feuernacht*, p. 66.

written in the context of a letter which Klotz wrote to him from behind the bars of an Italian prison, reminding him of his version of their conversation and his commitments. Eva Klotz stated that while Kreisky explicitly supported an unspecified degree of BAS violence, in contrast to other politicians, he did not make any commitments with regards to the eventual needs incurred by the families of the BAS members fighting for the cause⁵⁸⁵.

On November 10th, during a meeting between Rupert Zechtl – an SPÖ politician and serving member of the Tyrolean provincial cabinet – and several BAS leaders, Kerschbaumer requested to meet Kreisky. When asked about this in 1991, Zechtl stated that this meeting had actually been desired by both sides. The meeting finally took place at Kreisky's apartment on November 27th; Kerschbaumer had brought the two fellow BAS members Karl Tietscher and Georg Pircher with him and Zechtl was also present. Regretfully, by the early Nineties, Zechtl was the only surviving witness of that crucial meeting. According to his account, “Kreisky knew what kind of people they were, but by no means did he know about either Kerschbaumer's or Pircher's actions. Kreisky didn't know anything about the active steps [taken by the BAS, ed. r.]⁵⁸⁶” When explicitly asked whether “terrorist activities” were discussed during the meeting itself, Zechtl answered:



Rupert Zechtl, [undated]. Orifinal credit: unknown. Source: parlament.gv.at. [Link](#).

“Such things were not discussed. The topic was prudently avoided. Do you really think that a meeting with the Austrian foreign minister could cover such issues, which back then were so crucially important?”⁵⁸⁷

In any event, after the rather short meeting, all of them went to the local restaurant called *Poldi Kurz*, where others – such as Gerd Bacher and Fritz Molden – joined the group. Several decades later, both Molden and Zechtl confirmed that Kreisky “knew about all of it”. Both of these meetings took place before the hot phase of the BAS activity, which started with the single minor explosion of December 10th. As noted by Thomas Riegler, it still stands to reason that not only were most operational plans well advanced, but that this knowledge and particularly the timing might have been shared with the foreign minister. Unsurprisingly, as soon as the first attacks started to actually happen, Kreisky promptly distanced both himself and the Austrian government from all of it⁵⁸⁸.

585 See *ibid*, p. 67-8 and Thomas Riegler; February 27th 2017; Was wusste Bruno Kreisky? Cited from thomas-riegler.net. [Link](#). In the aforementioned memo for the record, Kreisky stated: “I explicitly told Klotz and Pfaundler that only peaceful means can be helpful [to the cause, ed. r.] and that all other actions are destined to end in defeat.” Bruno Kreisky, on July 23rd 1962, internal memorandum for the record, cited from Franceschini 2016, Bruno Kreisky und die Attentäter, p. 127.

586 Original: “Kreisky hat gewusst, was das für Leute sind. Er hat aber beileibe nicht gewusst, was für Aktionen der Kerschbaumer gemacht hat oder was der Pircher getan hat. Von den aktiven Aktionen hat Kreisky nichts gewusst.” Rupert Zechtl, November 13th 1991, cited from *ibid*, p. 134. See also *ibid*. p. 128 and 133.

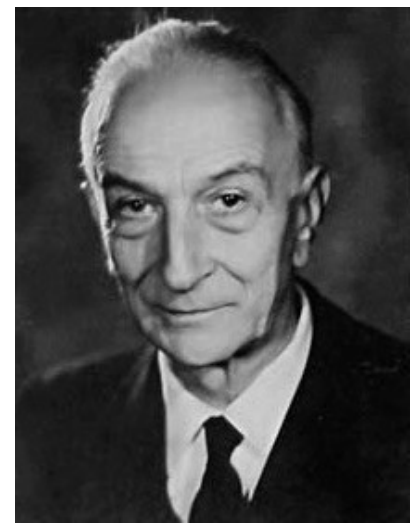
587 Original: “Darüber ist nicht gesprochen worden. Das hat man wohlweislich vermieden. Glauben Sie wirklich, dass eine Besprechung mit dem österreichischen Außenminister solche Dinge behandelt, die damals brennend aktuell gewesen sind?” Rupert Zechtl, November 13th 1991, cited from *ibid*, p. 135. In the end Franceschini describes Zechtl's version of events as “the most plausible one”, even though he then proceeds to document several instances in which the account turned out to be unreliable, particularly concerning the amount of information that Kreisky already had by the time he met the BAS's leading members.

588 See Thomas Riegler; February 27th 2017; Was wusste Bruno Kreisky? Cited from thomas-riegler.net. [Link](#) and Gehler 2012, Bruno Kreisky, p. 179. Christoph Franceschini documented how, aside from his multiple meetings with BAS leaders, Kreisky had access to extensive police and StaPo reports detailing the ins and outs of the BAS's preparations for their first attacks. See

“For the entire period from 1959 until 1966, during which Bruno Kreisky led the Austrian foreign ministry, he was the Austrian protagonist in the complex negotiations with the Italians concerning the South Tyrolean issue. [...]. As the tensions rose to new heights, following both Kreisky's recourse to the UN and the first attacks of the early Sixties, many in Italy considered him to be one of the main actors responsible for the increased tensions in South Tirol, and even for terrorism⁵⁸⁹. [...] Kreisky considered the South Tyrolean issue to be of utmost importance for Austrian politics and, as a result of his many efforts, he was nicknamed Andreas – like the Tyrolean hero Andreas Hofer who led the resistance efforts against Napoleon in 1809 – and even “minister of the extremes” (Minister für das Äußerste).⁵⁹⁰”

Michael Gehler argued that both of the resolutions that Kreisky managed to get approved by the UN are to be considered among his great triumphs since, in contrast to the Paris agreement of 1946, they led to an “effective internationalization of the South Tyrolean issue”, as well as to its “recognition as an international dispute”. Unsurprisingly, Federico Scarano characterized the UN resolutions differently, more as a compromise. Whatever the interpretation, the results ultimately came at the price of a direct confrontation with Italy. Despite the fact that throughout the Sixties the ÖVP made Austria's accession to the EEC one of its top priorities, this path ended up being blocked by Italy on grounds relating to South Tirol⁵⁹¹.

Austrian scholar Thomas Riegler suggests that there was a correlation between the timing of the BAS's initial attacks, and the positive effects which Kreisky and his team of diplomats experienced at the different negotiating tables. For example, he implies a relationship between the early 1961 attacks and “the first signs of good will” shown by Italian officials at the following round of negotiations⁵⁹². It remains, however, unclear to what extent this strategy actually worked. Only a few hours prior to the four dozen explosions that rocked the “Night of Fire”, Antonio Segni – then the Italian foreign minister – released a statement in person on Italian television, where he explicitly opened the door to a peaceful solution to the controversy. Yet, according to Federico Scarano, the atmosphere was so tense at the June 24th meeting in Zurich that “it became difficult to even release a joint press statement.”⁵⁹³



Antonio Segni, [undated]. Original credit: unknown. Source: wikipedia.it. [Link](#).

Franceschini 2016, Bruno Kreisky und die Attentäter, p. 145.

589 Original: “Per tutto il lungo periodo nel quale Bruno Kreisky fu ministro degli Esteri Austriaco dal 1959 al 1966 egli fu il principale protagonista austriaco nelle complesse trattative con gli italiani per la soluzione della questione sudtirolese. [...] Quando la situazione si acui con il ricorso austriaco all'ONU e gli attentati dei primi anni '60, egli sarebbe stato considerato da molti in Italia come uno dei principali responsabili dell'aumento della tensione in Sudtirolo e perfino del terrorismo.” Scarano 2016, La diplomazia italiana, p. 55.

590 Original: “Per Kreisky il problema sudtirolese era il principale della politica austriaca e per l'impegno da lui profuso gli sarebbe stato dato il soprannome di Andreas, dall'eroe tirolese Andreas Hofer protagonista della resistenza contro Napoleone nel 1809, e perfino di “ministro degli estremi” (“Minister für das Äußerste”).” Scarano 2016, La diplomazia italiana, p. 61. See also Peterlini 2011, Feuernacht, p. 68.

591 See Gehler 2012, Bruno Kreisky, p. 181-2 and Scarano 2016, La diplomazia italiana, p. 69. In the context of Rome's veto, Gehler argues that Kreisky – perhaps one of the most skilled and intelligent diplomats ever to serve the Austrian republic – may have somehow not understood the implications of his rather nefarious South Tirol policy.

592 See Thomas Riegler; February 27th 2017; Was wusste Bruno Kreisky? Cited from thomas-riegler.net. [Link](#).

593 See Scarano 2016, La diplomazia italiana, p. 70-1.

“The first conversations were held in Innsbruck with the journalist Wolfgang Pfaundler, who then put us in contact with the journalist Fritz Molden from Vienna. While Wolfgang Pfaundler was tasked with the propaganda efforts, Fritz Molden was in charge of the money and the weapons.

This collaboration worked very well. We received excellent weapons, which were transported to South Tirol by other people. After getting wind of our intentions, multiple political figures eventually agreed with them, such as the socialist provincial councilor Rupert Zechtl of Tirol, who on several occasions proposed to talk on our behalf to the Austrian foreign minister Dr. Kreisky, as well as to other political figures of his party. Around mid-September 1959, Kerschbaumer and I were invited through Zechtl to present our plan directly to foreign minister Kreisky.⁵⁹⁴”

By mid-January 1965, both Italian and Austrian newspapers started to publish fragments of Amplatz's testament; this happened just one week after the draft resulting from the Kreisky-Saragat negotiations had been turned down by the combined leadership of the Tyrolean ÖVP and the SVP.

“It was no coincidence that just four months after Amplatz's violent death, his political testament was leaked both to the Austrian and Italian press. This move had been planned and timed with the utmost precision, with the intent of irrevocably burying the Austrian foreign minister's ambitious project.”⁵⁹⁵

According to Franceschini, the plan to destroy Kreisky's political career failed due to two main reasons: firstly, a copy of the testament was sent to the Italian embassy prior to its publication, thereby avoiding much of the criticism from Italian officials. Secondly, as already mentioned, Kreisky was an intelligent and skilled diplomat, capable of correctly evaluating the risk associated with some of his meetings. As countermeasures against such allegations he had written a whole series of notes and memorandums for the record, documenting his own version of events and topics discussed during such meetings. In short, it may well be argued that the *minister of the extremes* was able to dodge the bullet by clinging to his own memos⁵⁹⁶. After the ÖVP's late 1964 rejection of the Kreisky-Saragat agreement, it later became the socialists' turn to reject the results achieved by their political opponents. When the Austrian parliament voted on the agreement reached in the following round of negotiations by Kurt Waldheim, Silvius Magnago and Aldo Moro, Bruno Kreisky, as leader of both the SPÖ and its parliamentary faction, sided with the FPÖ in voting against the agreement⁵⁹⁷.

As already mentioned at the beginning of the opening section, the focus of the narrative now turns to those episodes with either documentable or at least probable links to the Italian Gladio network.

594 Original: “Die ersten Besprechungen hatten wir mit dem Journalisten Wolfgang Pfaundler in Innsbruck, der uns dann mit dem Journalisten Fritz Molden aus Wien zusammenbrachte. Wolfgang Pfaundler hatte die Aufgabe für die Propaganda zu sorgen, und Fritz Molden, für Geld und Waffen. / Diese Zusammenarbeit hat sehr gut geklappt. Wir erhielten sehr gute Waffen, die später von anderen Personen nach Südtirol gebracht wurden. Auf unser Vorhaben aufmerksam geworden, ließen sich mehrere Politiker herbei. So der Sozialist, Landesrat Rupert Zechtl aus Tirol, der uns mehrere Male den Vorschlag machte, mit Aussenminister Dr. Kreisky und anderen Politiker zu sprechen. Mitte September 1959 sind wir, Kerschbaumer und ich, durch Zechtl bei Aussenminister Dr. Kreisky zu Besprechungen über unser Vorhaben vorgeladen worden.” Luis Amplatz, August 14th 1964, Last will and testament, cited from *Arbeiter Zeitung* of January 14th 1965 (p. 3); see arbeiter-zeitung.at, [Link](#).

595 Original: “Es war kein Zufall, dass vier Monate nach dem gewaltsamen Tod Amplatz' dessen politischen Testament der österreichischen und italienischen Presse zugespielt wurde. Die Aktion war vielmehr geplant und exakt getimt, um ein ehrgeiziges politisches Projekt des österreichischen Außenministers endgültig zu Fall zu bringen.” Franceschini 2016, Bruno Kreisky und die Attentäter, p. 125.

596 See *ibid*, p. 125-6. It should be reiterated that these memorandums were only “for the record”, and were neither addressed nor intended for anyone else other than himself, except on occasions such as this one.

597 See Scarano 2016, *La diplomazia italiana*, p. 86.

1961-67: connected bombings in both Austria and Italy

In 1991, General Manilo Capriata was interviewed as a witness by Judge Carlo Mastelloni, particularly with regards to the brief period in early 1962, when Capriata had been the head of SISMI's section R – the very division that operated Gladio – directly subordinated to Giovanni De Lorenzo, then the agency's director. According to this testimony, which was widely cited in the Italian parliamentary investigation commission's report on South Tirol, during that brief period Gen. De Lorenzo ordered Capriata to activate all of the saboteurs who had already undergone training at the CAG in Sardinia, and that were currently resident and/or stationed in South Tirol. Allegedly, this was done despite the opposition of the then-head of section D (internal security) Gen. Viggiani, “because the measures implemented in that area by *Ufficio D*, had turned out to be insufficient.”⁵⁹⁸

On September 23rd 1963, still more or less during the transitional period between Kershbaumer's non-violent vision and the Andergassen leadership, a series of explosions rocked the Alpine province of Upper Austria. A few minutes after 6am the first blast destroyed the *Löwendenkmal* (lion-like statue), situated on the road between Ebensee and Traunkirchen. Luckily, only material damage was caused by this first explosion. A second, much more serious act of sabotage was avoided at the cable-car station of Ebensee, thanks only to sheer luck. A time-bomb had been skillfully planted inside the upper station, and had been set to explode at the end of the first morning trip up the mountain, thereby causing the car to fall when close to the top. On that day, the first passengers were one adult and five children. However, the device failed to ignite at the right moment, thereby sparing the lives of the passengers and saving the installation from catastrophe⁵⁹⁹.

On that very same morning, between 7 and 8 am, the Gendarmerie received information concerning another possible device located at Ebensee's salt mine. A number of officers showed up at the scene and closed off the perimeter. After having found already two separate sets of charges, police inspector Kurt Gruber inadvertently set off the third one while holding it in his hands. Aside from killing him, the blast wounded eleven other officers, two of them critically, and one severely. All three of the crime scenes were analyzed by the court-appointed expert Alois Massak. He reported that not only had all of these bombs been planted by the same group, but that these were also the same individuals who had already committed another act of sabotage, the bombing of the Andreas Hofer monument in Innsbruck in 1961. This theory is further supported by the fact that a number of almost identical membership cards of a shadowy organization called *Giovane Italia* (young Italy) were discovered in or around all four of the aforementioned targets. While none of the cards carried a name, the cards at the site of the first attack were dated 1960, while the newer ones all dated back to 1963 and carried an additional stamp mark stating: *I Carabinieri non si toccano* (Nobody touches the Carabinieri, [an Italian military/police force])⁶⁰⁰.

598 IPICR 1992, Doc. XXIII, n. 52, p. 25, [Link](#). Despite the fact that no other corroborating evidence or testimonies could be found, the report went on to state that “there are no reasons to consider [Gen. Capriata] as a mendacious witness”. Ibid., p. 90.

599 See Peterlini 2011, *Feuernacht*, p. 329-30.

600 According to Peterlini, while some sort of historical/economical justification can be found for the individual targets that were selected, the author of this narrative was not able to find a single convincing explanation as to why the terrorists had decided to attack Ebensee in Upper Austria, of all places. See *ibid*, p. 329-32.

“According to court expert Massak, there wasn't really any doubt as to whether all of the attacks had been perpetrated by one and the same group, up to and including the October 1st 1961 sabotage of the Andreas Hofer monument in Innsbruck. His conjecture didn't primarily rely upon the recovered membership cards. However, the Italian origin of the components, as well as the fact that some of them were accessible only through military channels, both pointed in the direction of Italian groups.⁶⁰¹”

Despite the many promising leads pointing towards Italy, the investigations soon shifted focus towards the BAS; after a while, the search was eventually narrowed down to one particular individual: Kurt Welser. It is only by sheer chance that the actual perpetrators were arrested during investigations into other bombings, this time of local offices of the Italian communist party (PCI). Following the arrest of a small group of right-wingers, their houses were searched, leading to the recovery of a number of almost identical *Giovane Italia* membership cards with the same stamp mark, as well as photos documenting one of the men's involvement in the attacks in Austria. His name was Giorgio Massara, and he was the leader of the cell-like group. When confronted with the evidence uncovered, Massara actual-



The defendants in the trial for the 1963 Ebensee bombings: (clockwise, starting from upper left side) Giorgio Massara, Sergio Poltronieri, Luciano Rolando, Maurizio Perito; [undated]. Original credit: Helmut Golowitsch, Puchenau. Source: Peterlini 2011, Bombenjahre, p. 338.

ly confessed to the attacks, closely followed by two others of the original four-man group: Sergio T. Poltronieri and Luciano Rolando. The narrative they presented revolved around an act of retaliation against Austria for the BAS's attacks. Despite the resounding success of the investigations, the trial in Italy proceeded so slowly that the fourth member – Maurizio Perito – managed to escape to South Africa. In the end, despite having been arrested multiple times, and despite the conclusive evidence gathered against them, none of the group's members was ever convicted, not least because they were never charged with the most serious crimes, such as murder and attempted multiple murder. It still remains unclear who exactly gave orders to these four individuals; unsurprisingly, their names do not figure among Andreotti's 1991 list of Gladio members⁶⁰². The Italian parliamentary investigation commission's report on South Tirol stated in passing:

“The whole affair resembles quite closely an activation of Gladio; in any event we are talking about a readily

601 Original: “Für Gutachter Massak besteht kein Zweifel, dass alle Anschläge und Anschlagversuche von ein und derselben Tätergruppe durchgeführt wurden – einschließlich des Andreas-Hofer-Denkmal in Innsbruck am 1. Oktober 1961. Seine Vermutung, die sich nicht in erster Linie auf die hinterlegten Ausweise, sondern auf die italienische Herkunft und zum Teil ausschließliche militärische Zugänglichkeit der Sprengmaterialien bezieht, geht eindeutig in Richtung italienischer Gruppen.” Ibid, p. 331-2.

602 See Perner 2003, Südtirol, p. 117-8 and Peterlini 2011, Feuernacht, p. 337-9. Austrian scholar Julia Montalcino cited an unspecified article published at the time by the *Corriere della Sera* (major Italian daily), in which Gen. De Lorenzo was suggested to be the true commissioner of the aforementioned attacks in Austria. The purpose would have been to signal to Austrian decision makers to stop helping or even just tolerating the BAS's activities. Regretfully, the author of this narrative was unable to either find the article in question, nor confirm its content. See Montalcino 1996, Gladio-Bomben in Österreich, p. 86.

apparent case of deviation from the institutional tasks.⁶⁰³”

Another similar link is predicated upon the testimony of Gen. Vito P. Formica, who at the time of the following events was the head of training of the CAG, and thereby a direct subordinate of Col. Mario Monaco, the commander of Gladio's main base of operations. According to Gen. Formica's testimony of mid-1991, following the shootout at the Finance Guard (GdF) station of Malga Sasso (near the Brenner pass), in which three agents died under still somewhat mysterious circumstances on September 9th 1966, then-director of SID Adm. Henke ordered him to go to South Tirol to assess and report on the situation.

“I seized the opportunity to study the area; for the event of possible retaliation, after nightfall I even studied itineraries and objectives located in Austrian border settlements. I formulated some thirty plans for as many different objectives, stretching from the Reschen Pass to the Peralba mountain (240km). Upon my return I delivered them all to my direct superior, who then stored them in a safe. On December 31st of the same year the plans were requested with the utmost urgency by the office in Rome, which is when we lost track of them.⁶⁰⁴”

The report then went on to state that, further according to Formica, those plans had been personally commissioned by Adm. Henke for retaliation against Austria, and that Col. Monaco only learned about them later. Moreover, Formica said that “he was not aware that the objectives he picked in Austria had later gone on to become the targets of terrorist attacks.⁶⁰⁵”

1978-88: the last phase of the cycle

“The last phase, a rather long and complex one, spans the ten years stretching from 1978 to 1988. Following a long phase of overall inactivity on the side of the terrorists, which lasted from 1968 to 1978 (the phase in which the agreements leading up to the new statute of autonomy were reached), a new series of attacks started in 1978, against both “German” and “Italian” targets. While in the first case it was the group known as *Ein Tirol*, in the second it turned out to be the groups known as API [Azione Protezione Italiani, ed. r.] and MIA [Movimento Italiani Alto Adige, ed. r.].⁶⁰⁶”

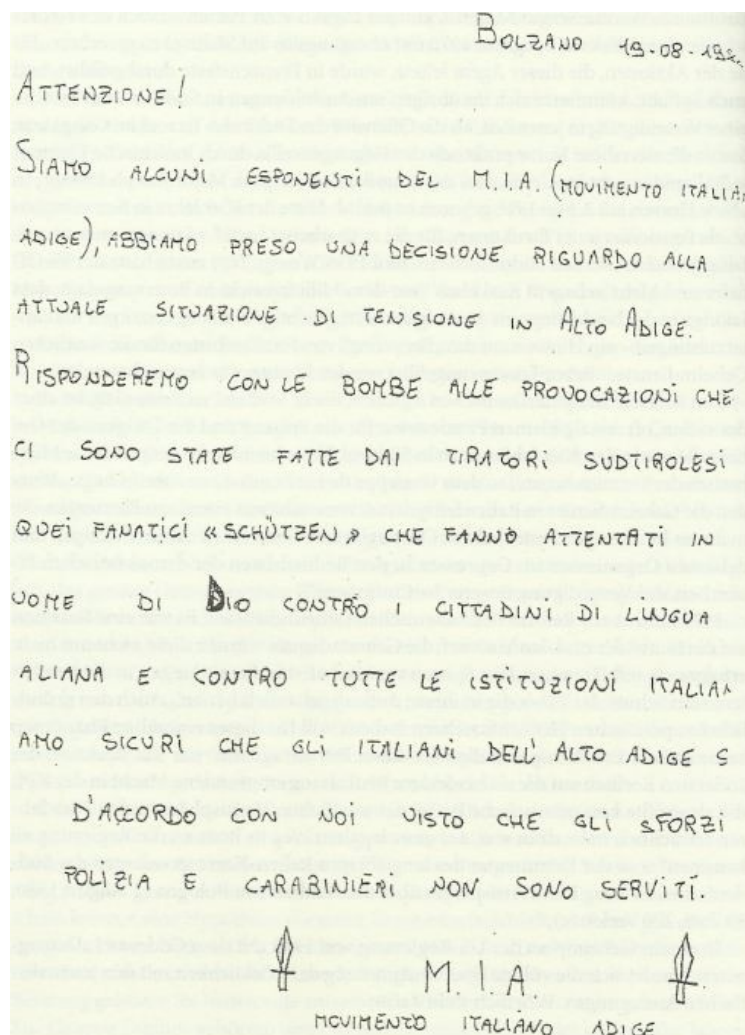
603 Original: “La vicenda assomiglia molto ad una attivazione di Gladio, ma in ogni caso siamo di fronte ad una palese deviazione dai compiti istituzionali.” IPICR 1992, Doc. XXIII, n. 52, p. 111. [Link](#). As already mentioned in chapter three, one of Gladio's oldest paramilitary units – known as *Stella Marina* – had already been established in 1957, supposedly covering the territory stretching from the Yugoslav border to the Isonzo river. For the stated purpose of verifying its readiness, in 1958 one of its sub-units was activated on the occasion of the inauguration of a monument in honor of the “Divisione Julia”: 85% of its 130 members showed up just as expected. By that time *Stella Marina* already counted over 400 recruited members, and this number was expected to increase by another 2,000 units. See IPICR 1991, Doc. XXIII, n. 36, p. 31, [Link](#).

604 Original: “Nell'occasione studiai il terreno e, nottetempo, itinerari ed obiettivi situati nei centri abitati confinanti, in territorio Austriaco, per un'eventuale rappresaglia. Compilai una trentina di piani per altrettanti obietti dal Passo Resia al Monte Peralba (240km). Al rientro li consegnai al mio diretto superiore e furono custoditi in cassaforte. Il 31 dicembre del medesimo anno furono con estrema urgenza richiesti dall'ufficio di Roma e non se ne seppe più nulla.” Vito P. Formica, June 11th 1991, transcript of the interview with the Italian parliamentary commission, cited from IPICR 1992, Doc. XXIII, n. 52, p. 92. [Link](#).

605 Original: “[...] di non essere a conoscenza che gli obiettivi da lui individuati in Austria abbiano poi formato oggetto di attentati.” Ibid, p. 91. [Link](#). Regretfully, the commission's report did not provide more detail of the exact context of this rather startling assertion.

606 Original: “Un'ultima fase, molto lunga e complessa, riguarda il decennio che va dal 1978 al 1988. Dopo una lunga fase di silenzio degli attentati, che va dal 1968 al 1978 (la fase di realizzazione degli accordi che hanno portato al nuovo statuto di autonomia), nel 1978 riprendono gli attentati sia sul versante “tedesco” sia sul versante “italiano”: nel primo caso ad agire è il gruppo “Ein Tirol”, mentre nel secondo caso ad agire sono i gruppi API e MIA.” Ibid, p. 18. [Link](#).

Due to the heavy propaganda/advertising activity to which average Italian nationals were (and still are) exposed on a daily basis, a growing number of average citizens started to resent the concrete steps that were being taken towards local autonomy. So while some Italians felt like they were being cheated out of some unspecified assets by the South Tyroleans, the latter felt that the whole process was proceeding far too slowly, particularly due to institutional entrenchment and passive resistance. The potential for conflict attached to this divide soon affected the overall regional climate, in turn leading to the relatively frequent “political incidents” during the course of the late Sixties and Seventies. However, the season of major bombings only started again towards the end of the decade, with a series of attacks for which MIA later claimed responsibility. “It was further determined that the attacks' technical execution was so perfect that it suggested the involvement of some sort of military unit⁶⁰⁷”.



MIA Leaflet, Bolzano, August 19th 1988, carrying the Gladio symbol, which at the time was still widely unknown. Source: Peterlini 2003: Die Achse am Brenner, p. 232.

“But it is in 1979 that a different terrorist phenomenon appears in all its violence, clearly different because solely aimed against “German” targets. [...] In the night between the 3rd and 4th of December, six bombing attacks took place at six different locations, very far from each other and practically simultaneously. The targets that were chosen were the ski-lift installations (cable-cars and chair lifts) owned by “Germans”, either private individuals or corporations. In all cases the exact same technique was used, capable of causing the maximum damage with the minimum amount of explosives, but also without endangering any people. Always the same exact use of explosives, which were masterfully placed at the weakest points of the installation[s]. As if it had been the same expert hand, only that it had to involve at least 18 individuals, three for each target. One terrorist to spot the target, one able to climb up the pillars, and one to provide the escape for the former two. Almost a military exercise of saboteurs. It is assumed that this series of attacks required an onsite support team, perhaps just as large as the first one.⁶⁰⁸”

607 Original: “[F]u rilevato che la tecnica di esecuzione era talmente perfetta da far pensare all'opera di un corpo militare”. Ibid, p. 96, [Link](#). See also Peterlini 2003, Die Achse am Brenner, p. 234-6.

608 Original: “Ma è nel 1979 che un fenomeno terroristico diverso, ora facilmente riconoscibile perché diretto contro obiettivi “tedeschi” diventa virulento. [...] Nella notte dal 3 al 4 dicembre vengono eseguiti sei attentati dinamitardi su sei obiettivi in sei località diverse, molto distanti tra loro e praticamente alla stessa ora. Gli obiettivi scelti sono impianti di risalita (funivie e seggiovie) di proprietà di privati o di società “tedesche”. In tutti la medesima tecnica precisa, capace di provocare il massimo danno con il minimo uso di esplosivo, senza nessun pericolo per le persone. Il medesimo preciso uso dell'esplosivo collocato esattamente su parti tecnicamente più vulnerabili dell'impianto. Quasi una stessa mano esperta, ma con la necessità di coinvolgimento di almeno 18 persone, tre per ogni impianto. Un terrorista che individua l'obiettivo, uno che è capace di scalare i piloni, uno che fa fuggire i primi due. Quasi una esercitazione militare di guastatori. Si presume che per tali serie di attentati sia stata necessaria anche una struttura di sostegno sul posto forse altrettanto numerosa.” IPICR 1992, Doc. XXIII, n. 52, p. 115, [Link](#).

After having contributed to a number of high-profile investigations, such as those into the assassination of Gen. Dalla Chiesa, the kidnapping and assassination of Aldo Moro and the bombing of Peteano in 1972, Marco Morin became a rather renowned explosives expert. During the Seventies and Eighties, he went on to carry out many investigations into instances of sabotage, including some of those in South Tirol. As already mentioned at the end of the third chapter, thanks to the confession of Vincenzo Vinciguerra, Judge Felice Casson was able to prove that at least one of Morin's court testimonies had been deliberately falsified. In that case, Morin had attempted (and for more than 12 years actually managed) to shield some of his own right-wing associates from the investigations. Given that a number of historians agree on the idea that Morin was some kind of Gladio affiliate, this could go a very long way towards explaining why no Gladio member has ever actually been convicted (to a significant amount of jail time)⁶⁰⁹.



Marco Morin, [undated]. Original credit: unknown. Source: Peterlini 2003: *Die Achse am Brenner*, p. 245.

Other attacks executed by either MIA or API in the region targeted railways, other skiing installations, or selected buildings in Bolzano, those which represented both sides of the negotiations for the *Paket* (the reform of South Tirol's statute of autonomy). Such urban targets usually included the local offices of SVP and DC, as well as the residences and offices of individual politicians involved in the talks. During the second half of the Eighties, a new shadowy organization rose from the ashes of a group generally referred to as the *Obermaiser Bande*, which could be argued to have basically been a gang of thugs based in the Bolzano and Merano areas. This new organization became known as “Ein Tirol”, allegedly led by Karl Außerer. During its last major wave of violence, which stretched from 1986 to 1988, this obscure group committed some 46 attacks scattered across the region. According to Austrian scholar Thomas Riegler, this group's attacks seemed to somewhat correlate with those claimed by MIA and API, in that they too ended up targeting the representatives of the negotiations⁶¹⁰.

At times the situation turned into outright chaos, especially when both sides of the Italo-Tyrolean divide attacked on the same day. This happened in Bolzano when four different bombs exploded on July 21st 1981, two of which were aimed at the German-speakers (hitting Magnago's villa and the regional assembly building), while the other two were aimed at the Italian-speakers (targeting the local prefecture as well as the DC's offices). “The responsibility for the Italian attacks was claimed by two groups, Associazione Protezione Italiani (API) und der Movimento Italiani Alto Adige (MIA). Both organizations were directly linked to Francesco Stoppani and to Gladio⁶¹¹”. Stoppani – a registered member in Andreotti's list of Gladio operatives – knew the

609 See Azzellini 2003, *Gladio in Italien*, p. 40; Peterlini 2003, *Die Achse am Brenner*, p. 245-6; Ganser 2005, *NATO's secret armies*, p. 3; Peterlini 2011, *Feuernacht*, p. 436-7.

610 See Riegler 2013, “Wir setzen uns rein...”, p. 167 and IPICR 1992, Doc. XXIII, n. 52, p. 96. [Link](#).

611 Original: “Die Verantwortung für die italienischen Attentate übernahmen zwei Gruppen, die Associazione Protezione Italiani (Api) und der Movimento Italiani Alto Adige (Mia). Von beiden Organisationen gibt es direkte Spuren zu Francesco Stoppani und Gladio.” Peterlini 2003, *Die Achse am Brenner*, p. 237.

region quite well, at least since his military service in 1975, during which he was stationed at Welsberg-Taisten, situated at the very eastern tip of South Tirol. According to Peterlini, in 1979 Stoppani also passed through the infamous Gladio training facility for guerrilla tactics of Capo Maraggiù (CAG), thereby graduating to the status of a trained saboteur. Upon his return to South Tirol, sometime between late 1979 and 1980, he made quite an impression across several Carabinieri stations, where he openly advocated the stopping of secessionist terrorism by any means necessary, “even with non-orthodox ones”. When challenged on his connections to the bigwigs of Rome, he reacted by dialing into the nearest phone the direct line to Col. Inzerilli, and further claimed to know personally the mysterious head of MIA⁶¹².

Aside from the aforementioned unorthodox acts, during his January 19th 1980 visit to the Carabinieri station of San Candido/Innichen, Stoppani also described in detail another mission which he had allegedly been tasked with. The mission's priority was to find, capture, and return to Bolzano a dangerous terrorist from the Sixties, who years later had been convicted (in absentia) to life in prison. In the event of resistance or other obstacles preventing the target from being recovered alive, the order was to execute him on the spot. The terrorist's name was Peter Kienesberger (BAS), who – together with two other Austrian nationals – had been found guilty of the July 25th 1967 attack at Porzescharte/Cima Vallona, and of thereby killing four Carabinieri agents and severely injuring one other⁶¹³. The trial had been characterized by several contradictions among the key testimonies, while Kienesberger and the two other defendants then managed to escape to Austria, where they were soon tried again, but acquitted of all charges. According to Hans Karl Peterlini, during the ensuing secret negotiations in London, Italian officials protested vigorously against the trial's outcome, at one point even requesting a reform of the Austrian penal code. Since Kienesberger officially resided in Nuremberg (West Germany), and since that is where he returned to after the Austrian trial, Rome tried to strong-arm German authorities as well, requesting his immediate extradition. In light of the dubious and in some cases outright illegal circumstances in which the Italian trial was held, the German government ultimately denied the request⁶¹⁴.

“Once it became clear that it wasn't possible to get hold of Kienesberger through the courts, according to his own statements, in 1980 Stoppani received the order to either kidnap or kill him.”⁶¹⁵

Furthermore, the South Tyrolean historian correctly pointed out that Stoppani might in fact have received such an order through his several contacts in the Italian right-wing underworld. In this regard, one of the possibilities was the Verona “chapter” of *Ordine Nuovo*, then led by Sergio Minetto. One of the associates of this group was Carlo Digilio: the son of GdF agent and former OSS informant Michelangelo Digilio, Carlo soon

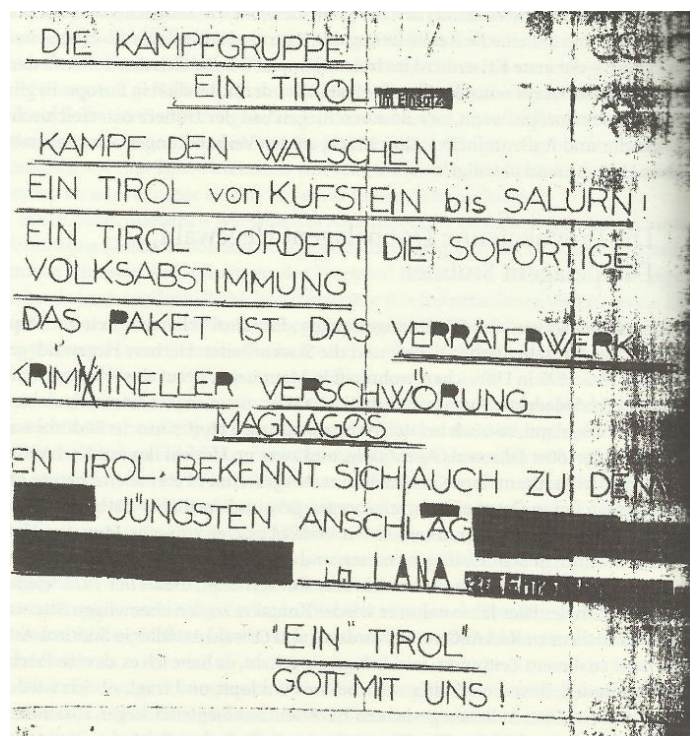
612 During Casson's investigation into Gladio, Gen. Inzerilli (for more information, see chapter three) described Stoppani as having been sort of under his wing, since the latter was the son of a close friend of General Santovito, head of military (and thereby Inzerilli's direct superior) intelligence between 1978 and 1981. After having realized that Stoppani was not among the brightest, Inzerilli transferred him to South Tirol where, according to the General, “he couldn't do much damage”. See *ibid.*, p. 235 and IPICR 1992, Doc. XXIII, n. 52, p. 95-6. [Link](#).

613 See *ibid.*, p. 87, [Link](#). For more information on the attack and Kienesberger's trial; see Speckner, Hubert (2013): “Zwischen Porze und Roßkarspitz...: der “Vorfall” vom 25. Juni 1967 in den österreichischen sicherheitsdienstlichen Akten” Gra & Wis Publisher, Vienna.

614 See Peterlini 2003, *Dia Achse am Brenner*, p. 233-7.

615 Original: “1980 – als klar wurde, dass man Kienesberger auf gerichtlichen Weg nicht habhaft werden konnte – erhielt Stoppani nach eigenen Angaben den Auftrag, ihn zu entführen oder zu ermorden.” cited from *ibid.*, p. 238.

ended up taking on the proverbial mantle of his father, by later becoming a CIA informant himself, code-named *Zio Otto* (uncle Otto)⁶¹⁶. During their inquiry into the *Piazza della Loggia* massacre – an attack which took place in Brescia on May 28th 1974, killing nine and injuring a further 88 people – prosecutors Roberto di Martino and Francesco Piantoni interrogated Digilio in connection with the group's activities, especially those of Marcello Soffiati, one of the bloodbath's main perpetrators. The following is a fragment of the transcript of the extensive interviews that were conducted in the late Nineties, where the focus drifted towards the bilingual region.



Ein Tirol leaflet, explicitly defining the SVP and the Kreisky-Saragat “Paket” a “Verräterwerk” (the work of traitors), [undated]. Source: Peterlini 2003: *Die Achse am Brenner*, p. 254.

“Q: Do you remember whether MINETTO played any role in countering terrorism in any specific area?
Digilio: Would you like to talk about terrorism in South Tirol?

Q: Yes, I'd like to speak about South Tirol's terrorism⁶¹⁷.

Digilio: Well, gentlemen. Regarding South Tirol's terrorism and the reactions which ensued from the Italian right-wing forces, with the help of his resources in South Tirol – which included [Benito] ROSSI, the well-known friend of Marcello Soffiati – [Sergio] MINETTO organized training courses aimed at making the Austrians understand that if they continued to disturb Italian life, the Italians would equally be both able and ready to make Austrians' life impossible⁶¹⁸.

Q: Please be patient [...]. Let me just read what you stated on October 20th 1996: «At the beginning of the Seventies, Sergio MINETTO and Marcello SOFFIATI [...] gathered a number of individuals, especially former *repubblichini* [officials or supporters of Mussolini's “Salò Republic” of 1943-45, ed. r.] and former officers of the paratroopers. These were then to be deployed in the countermeasures against South Tyrolean terrorism, which was jeopardizing the sovereignty of our country. [...]» Is the content of what I just read correct?

Digilio: Yes, of course (unintelligible)⁶¹⁹.

616 See *ibid*, p. 229-30. According to Peterlini, other members of this group included other Italian army officers such as Leo Joseph Luongo and Amos Spiazzi. For more information on Col. Spiazzi and his links to at least two planned coups d'état, see chapter three.

617 Original: “[Question:] Ricorda se MINETTO abbia avuto un qualche ruolo nel contrasto del terrorismo in una certa zona? [Answer:] Intende parlare del terrorismo in Alto Adige? [Question:] Sì, intendo parlare del terrorismo in Alto Adige.” Cited from Di Martin/Piantoni 2008, “Procura della Repubblica presso il Tribunale di Brescia – Memoria del Pubblico Ministero” (Office of the court district attorney of Brescia – Memo of the prosecution), Proc. Pen. n. 03/08 Corte Assise di Brescia, p. 272, see 28maggio74.brescia.it [Link](#).

618 Original: “[Answer:] Bene, signori. Per quanto riguarda il terrorismo altoatesino e le risposte da parte delle forze di estrema Destra in Italia, il MINETTO aveva organizzato, con gli elementi che aveva su in Alto Adige, tra cui il ben noto ROSSI, amico di Marcello Soffiati, dei corsi di addestramento per poter fare capire agli Austriaci che, se non smettevano di disturbare la vita italiana, gli italiani avrebbero ben saputo come rendere la vita impossibile anche agli Austriaci, tale e quale”. Cited from *ibid*, see 28maggio74.brescia.it [Link](#).

619 Original: “[Question:] Abbia pazienza, [...]. Le leggo solo quello che disse allora (20.01.96): «All'inizio degli anni Settanta, Sergio MINETTO e Marcello SOFFIATI [...] raccolsero una serie di elementi, soprattutto ex repubblichini ed ex ufficiali dei paracadutisti, che servivano ad attività di contrasto al terrorismo altoatesino, che metteva in pericolo la sovranità del nostro

Hans Karl Peterlini termed the phase of South Tyrolean terrorism connected with the *Ein Tirol* group a *Verwirrspiel* (game of mirrors): “the chapter of South Tirol's terrorist attacks most difficult to see through⁶²⁰”. This group's operations were professionally planned and executed, to the point that suspicions of military or intelligence collaboration immediately began to arise. This organization became the meeting point of German, Austrian and South Tyrolean right-wingers who believed it possible to create an independent and united Tirol, as well as Italian intelligence operatives, who consistently helped the MSI (Italy's major right-wing party) in expanding its share of the electorate. For example, among several other things, the Austrian scholar Thomas Riegler was able to document at least one case of an eastern intelligence agent (employed by the East German Stasi), who seems to have not only been in contact with several South Tyrolean terrorists, both BAS and *Ein Tirol*, but also to have actively participated in at least one of the latter's attacks⁶²¹. However, since among all of the evaluated sources the only link which the author could establish between this group and the Italian stay behind efforts is both rather weak and circumstantial, the narrative will not look further into the developments of this group.

In conclusion, it may well be argued that the bilingual region's rich history of violence, covert activities and sabotages constitutes a prime example of the effect of endowing ANY office, division, agency, department, police force or army with the authority to conduct covert military operations. At the very least, it may be argued that the tools, the plans, and – in some cases – even the covert backing of the American intelligence agencies empowered and/or emboldened some of the individuals involved to pursue their own rather dubious agendas. Given the capabilities which had been built up in both of the countries involved, given the lack of any local political oversight whatsoever, and given the shadowy figures which gravitated in and around the two security and intelligence establishments, it seems that only the external limits imposed by the Cold War prevented the bilateral relationship from irreparably breaking apart.

Aside from briefly describing an instance in which two separate CIA caches were found by Austrian civilians, the last chapter of this narrative summarizes the main conclusions, by answering the research questions posed in chapter two.

9 Summary of conclusions

“Only puny secrets need protection. Big discoveries are protected by public incredulity.”⁶²²

According to the evaluated sources, it may be concluded that neither the organization of Wilhelm Höttl,

Paese. [...]». È esatto quello che le ho appena letto? [Answer:] Sì, certo (incomprensibile).” Cited from *ibid*, see 28maggio74.brescia.it [Link](#).

620 Original: “[...] das am schwersten durchschaubare Kapitel der Südtirol-Anschläge, das Verwirrspiel um *Ein Tirol*.” Peterlini 2011, *Feuernacht*, p. 430. For more information on the later developments, such as the activities of the Obermaier Gang and the “Ein Tirol” group, as well as their contacts to Italian intelligence agencies, see Peterlini 2003, *Dia Achse am Brenner*, p. 239-46.

621 See also Riegler 2013, “Wir setzen uns rein...”, p. 176-7. While the material damage of this last wave of attacks soon added up to be much higher than that of the first series of (BAS-related) bombings and shootings, it did not cause nearly as much loss of life. See *ibid.*, p. 168.

622 Famous aphorism credited to Canadian scholar H. Marshall McLuhan, [undated], cited from marshallmcluhan.com. [Link](#).

nor the Rössner-Soucek group fully satisfy the parameters described in chapter two. While there is evidence in both cases suggesting that preparations for such covert capabilities were underway, these do not appear to have come anywhere close to either the scope or the stage of development of the other four networks. Furthermore, while Höttl was both actively protected and funded by the CIC, the potential ties between the Rössner-Soucek group and the American intelligence apparatus remain relatively obscure. Conversely, the evaluated sources leave little room for doubt in the case of the four organizations described in chapter seven: ICEBERG, the E&E line, GRLAUNCH and GRDAGGER. While it may very well be argued that these constituted functionally diverse branches of the same network, at least during the initial phase, all of these stay behind organizations were established, funded and fostered by the CIA. As already mentioned in chapter seven, the sources point to a relatively small group of agents stationed across Vienna and Salzburg, as well as Berchtesgaden, Munich and Karlsruhe, as the networks' combined middle management. According to the Italian parliamentary investigation commission's narrative, despite having begun both planning and preparations a few years earlier, the development of the Austrian stay behind networks correlates quite closely with the early stages of Gladio's development, up to and including the emplacement of the Nascos.

Aside from the intelligence apparatus (particularly the CIA) and the US military (particularly the forces in Austria and Germany), the State Department also appears to have been a significant factor in some aspects of the networks' establishment and management⁶²³. As particularly evident in the case of GRDAGGER and Franz Olah, the strategic importance of the political parties seems to have been eclipsed by that of the Austrian trade unions (ÖGB). However, this value may be argued to have been in turn mostly derived from the implementation of the Marshall plan, as well as by the establishment of the ECA in Vienna. According to some of the evaluated scholarly contributions, this latter agency of the US government played a key role in the initial phase of the relationship with Austrian unionists, first and foremost with Franz Olah⁶²⁴. Despite the fact that the author of this narrative was nevertheless unable to concretely substantiate this assertion, the circumstances surrounding the 1950 general strike and Olah's ensuing rise to prominence do at least point in that direction. As already mentioned in chapter five, the evaluated sources do not suggest any kind of "official" communications or negotiations between American officials and Austrian government representatives on this particular issue. This in turn suggests that neither Vienna nor the major political parties played a significant role in the networks' establishment process. This finding stands in clear contradiction to the statements made by both Franz Olah and Fritz Molden on this particular issue.

623 In an undated report to the JCS – commonly identified as JSPC 862/2 – the Joint Strategic Plans Committee urged the military and national security establishments to urgently supply “the skills and the means to wage guerrilla warfare not only for positive advantages in supplementing our war-making capabilities during military conflict but for the equally effective negative advantage of countering Soviet employment of the weapon during periods of political conflict.” In this report the committee then went on to argue that, “[g]uerrilla warfare, which derives from resistance movements, [...], has both military and political aspects and is of concern both to the State Department, for which guerrilla warfare is a potential instrument of foreign policy, and to the Department of Defense, for which it is a weapon of military strategy”. This is particularly true for “resistance movements, which are generated by strong nationalistic tendencies among an oppressed minority or a subjugated people”. The JSPC further argued that, while the military aspects of such guerrilla warfare are predominant in times of war, “during periods of military peace or even during civil war the political aspect of guerrilla warfare is foremost and the purpose of the guerrilla warfare becomes to consolidate an area after a particular political or economic pattern. Accordingly, guerrilla warfare is a matter of concern primarily for the State Department during peace and for the Department of Defense during war.” Copy of: Joint Strategic Plans Committee; [undated]; Report to the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JSPC 862/2) – Proposal for the establishment of a guerrilla warfare school and a guerrilla warfare corps (p. 29-30). From Prof. Rathkolb's private archive.

624 See in particular Svoboda 1990, Franz Olah: Eine Spurensicherung and Konrad/Lechner 1992, “Millionenverwechslung”.

“Since the [Olah's, ed. r.] special project was a domestic political factor, while also being funded – and therefore controlled – by foreign financiers, it constituted both a major violation of Austrian sovereignty, and a negligent breach of the democratic foundations of our country. [...] Neither this organization, which had been established in the wake of disproportionate fears of a communist takeover, nor [...] its connection to foreign financiers, correlated in any way with the actually existing communist threat⁶²⁵.”

Authors like Siegfried Beer, Oliver Rathkolb and Thomas Riegler have expressed serious doubts on the military efficiency and readiness of the CIA's stay behind units in Austria. These doubts are mostly founded upon some of the characteristics of the underground caches, such as their depth, the rudimentary methods of conservation (at least in some of the cases) and the fact that, during winter, virtually none of them would have been accessible due to the frozen ground. However, these same elements also contributed towards amplifying the threat to the civilian population, be it through “unauthorized” use or even plunder of the depots, as well as reducing its justification even further. As already anticipated in chapter four, a historically significant episode took place in the summer of 1955, during the very last months of the Austrian occupation. Due to astonishingly fortuitous circumstances, the author was able to gather both Austrian and US primary source material on this particular instance, thereby allowing for an unusually high amount of interesting details. Given that this particular “incident” happened during the active withdrawal phase of quadripartite occupation forces, it provides some insight into the issue of foreknowledge among Austrian officials of the CIA's stay behind activities. However, it also provides a documented scenario of just how easy it was to find and plunder some of the CIA's underground depots⁶²⁶.

It remains unclear whether the Austrian stay behind networks were activated on the occasion of other salient events of the early Cold War. For example, the evaluated sources did not allow to draw any conclusions regarding the refugee crisis which hit Austria in 1956, following the Soviet repression of Hungary, and the possible involvement of the CIA's stay behind agents.

Excursus: the CIA's caches between Hintersee and Faistenau

As already anticipated in chapter four, a historically significant episode took place in the summer of 1955, during the very last months of the Austrian occupation. Due to astonishingly fortuitous circumstances, the author was able to gather both Austrian and US primary source material on this particular instance, thereby allowing for an unusually high amount of interesting details. Given that this particular “incident” happened during the active withdrawal phase of quadripartite occupation forces, it provides some insight into the issue of foreknowledge among Austrian officials of the CIA's stay behind activities. But it also provides a documented

625 Original: “Grundsätzlich war das Sonderprojekt ein innenpolitischer Faktor, der, finanziert – und damit kontrolliert – von ausländischen Geldgebern, eine erhebliche Verletzung der österreichischen Souveränität, und zudem in fahrlässiger Weise einen Verstoß gegen die demokratischen Grundlagen unseres Staates darstellte. [...] Die durch übersteigerte Ängste vor einer kommunistischen Machtübernahme ins Leben gerufene Organisation, und die [...] Verbindung zu ausländischen Geldgebern standen in keinem realen Verhältnis zur existierenden kommunistischen Bedrohung.” Konrad/Lechner 1992, “Millionenverwechlung”, p. 14.

626 See Beer 2000, Rund um den “Dritten Mann”, p. 96; Rathkolb 1997, Washington ruft Wien, p. 148; Riegler 2016, Strukturen für den geheimen Krieg, p. 669 and Thomas Riegler; January 5th 2015; “Stay behind” in Österreich – Teil 1, cited from oesterreichterrorismus.blogspot.co.at. [Link](#).

scenario of just how easy it was to find and plunder some of these depots⁶²⁷.

According to a GRCROOND project status report, dated August 1955, two Austrian farmers, one of whom had observed a USFA engineer detail emplace one of the caches near Hintersee one week earlier, went on to dig up that cache on July 31st and transported 11 boxes of its contents to a remote area. The report further stated that the discovery was only brought to USFA's attention by the Gendarmerie on August 9th.

“USFA Ordnance personnel recovered the cache items and in examining the site of the exhumed cache, discovered that a 1954 cache emplaced in the immediate vicinity had also been exhumed; by whom and when was not apparent. Only few items left behind in the 1954 cache were recovered; the bulk of the cache material was gone.”⁶²⁸

Unsurprisingly, the only American source found by the author which mentioned this incident played down the event, concluding by stating that the internal investigation into the issue had to be halted “because of lack of cooperation” with Austrian authorities and “the shortage of time [...] resulting from USFA's present rapid withdrawal from Austria⁶²⁹.” According to the detailed report compiled by Johann Kleber, then the acting commander of the Gendarmerie station of Faistenau, one of the farmers in question was Johann Wörndl, a local resident who lived close to the area of forest in question. Wörndl confirmed to the Gendarmerie that he had seen groups of US soldiers with several trucks and jeeps on two separate occasions: first in the summer of 1954, and the second time on July 25th 1955, with the soldiers this time in three trucks and two jeeps. Once on site, they headed towards a spot about 50m away from where they (or other US soldiers) had camped the year before. Wörndl didn't think much of it the first time around (1954), but on the second occasion, a week after the soldiers had moved out, he and others started digging in the more recent spot, soon uncovering the following material: 6 boxes of explosives, 3 boxes of fuses and detonators, 2 assault rifles with munitions and accessories, as well as 2 (12mm) Army pistols, also with munitions and accessories. According to the report, he planned to report to the Gendarmerie on the same day but, because he had noticed children witnessing the whole event, he decided to store the material in a remote cabin⁶³⁰.

On the very same day, Paul Weissenbacher learned from unspecified children that explosives were buried somewhere in the forest. Together with Ludwig Müller, they dug underneath the older “camp-spot” and uncovered several boxes full of explosives, hand grenades and bazooka munitions. After having closed the hole and hidden most of the material in the surrounding area, each of them carried two kits of explosives home with them. After having been informed by the Austrian gendarmerie, the US military searched the area and found the

627 In the 1959 list of caches, which already attracted the attention of both Oliver Rathkolb and Thomas Riegler, two are described as having been “discovered by Austrians.” [case officer redacted]; See April 27th 1959; Dispatch EASA-5184 – Inventory of SOB Arms Caches (p. 2-3). [Link](#). Regretfully, no sources connected to this other cache were found, which had been emplaced between the Traunsee and the Attersee, in Upper Austria. A similar incident happened with one of the British caches, the content of which in 1965 ended up in the hands of the students of a technical school in Ferlach (Klagenfurt). See copy of: Sicherheitsdirektion Kärnten; November 12th 1965; Bericht GZ Präs-3682/3/65 – Waffenlager der ehemaligen britischen Besatzungsmacht in Kärnten (weapon depots of the former British occupation power in Carinthia). From Prof. Rathkolb's private archive. See also Thomas Riegler; February 5th 2016, Ein Waffenlager im Schrebergarten, cited from [oesterreichterrorismus.blogspot.co.at](#). [Link](#).

628 [case officer redacted]; August 1955; Status report – Project “GRCROOND” (p. 1). [Link](#).

629 Ibid. [Link](#).

630 See copy of: Kleber Johann; August 10th 1955; Report ZI. 7328/1/55 – Sprengmittel- und Schusswaffenlager in Hintersee; Aufdeckung. (Discovery of a stock of weapons and explosives in Hintersee) (p. 1). From Prof. Rathkolb's private archive.

following: 4 backpacks full of explosives, 40 empty magazines, 24 hand grenades, 1 bazooka with accessories and 20 munitions, and 1 bayonet. In both cases the report notes that the civilians did find the metal-detector-blocking layer of old cans, but did not stop digging; furthermore, all the weapons were clearly new or in excellent condition and made in the US. The Gendarmerie only actually recovered the content between the 8th and 9th of August, and it was then immediately handed over to US authorities. The reports concluded by stating: “The cause for the underground depots remains unclear.⁶³¹”. The information reached the Austrian ministry of the interior on August 10th, and by the following day the ministry had already issued a dispatch stating that “apparently” US soldiers had buried the weaponry with the intent to sell it on the black market at a later date⁶³².

On August 12th 1955 *Die Presse* reported on the matter which had just taken place near Salzburg. A relatively large cache of weapons and explosives had been found by local residents and reported to the Gendarmerie soon thereafter. Without giving the impression that any civilian was ever in danger, the article concludes by mentioning that individual US soldiers were being investigated on the suspicion of black-market activity. Meanwhile, an article published on August 13th/14th in the “*Neue Zeit und Salzburger Tagblatt*” – a minor local daily close to the KPÖ – noted that, since US military authorities had excluded all Austrian officials from the investigation, and since it had been US military vehicles and personnel that transported and buried the stockpile in the first place, it seemed plausible that USFA command knew everything about this particular stockpile⁶³³.

As noted by Austrian historian Oliver Rathkolb, the fact that mainstream publications immediately echoed some unsubstantiated theory spun by officials from the ministry of the interior can be interpreted as an indication of the desire not to attract too much attention to the issue. This in turn would mean that, even below Cabinet level, Austrian officials were aware of at least some of the CIA's covert activities⁶³⁴. Regrettably, the evaluated sources do not allow this to be pursued further, leaving open all questions regarding individual prior knowledge and collaboration by the Austrian government.

Summary of conclusions (part 2)

It is very hard to determine to what extent the Austrian stay behind networks were connected even during peacetime. While some sources point to the aforementioned rather small group of CIA officers as the “handlers” of virtually all stay behind agents, the discrepancies between the cases of Olah and GRLAUNCH-1 demonstrate just how divergent the relationship with such handlers could be. Pretty much the same can be said

631 Ibid, (p. 1-2). From Prof. Rathkolb's private archive.

632 See copy of: Hlubucek [no first name]; August 11th 1955; report – Fund von Waffen und Sprengmittel amerik. Herkunft in Königsstadtwald (Discovery of weapons and explosive of US origin in Königsstadtwald). From Prof. Rathkolb's private archive. See also copy of: Broch [no first name]; August 10th 1955; Report – Sprengmittel- und Schusswaffenlager in Hintersee; Aufdeckung. (Discovery of a stock of weapons and explosives in Hintersee). From Prof. Rathkolb's private archive.

633 See [no author specified] (*Die Presse*), n. 2067, August 12th 1955: “Geheimes Waffenlager bei Salzburg entdeckt” (secret stockpile of weapons uncovered near Salzburg) and [no author specified] (*Neue Zeit und Salzburger Tagblatt*, minor Austrian daily, provincial coverage), August 13th/14th 1955: ““Amerikaner verstecken Waffen” – Geheimes Sprengstoff- und Waffenlager bei Salzburg entdeckt” (“Americans hide weapons” – secret weapons and explosives cache uncovered near Salzburg).

634 See Rathkolb 1998, Österreich in den strategischen Planungen der USA, p. 27-8.

on a European level: while in the case of open warfare the coordination of the “clandestine networks” was fairly certain, this assessment proves much more difficult when confronted with the reality that none of these western-sponsored networks were ever activated, at least not for their originally intended purpose of “staying behind” the enemy lines. It is in this context that the evaluated sources do not suggest any kind of direct connection between the Italian and the Austrian stay behind networks. However, as already described in the preceding chapter, at least some elements from these networks seem to have come very close to an all-out confrontation as a result of the tensions in South Tirol.

Aside from the person of Fritz Molden, who was documentably a high-ranking member of both the Austrian stay behind network and the BAS, the evaluated sources suggest that Gladio was connected to a number of attacks, including those in Ebensee in 1963 and those against “German” targets in South Tirol in late 1979. However, this research has also documented how the stay behind networks were not the only “players” interfering with negotiations on the issue. Aside from the intelligence apparatus on the Italian side of the border, there were a number of right-wing organizations (particularly Ordine Nuovo and the MSI party) who benefited most from the political shift fueled by the tensions. On the other hand, as clearly shown by the examples of Bruno Kreisky and the Tyrolean ÖVP, by continuously attempting to “score points” against each other on the back of this issue, the two major Austrian parties basically took turns in sidetracking the negotiations with Rome. Despite the fact that more research on the Austrian stay behind networks is required to fully understand just how close they came to an all-out confrontation with their Italian counterpart, it may be argued that these networks did not just pose a severe threat to the internal security of their host countries, but also to the external security as well.

Ganser convincingly argued that, conversely to what happened in 1968, when, following the brutal repression against Czechoslovakia, Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev outright declared the sovereignty of all the satellite countries to be *limited*, most western Europeans started to discover the actual extent of the *underlying* limitations of their own sovereignty only after Andreotti's revelations of the early Nineties. Despite De Gaulle's efforts, even *la grande nation* – under one of its most tenacious and respected leaders – was unable to fully disentangle itself militarily from the US and NATO⁶³⁵.

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Annex – Interview of Gen. iR Horst Pleiner

**Conducted and tape-recorded in German by Lorenzo Cottica, July 18th 2017,
at the Landesverteidigungsakademie (National Defense Academy), Vienna.**

C: Vorweg möchte ich mich nochmals bei Ihnen herzlichst für dieses Interview bedanken, und bitte um Erlaubnis dieses Tonband laufen zu lassen.

P: Jawohl!

C: Des weiteren bitte ich Sie Ihre Person, sowie Ihren beruflichen Werdegang kurz vorzustellen.

P: Horst Pleiner. Geboren 1941 in Salzburg. 1959 Matura am humanistischen Gymnasium in Salzburg; Eintritt ins österreichische Bundesheer. 1963 Ausmusterung zum Leutnant. 1969 bis 1972 sechster Generalstabskurs. Anschließend an der Landesverteidigungsakademie tätig. Im Herbst 1978 bin ich ins Bundesministerium für Landesverteidigung gekommen, und dort bis zum Ende in 2002 im aktiven Dienst geblieben. Letzte Funktion Generaltruppeninspektor. In der Position war ich der letzte der Generaltruppeninspektoren, nachdem mit meinem Abgang, das in den Chef des Generalstabes umgewandelt wurde.

C: Da ich Ihnen bereits im Vorfeld fast alle für mich wesentlichen Fragen mitgeteilt habe, würden Sie lieber „frei“ über dieses Themengebiet sprechen, oder eher entlang meiner Fragen?

P: Ich schlage vor, zuerst einmal ein Eingangsstatement meinerseits zu nehmen, und dann anhand der Fragen die Sache abzuarbeiten, weil es dadurch präziser wird.

C: Bitte!

P: Ich möchte daher beginnen mit einem Aspekt der bei solchen Bearbeitungen immer wieder auftaucht, und der auch in der medialen Behandlung dieses Themas immer wieder zu erkennen ist. Es geht um die Vermischung mehrere Bereiche bei der Frage nach derartigen Organisationen. Es gibt solche Organisationen als politische Organisation, es gibt sie als nachrichtendienstliche Organisation, und es gibt sie als militärische Organisation. Das müsste immer getrennt werden, weil diese drei Organisationsformen von unterschiedlichen Voraussetzungen ausgehen, unterschiedliche Aufgaben haben, und in unterschiedlicher Art strukturiert sind und vorgehen. Es gibt dabei eine Reihe von unterschiedlichen Themenbereichen die manchmal von der einen wie von der anderen Art abgedeckt werden können, und die ich folgendermaßen charakterisieren möchte: Die erste Form ist eine stay behind Organisation, in der Tiefe eines Okkupanten oder einer Offensive die gewisse Teile eines Staatsgebietes, oder ein ganzes Staatsgebiet in Besitz nimmt, die entweder als Rücklasskräfte oder Tiefenaufklärung und -beobachtung zurückbleiben, um dann sowohl militärisch aktiv werden (in ihrer Beobachtungstätigkeit) als auch nachrichtendienstlich. Für solche Organisationen gibt's eine Reihe von Beispielen, und ich gehe dann nochmal darauf ein. Es können solche stay behind Organisationen als Schleusungsdienst für Soldaten, für abgeschossene Piloten, für wichtigen zivilen und militärischen Experten, für das Ein- und Ausschleusen von Agenten und von Kommandos genutzt werden.

C: und feindliche Deserteure!

P: Es gibt solchen Organisationen im Rahmen von militärischen Special Forces, die dann für Kommandoaktionen von besonderer Priorität herangezogen werden, die nach Luftangriffen und sonstigen Attacken die Wirkungsauflklärung am Boden durchführen, oder (das ist die modernere Variante) zur Zielbeleuchtung und Einweisung von Flugzeugen, für solchen Angriffe, oder auch für Drohnen usw. herangezogen werden. Dann gibt es Guerillakräfte, welche aus einer

Widerstandsbewegung herausgebildet werden können; sie können aber auch aus einem vorgegebenen Netz von Depots oder Vertrauensleuten entstehen; oder sich eben aus spezifischen Guerillakräften entwickeln. Es gibt Gruppierungen die bei militärstrategisch wichtigen Ziele Kommandoaktionen durchführen, die aber üblicherweise nur eine solche Aktion in einem längeren Zeitraum durchführen können, weil sie dann wegen der Folgewirkungen und Gegenmaßnahmen meistens entweder in ihrer Wirksamkeit entsprechend eingedämmt werden, oder sich entsprechend aus dem Verfügungsraum absetzen oder aussickern müssen. Und dann gibt's schließlich die Gruppe von Kräften die für Attentate und Sabotage zur Destabilisierung unter den verschiedensten Vorgaben herangezogen wird: Etwa gegen eine Besetzung bestimmter Gebiete durch den Warschauer Pakt oder einen anderen Aggressor, oder auch gegen eine unerwünschte Regierung (oder Einzelpersonen) aktiv werden; wobei es je nach Intentionen, links- oder rechtsgerichtete Gruppen (oder sonstig ideologisierte Gruppen) sein können, und die eben für parteipolitische oder innenpolitische Ziele verwendet werden können. Von dieser Betrachtungsweise muss man ausgehen, und muss versuchen die Einordnung der jeweiligen Institution die angesprochen wird, richtig zu finden. Das ist, meiner Ansicht nach manchmal schwierig, weil es mit verbesserter Verschleierung und Geheimhaltung kaum möglich ist, die eigentlichen Ziele derartiger Organisationen nachzuverfolgen, insbesondere wenn diese Geschichten schon relativ lange zurückliegen. Wir betrachten hier einen relativ langen Zeitraum und es ist daher klar, dass es zumindest in der medialen (und vielleicht manchmal auch in der nachrichtendienstlichen) Berichterstattung, zu gewisse Grauzonen der Zuordnung kommt, welche Organisation nun für was verantwortlich ist. Um es so zu formulieren: Wo Gladio draufsteht ist nicht immer Gladio drin, und selbst wenn Gladio draufsteht, steht einmal eine spezifische Gruppierung dahinter, und im anderen Fall eine andere. Darüber hinaus gibt es in der diesbezüglichen Berichterstattung das Problem, dass da Vermutungen in der Form von Erkenntnissen ausgedrückt werden; wo Einzelfaktoren (die sich aus Gesprächen, aus Selbstdarstellungen von Akteuren usw. ergeben) auf die ganze Organisation übertragen werden und dann Ableitungen getroffen werden, die möglicherweise einfach nicht zutreffen.

C: Wann haben Sie persönlich zum ersten Mal von der Existenz geheimer Waffenlager der ehemaligen Besatzungsmächte erfahren?

P: Im Jahr 1965 durch den damaligen Generalmajor Paumgarten, den Gruppenbefehlshaber in Salzburg. Das wurde mir im Rahmen eines Gespräches mitgeteilt, indem ich ihn drauf angesprochen hatte, dass ich in jenem Bereich wo ich tätig war, mich bemüht habe, die dort eingerückten Einjährig-Freiwilligen in ihrer infanteristischen Ausbildung soweit zu bringen, dass sie allenfalls in der Lage sein würden, als selbstständige Kommandanten von Gruppen oder Zügen, in der Tiefe eines Aggressors zu führen. Daraufhin hat General Paumgarten auf die Tatsache verwiesen, dass es gewisse Vorbereitungen schon gegeben hat. General Paumgarten war bekannterweise ein Mitarbeiter des Salzburger Komitees vor 1955, mit guten Beziehungen zu den Amerikanern, und zwar sowohl zu US-Army als auch zur CIA. Darüber hinaus hatte er auch noch Verbindungen zum Wiener Komitee (mit Liebitzky & Co). Er hat mir eben allgemein mitgeteilt, dass es solche Lager gegeben hat, oder noch gibt ohne näher drauf einzugehen, und hat dabei verwiesen, dass irgendwann in der Zeit davor britische Lager in Kärnten bzw. in der Steiermark geräumt worden sein. In nehme an, dass er sich dabei auf die Karawankenhöhle sowie deren Folgeentwicklungen bezogen hat.

C: Wie viele Lager mit militärischem Inhalt wurden letztendlich in 1996 geräumt? Diese Frage ergibt sich aufgrund der widersprüchlichen Fachliteratur.

P: Ich kann nur sagen, die Aussage von Christian Segur-Cabanac (mit den 68 Lagern) ist meiner Ansicht nach korrekt. Ich

persönlich hab sie nicht nachgezählt, aber in den einschlägigen Bericht ist von 68 die Rede gewesen.

C: Von wem ist Ihrer Meinung nach die ursprüngliche Initiative zur Anlage dieser Lager gekommen?

P: Für mich kam es über die CIA und ist zum Teil auch, zumindest in der amerikanischen Besatzungszone, in erster Linie von der CIA aus gesteuert, aber mit Hilfe der US-Army abgewickelt wurden. Dazu haben die Amerikaner ihre Alliierten (Großbritannien und Frankreich) informiert und in das System einbezogen, auf welchen Weg auch immer. Denn, auch die haben Lager angelegt, die dem gleichen Sinn und Zweck hatten, nämlich eine stay behind Organisation für den Fall einer Operation des Warschauer Paktes in das österreichische Bundesgebiet hinein aufbauen zu können, bzw. in entsprechende Dimensionen aufwachsen zu lassen.

C: Die Franzosen in ihre eigenen Zone auch?

P: Ja. Wobei ich nicht weiß wie viele Einrichtungen die Franzosen, und wie viele Einrichtungen genau die Briten angelegt haben. Das war nie ein Thema bei uns weil, zu dem Zeitpunkt an dem ich Einblick in diese Arbeiten hatte, diese britischen und französischen Lager nicht mehr gab. Es ist dazu zu sagen, dass von der Anlage dieser Lager her, mit der Ausnahme des Karawanken-Lagers (welcher eben von britischer Seite angelegt wurde), es sich eher um kleine Depots handelt, die mit hoher Wahrscheinlichkeit für eine Beobachtungs- und Schleuserorganisation vorbereitet wurden bzw. die Leute die darüber informiert worden, waren Teil einer solchen stay behind Organisation in der Tiefe und nicht eine Guerillaorganisation für Mordkommandos, strategische Operationen usw. Auch zahlen- und artenmäßig war das vorgefundene Material (mit den Funkgeräten, der eigentlich geringen Bewaffnung und dem wenigen Sprengstoff) nicht für größere Guerilla- oder Kommandoaktionen geeignet.

C: Wurden Ihrer Meinung nach bereits vor 1996 bestimmte Mitglieder der Österreichischen Bundesregierung über die US-Waffenlager in Kenntnis gesetzt? Wer? Wann?

P: Die Frage ist welche österreichische Bundesregierung damit gemeint ist. Wenn jene vor 1955 gemeint ist, gehe ich davon aus, dass es eine Reihe von österreichischen politischen Repräsentanten gegeben hat, die über die Gegebenheiten (zumindest im Grundsätzlichen) informiert wurde, in der einen oder anderen Form. Wobei Olah, in der Zeit, noch kein Regierungsmitglied, sondern ein Gewerkschaftsmann war, aber zweifelslos einer mit Verbindungen in Richtung CIA und allenfalls Verbindungsleuten anderer Prägung, welche aber im Vorfeld der CIA tätig waren, oder gewesen sein könnten. Olah hat ab 1951 seine Wandersportgruppe entsprechend forciert, war aber nie bereit über diese Gruppe Aussagen zu machen. Er hat Dr. Speckner gegenüber, auch in Form eines Briefes, nachdrücklich zum Ausdruck gebracht, dass alles was zu diesem Thema gesagt oder veröffentlicht wurde, nur Spekulationen sind, und dass er dazu keine Aussagen machen wird. Das hat er bis zu seinem Sterbebett durchgehalten. Es war ihm auch nichts zu entlocken, auch nicht bei freundlichen Gesprächen in seinem fortgeschrittenen Alter. Obwohl er also an manchen Veranstaltungen und Treffen teilgenommen hat, war es nicht möglich (ich habe selber mit ihm mehrmals gesprochen) da irgendetwas zu erfahren. Nicht einmal, dass er durch nichts sagen irgendetwas bestätigt oder verneint hätte. Wenn er irgendjemanden was erklärt oder erzählt hat, wir waren es jedenfalls nicht.

C: Waren Ihrer Meinung nach andere österreichische Stellen, abgesehen von Regierungsvertretern, bereits vor 1996 über diese Waffenlager informiert? Wann? Wie?

P: Olah habe ich bereits genannt. Er wusste sicherlich dass es da etwas gibt und hat auch offenbar selber entweder für seine Wandersportgruppe gewisse Positionen gekannt, die von anderen angelegt wurden, oder hat selber an der Anlage

solcher Positionen mitgewirkt. Vielleicht findet sich noch irgendjemanden der da beteiligt war. Olah selber war nie bereit Namen zu nennen, sodass es schwierig sein wird Leute dazu aufzufinden. Die Information der Briten für bestimmte Leute im Süden Österreichs kann ich nicht beurteilen. Jedenfalls wurden ihre Lager zunächst zufällig entdeckt, und dann nach entsprechender Information der Briten geräumt. In Österreich mit Sicherheit gewusst hat vor 1996 Paumgartten, eben als Mitglied des Salzburger Komitees, und ich nehme auch an, dass der eine oder andere Mitarbeiter des Salzburger Komitee über dies oder jenes Bescheid bekommen hatte. Das kann ich aber nicht belegen, und damit ist das auch nur eine Vermutung. Aber so wie Paumgartten mir gegenüber das einmal angesprochen hat, denke ich das gerade die enge Mitarbeiter Paumgarttens, die ja im ganz engen Kontakt mit den amerikanischen Stellen standen, davon des eine oder andere erfahren haben.

C: Was halten Sie von den Aussagen Fritz Moldens bezüglich der Beteiligung diverser ehemaliger Regierungsvertreter? (Dass Figl, Schärf, Gruber und Helmer "nur" davon wussten, Graf sogar wesentlich daran beteiligt war)

P: Aus meiner Sicht ist das denkbar. Fritz Molden sagte vermutlich das was er gewußt oder erlebt hat. Natürlich hat er sich durch seinen Widerstand gegen den Kommunismus exponiert, er war ja der Chef eines Presseimperiums. Er hat auch für andere Vorgänge, auf die wir noch eingehen werden, einiges an Geld, Zeitaufwand, und politische Einflussnahme investiert. Er wird mit Sicherheit ÖVP nahestehende Personen einbezogen haben, oder auch am Umweg über das Wiener Komitees davon etwas erfahren haben, was dafür spricht dass Graf involviert war, da er ja mit Liebitzky und dem Wiener Komitee in einer doch sehr engen Verbindung stand und dort auch in diesen ganzen Gegebenheiten vor 1955 inkludiert war. Das würde also für Figl und Gruber auf jeden Fall zutreffen; bei Gruber aufgrund seiner generellen Haltung, ich könnte mir sogar vorstellen, dass er Leute mit einbezogen hat, wie den vor zwei Jahren verstorbene Botschafter Dr. Steiner, ich bin davon überzeugt dass er auch einiges davon wusste, aber nie etwas darüber gesprochen hat. Bei Schärf und Helmer kommen mir Bedenken, weil die ursprüngliche Tendenz des Fritz Moldens eher Christlich-sozial war, und daher ÖVP-nahe, und weil auch später beim BAS die Informationen Richtung SPÖ durch einen Nationalratsabgeordneten aus Tirol...

C: Ruprecht Zechtl...

P: gelaufen ist. Das ist aber eigentlich erst später passiert, sodass ich diese Sache mit Schärf und Helmer mit einem Fragezeichen versehe. Ich glaube aber grundsätzlich zu solchen Dingen, dass die damals sehr vorsichtigen Herren die noch dazu sich im Osten Österreichs befunden haben, davon Abstand genommen haben, irgendwelche schriftliche Unterlagen zu erstellen oder irgendwo liegen zu lassen. Das war viel zu heikel.

C: Für den Fall, dass solche Beziehungen bereits vor dem Abschluss des österreichischen Staatsvertrages bestanden haben, wie haben sich diese nach 1955 entwickelt?

P: Das einzige was ich dazu sagen kann, ist Beziehungen bestimmter Art gab es auf jedem Fall mit Olah. Das ist keine Frage. Es gibt aber auch in dem Zusammenhang das Thema Lütgendorf, und vielleicht hat der eine oder andere im Umkreis von Fechner usw. (sprich die damalige Gruppe für Nachrichtenwesen) auch solche Beziehungen gepflegt. Es steht ja fest, dass Lütgendorf im Krieg eine Zeitlang in der Abteilung Fremde Heere Ost tätig war, dass er dort Verbindungen hatte zu Leuten die bis Kriegsende dort tätig waren. Er kam als Kriegsgefangener nach den USA, und war während seiner dortigen Befragung durch die CIA und G-2 Dienst der US-Army eingehend zur Bearbeitung von Informationen und Auskünften herangezogen. Dabei hat er im sehr engen Rahmen mit Gehlen & Co. gearbeitet, und

war mit denen auch gemeinsam untergebracht. Er wurde dann von den Amerikanern aus dieser Gruppierung herausgenommen, weil er beim Ansätzen von antisemitischen Aussagen abgehört wurde. Es ist aber mit hoher Wahrscheinlichkeit davon auszugehen, dass die Kontakte Lütgendorfs zu Gehlen damit nicht endgültig abgerissen waren. Es daher denkbar, dass Lütgendorf auch nach 1955 noch bestimmte Kontakte oder Verbindungen in Richtung München oder Pullach hatte. Das nehme ich an und habe auch nie eine konkrete Unterlage dazu gesehen. Ich vermute aber dass Lütgendorf geschickt genug war, um solche Dinge nicht schriftlich zu deponieren, oder etwaige Besuche an unverfänglichen Orten wie im Tiergarten Hellabrunn oder im Englischen Garten zu erwähnen, und solche Aktionen wären von Österreich aus auch sicher nicht zu überwachen gewesen oder sind nicht überwacht worden.

C: Bis wann ist Lütgendorf im Amt gewesen?

P: Aufgrund verschiedener politischer Querelen und Ungeschicklichkeiten, die ihm dann auch Kreiskys Unterstützung kosteten, trat Lütgendorf im Jahr 1977 zurück. Er hat dann als Privatmann in Schwarza am Gebirge gelebt. An sich hatte er aber Verbindungen verschiedenster Art in den Nahen Osten. Dazu wäre unter Umständen der General iR Hannes Philipp zu befragen, der damals Kommandant der UNDOF (United Nations Disengagement Observer Force) Truppe in Damaskus war. Was ich gerüchteweise gehört habe, hatte Lütgendorf gewisse Beziehungen dorthin, sowie auch in den Libanon, nach Beirut. Wie man ja weiß, ist Lütgendorf in der freien Natur des südwestlichen Niederösterreichs ums Leben gekommen, und zwar unter nicht eindeutig geklärten Begleitumständen. Da könnte man allenfalls die Staatsanwaltschaft Wiener Neustadt aufsuchen, die damals die Untersuchung gemacht hat, wo (von einem dort beteiligten, meiner mütterlichen Familie nahestehenden Staatsanwalt) ich gehört habe, dass der Abschluss der Untersuchung Lütgendorfs auf Weisung von oben erfolgt ist. Was immer das bedeutet.

C: Was ist Ihrer Meinung nach mit dem Inhalt der "geplünderten" Lager geschehen? Glauben Sie, dass zumindest ein Teil davon bis nach Südtirol gekommen sein könnte?

P: Das ist eine Glaubensfrage an das Gewissen, die ich nicht zu beantworten wage. Es ist aber zu prüfen welcher Sprengstoff in Südtirol verwendet wurde, bzw. welcher Sprengstoff und welche Waffen in Südtirol sichergestellt wurden, und ob selbige mit dem bekanntgewordenen Inhalt der Lager und Depots übereinstimmen. In Teilbereiche glaube ich trifft das nicht zu. Zum Beispiel war St. Lambrecht Sprengstoff in diesen Depots sicher nicht enthalten. Es sind also einige Dinge in der medialen Darstellung ein bisschen ausgefärbt, und dadurch wurden Verbindungen hergestellt die den üblichen Verschwörungstheorien entsprechen. Im Grunde genommen, wird – sowie es mit den ursprünglichen Karabinern aus dem Karawankenlager geschehen ist – das Zeug bei irgendwelchen Leuten gelandet sein. Ich will nicht ausschliessen, dass jemand doch das eine oder andere Sprengstoffpaket weitergegeben hat. Dabei wäre aber die Frage, über welche Kanäle diese Leute zusammengekommen sind, indem es sich immerhin um unterschiedliche Regionen handelt, in denen sich die unmittelbaren Beziehungen zu den südtiroler Widerstandskämpfern vermutlich sehr gering ausgeprägt waren.

C: Wie eng war Ihrer Meinung nach die Beziehung zwischen der CIA und der Nachrichtengruppe des Verteidigungsministeriums im Zeitraum bis zum Jahr 1970?

P: Eine organisatorische Verbindung kann es nicht gegeben haben. Das schließt wiederum persönliche Kontakte nicht aus. Wir sind wieder beim Englischen Garten und beim Chinesischen Turm angelangt, aber auch genauso in Portugal, in Spanien, in Frankreich, oder in London. Das wird auch nie zu klären sein, indem die Reisetätigkeit der Herren der

Gruppe Nachrichtenwesen nicht dokumentiert ist. Diese wurde aus der Operationspauschale bezahlt – die es damals gab. Ich weiß nicht ob es einem Nachlass Buschek gibt, der dazu etwas beinhaltet. Was ich aber sicher weiß, ist das die Gruppe für Nachrichtenwesen, im Zuge der Umstellung zu HNaA und dann Trennung vom AbwA – eine Reihe von Dokumenten verbrannt hat. Dies verursachte auch einige Aufregung, aber die damals Beteiligten (so u.a. der jetzige Hofrat i.R. Mais), haben immer bestritten haben, dass es sich dabei um nachrichtendienstlichen Akten, oder zumindest wesentliche Bestandteile entsprechender Dokumentation gehandelt habe, sondern nur um „Notizen“ usw. Auf jeden Fall handelte es sich um eine beachtliche Menge die dort verbrannt wurde, und es ist daher anzunehmen, dass dabei bestimmte Sachen beseitigt wurden, die nicht unbedingt in die Hände der Nachfolgeorganisation, oder der persönlichen Nachfolger, fallen sollten. Dazu kann ich nichts mehr sagen, aber über manche Akten wird immer noch gesprochen, bzw. hin und wieder in den Medien zitiert, so z.B. der Akt Lütgendorfs. Da stellt sich wiederum die Frage was der Akt Lütgendorf wirklich war: Zwischen einem Dossier mit seinen Extravaganzen und der Frage der Beobachtung seiner Tätigkeiten in den abendlichen Treffen und Sitzungen des Club 45, oder irgendwelcher anderer Gegebenheiten, etwa im Hochfilzen, oder mit dem Udo Proksch usw. besteht doch ein gewisser Unterschied. Es ist viel darüber medial gesagt und gemunkelt worden, bestätigt wurde allerdings nichts, und es sind viele derjenigen die vielleicht etwas davon gewusst haben könnten, inzwischen verstorben. Ich weiß nicht ob Dr. Kriviny noch lebt; den müsste man suchen, er war ein enger Vertrauter des Ministers Lütgendorf, fast ein persönlicher Assistent. Er könnte daher unter Umständen etwas wissen, besonders weil inzwischen für etwaige Dinge die Verjährung sicher ist.

C: Wann hat diese Aktenverbrennung stattgefunden, die Sie da erwähnt haben?

P: 1983. Darüber gab es aber, wie schon gesagt, eine ganze Menge medialer Aufregung in den verschiedensten österreichischen Zeitungen, und darunter auch die Volkstimme natürlich, die sich sowieso immer zur Wort gemeldet hat, aber auch in anderen.

C: Wie groß schätzen Sie Franz Olahs Handlungsspielraum ein, besonders in Beziehung zu seinen diversen ausländischen Geldgebern (nicht nur die CIA)?

P: Er hat zwar betont, dass es eben nicht nur die CIA war, aber er hat nie gesagt wer das war. Es würde mich sehr wundern, wenn bei seiner heftigen Ablehnung die er mehrfach zum Ausdruck gebracht hat, er irgendwo und irgendwem etwas erzählt hat: weder dem Prof. Rathkolb, noch dem General a.D. Ronge, wer auch immer. Am ehesten müssten noch irgendwelchen Leuten aus dem Kernbereich der Wandersportgruppe etwas gewusst haben, zumindest ein Stellvertreter, der in so einer Situation unerlässlich ist. Darüber hat sich Olah nie ausgelassen. Mir ist keine Liste der Mitglieder seiner Gruppe bekannt.

C: Wie schätzen Sie die Rollen von Fritz Molden und Wolfgang Pfaundler in deren Verflechtung mit der damaligen Bundesregierung, der Tiroler Landesregierung, und dem Befreiungsausschuss Südtirol (BAS) ein?

P: Nun der BAS war politisch aktiv. Im Grunde genommen handelte es sich um eine Organisation die man eigentlich in zwei größere Gruppierungen teilen kann: Die eine war das südtiroler BAS, mit einer gewissen Affinität, oder gar als militärischer Arm der SVP (obwohl er ungeliebt war), 1956 mit diesem Kerschbaumer, mit dem Kasper oder Krisper? [Crepaz, Korrektur des Verfassers] aus Gröden, und dem Titscher aus Bruneck. Diese Gruppe war also vor Ort aktiv. In Österreich ist eine politische und mediale Unterstützungsgruppe im österreichischen und zum Teil auch deutschen BAS, meines Wissens ab 1959 dazu gekommen. Darin hat Fritz Molden die dominante Rolle gespielt, sowohl ideologisch als

auch finanziell; Gerd Bacher war jedenfalls eifrig dabei. Natürlich war Wolfgang Pfaundler als Journalist auch dabei. Dazu kam meines Wissen auch eine Reihe von anderen Repräsentanten sowohl des universitären Bereich, als auch in Tirol. Es kommt auch noch dazu, dass zweifellos auch österreichischer Politiker mit diesem BAS, sowohl dem südtiroler Arm als auch der österreichischen Unterstützungsorganisation Kontakte gehabt haben, darunter der damalige Außenminister Bruno Kreisky (in dessen Wohnung sich angeblich einiger Herren getroffen haben). Es gab Kontakte zum späteren Bundeskanzler Josef Klaus sowie auch zum Zechtl, dem Abgeordneten aus Tirol. Es ist daher einer intensive Verflechtung dieser Gruppierungen mit verschiedenster Kreisen in Österreich: Politischen, medialen, juristischen, und am allerwenigsten mit den militärischen Kreisen.

C: Eine wichtige Verbindung die Sie nicht erwähnt haben, war zu Oberhammer, dem Obmann der Tiroler ÖVP und damals Mitglied der Landesregierung.

P: Richtig. Ich wollte aber nicht alle aufzählen. Eins kann ich aber dazu noch sagen: Einer der dazu sehr viel weiß, und der möglicherweise auch bereit ist etwas zu erzählen, ist der frühere Bundesminister Harald Ofner. Den sollten man befragen, weil er voriges Jahr im Cafe Landtmann, anlässlich der Buchpräsentation von Hubert Speckner, über die Zeit der südtiroler Widerstandsbewegung sehr markige Worte gesprochen hat. Dies ist wichtig vor allem in Verbindung mit der Tatsache, dass dort andere Leute aus dem direkten Umfeld des BAS gewesen sind. Darüber hinaus verfügt meiner Meinung nach Harald Ofner über ein tiefes Insiderwissen zu diesem Thema.

C: Neben der als „Sonderprojekt Olah“ bekanntgewordenen Organisation führten die USA eine zweite, kleinere, paramilitärische Struktur in Österreich, welche in internen CIA Unterlagen als GRLAUNCH bezeichnet wird. Was wissen Sie darüber? Wer hat dessen Führung inne?

P: Ich kenne ein solches Stichwort nicht. Ich habe die Informationen genau gelesen die sie freundlicherweise mir als Anhang zu dieser Frage übermittelt haben. Ich bezweifle in manchen Bereichen, dass es sich dabei um die Organisation Olah handelt. Es ist aber nicht auszuschließen, dass aus Tarnungsgründen gewisse Charakteristika verwischt wurden: Sei es in Form von Legenden, oder in Form von „konstruierten Lebensläufen“. Der Hinweis auf München spricht unter Umständen auf eine Tarnorganisation für den BND bzw. mit Gehlen in Pullach. Es ist aber grundsätzlich denkbar, dass unabhängig von dem Sonderprojekt es eine stay behind Organisation auch in Österreich gab in der Zeit, ähnlich wie in Deutschland. Aus den Informationen die sie gesammelt haben, scheint mir diese Organisation in etwa deckungsgleich mit den Abläufen in Deutschland für diese stay behind Organisation zu sein. Es sind aber noch zwei weitere Elemente zu bedenken: Österreich war bis 1955 direkt im Führungsbereich von NATO Süd, und nicht von NATO Zentral (d.h. dass die Grenze an der Nordgrenze Österreichs verlief), und wir sollten nicht vergessen, dass die NATO Planungen ursprünglich und fast bis 1960 die Rheinlinie als Verteidigungslinie hatten, und Österreich so eine Art Bogen davor dargestellt hat. Es kann somit nicht ausgeschlossen werden, dass hier doch etwas auf die Beine gestellt wurde, so wie eben auch in Deutschland, wo zwei Formen von stay behind Organisationen existiert haben und darüber gibt es eine Publikation. Nach 1955 blieb Österreich im Interessensbereich von NATO Süd (vor allem von Vienza aus), sodass einer Steuerung einer solchen Organisation eher von dem Süden erwartbar wäre, und nicht von München aus. Grundsätzlich ist mir nie irgendwas aufgekommen, dass in diese Richtung passen würde.

Es ist nicht uninteressant zu schauen, was es überhaupt an „Galdio-artigen“ Organisationen gegeben hat: Galdio war ursprünglich eine klare stay behind Organisation. In der BRD gab es eben so eine, ausschließlich auf Aufklärung und

Ausschleusung ausgerichtet. Es gab in Italien di Gladio, ursprünglich für Anti-Warschauer Pakt Aktionen, dann auch für Antikommunismus in der internen politischen Dimension Italiens, gesteuert durch irgendwelche italienische nationale Kräfte, die angeblich 139 Depots mit 622 Mitglieder aufzuweisen hatten. Das ist also wenig. Wenn ich das nehme, sind das gerade mal 5 Leute pro Depots: Damit ist also kein großer Start zu machen. Da würde man absolute Spezialisten brauchen, wenn man dadurch Destabilisierung betreiben möchte, die entweder flächenhaft oder stärker wirksam ist, die fast unter „Profi Guerillas“ hineinfallen. Das ist bei der erwartbaren Amateurdimension nicht zu erwarten. Auch wenn sie eine Ausbildungseinrichtung irgendwo in Sardinien gehabt hatten. Aber, jemanden ein wenig Schießen beizubringen, oder die Handhabung einer Sprengkapsel ist die eine Seite; daraus aber einen wirklich kampfkraftigen, und auf sich selbst gestellten, im kleinsten Rahmen operierenden Guerilla zu machen ist wesentlich schwieriger. Dass es aber unter Umständen Ansätze hatte, um im Inneren bei Warschau Pakt Besetzung, oder bei kommunistischer Machtübernahme, die Situation zu destabilisieren, würde ich gar nicht bestreiten. Dies wurde offenbar von italienischen Geheimdiensten in irgendeiner Form unterstützt und angeleitet, sowie Dinge gemacht, die bis heute nicht so ganz geklärt sind. In der Schweiz gab es auch eine anti-Waschauer Pakt stay behind Organisation, die 1990 eine große Krise ausgelöst hat, weil die Schweizer plötzlich damit konfrontiert waren, dass unter Umständen jemand in der Schweiz damit gerechnet hat, dass die plötzlich vom Waschauer Pakt besetzt werden, was bis dahin (besonders durch ihrer Verteidigungsdimension) undenkbar war. Dazu wurden auch Gelder aus bestimmten Bereichen verwendet, das war der zweite Punkt der Geschichte. So überraschend ist diese Geschichte nicht. Wenn wir kurz jetzt zur NATO zurückkommen, ihre Verteidigungslinie ist nur langsam nach Osten aufgerückt: Anfangs lag diese am Rhein, erst 1964 haben sie das halbe Westdeutschland in ihren Verteidigungsbereich einbezogen. Ab 1969 waren sie de facto ziemlich weit vorne, sodass es die Vorneverteidigung eben gab, abgesehen von einem entsprechenden Schleier nahe der Grenze, mit einer gewissen Vorfeldzone versehen war. Des weitem gab es in Südtirol die Stella Alpina, die aber offenbar nur bis 1973 existierte, sowie die heikle Lodge P-2, die aufgelöst wurde nachdem deren Existenz bekannt geworden ist. (ob sie wirklich aufgelöst wurde, weiß ich nicht). Diese war eher ein politisches und finanzielles Instrumentarium, und daher nicht eine militärische stay behind Organisation.

C: Da haben aber viele ranghohe Offiziere der italienischen Streitkräfte und Geheimdienste teilgenommen!

P: Wahrscheinlich! Es gibt daher verschiedene Gegebenheiten. Dies sind also Dinge, die nicht ohne weiteres einfach so geklärt werden können. Das ist also im Grunde genommen, all das was ich dazu sagen könnte, und ich hoffe es sind damit ihre Fragen in einer einigermaßen hilfreichen Form beantwortet.

C: Absolut! Ich habe aber noch ein paar...darf ich?

P: Ja natürlich.

C: Bezüglich der Aussagen von Olah, die innerhalb einer seiner wichtigen Biographien, nämlich die von Manfred Lechner (Millionenverwechslung) enthalten ist: Darin vertrat Olah an verschiedenen Punkten seines Lebens die Ansicht, dass Schärf, Helmer und Böhm (der damalige ÖGB-Präsident) zwar von seinem Sonderprojekt gewusst, aber keine Einsicht in dessen Details hatten. Im Falle von Schärf und Helmer handelt es sich somit gerade um jene zwei Personen, wo sie vorher an ihrer Beteiligung gezweifelt haben?

P: Naja, es geht hier immer um den Zeitpunkt.

C: Das heißt Sie sprechen jetzt die Tatsache an, dass Olah erst später Schärf und Helmer informiert haben könnte, nämlich

zu einem Zeitpunkt als Figl, Gruber und Graf schon relativ lange davon wussten.

P: Ja genau.

C: Damit wäre Schärf zum Beispiel gar nicht mehr Bundespräsident gewesen zu dem Zeitpunkt wo er darüber in Kenntnis gesetzt wurde?

P: Ja.

C: Abgesehen von den britischen Waffenlagern in der Steiermark, Kärnten und Wien, wurden während des Kalten Krieges auch andere geheime Waffenlager in Österreich angelegt? Ich meine hierbei vor allem sowjetische Depots...

P: Davon hab ich nie etwas gehört. Ich kann mir aber vorstellen, dass im Zusammenhang mit Werkschutz und USIA, das eine oder andere gemacht wurde. Ich kann mir auch vorstellen, dass im Zusammenhang mit Überlegungen zu den sowjetischen Special Forces, welche sie unterschiedlich ausgeprägt hatten, noch vor ihrem Abzug das eine oder andere gemacht wurde. Es gab aber nie Hinweise darauf, und meines Wissens gab es auch nie Aktionen bei denen Depots mit entsprechenden Waffen aufgefunden sind oder geräumt wurden aber ganz auszuschließen ist es auch nicht.

C: Waren Ihrer Meinung nach die genannten paramilitärischen Strukturen (Sonderprojekt und GRLAUNCH) ein Bestandteil von NATO Kriegsplanungen oder nur von US-Kriegsplanungen? Inwiefern?

P: Die Frage kann Ihnen niemanden beantworten, weil es gibt eine einzige Arbeit die konkrete Auskünfte über einem bestimmten NATO Plan erteilt (der „Brennendes Edelweiß“) und diese bezieht sich ausschließlich auf NATO Süd bis 1960. Es ist nicht möglich gewesen, z.B. zum Thema 1968, von der NATO ein Dokument zu bekommen, das deren Beurteilungsstand in diesem Jahr zum Ausdruck bringt. Diese Dinge hält man unter Verschluss, und auch die Aussagen verschiedener Offiziere die gelegentlich über Planungen der NATO sprechen, kommen eher aus einer nationalen Sicht, weil ich glaube dass die Verpflichtungen zur strengen Geheimhaltung für die tatsächlichen Funktionsträger in bestimmten Bereichen doch so massiv waren, dass detaillierte Aussagen darüber, sowie konkrete Truppenzuordnungen nicht denkbar sind. Das gilt ja übrigens genauso für den Waschauer Pakt, wo auch über 1964 hinaus keine konkreten Operationspläne bekannt sind. Alles das was es darüber gibt: Atomschlag auf Wien, Wienerwald Eingänge, Ungarn bis München usw. ist alles Spielmaterial.

C: Da mir die Fragen eigentlich ausgegangen sind, möchte ich nur mehr wissen, ob Sie noch abschließend etwas dazu sagen möchten.

P: Ich habe mich bemüht das zu beantworten so gut es geht, oder soweit ohne Spekulationen (oder mit präziser Zuordnung zwischen ich vermute, könnte sein, und ist gegeben) die Sache heranzutragen und entsprechend zum Ausdruck zu bringen.

C: Binnen wenige Tage werde ich das gesamte Inhalt dieses Interviews zu Papier bringen, um es, in weitere Folge, im Rahmen des Quellenanhangs meiner Masterarbeit zu veröffentlichen. Sind Sie damit einverstanden?

P: Ja, Natürlich. Ich würde aber darum bitten, dass mir die Transkription zukommen lassen über E-Mail, sodass ich mir das anschauen kann.

C: Vielen, vielen Dank für die große Unterstützung die Sie dadurch geleistet haben.

P: Danke!