

LABOUR HISTORY REVIEW

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EDITORS

Malcolm S. Chase

School of Continuing Education, University of Leeds, Leeds, LS2 9JT.
email m.s.chase@leeds.ac.uk

David E. Martin

Department of History, University of Sheffield, Sheffield, S10 2TN.
email d.e.martin@sheffield.ac.uk

Margaret Walsh

Department of American and Canadian Studies, University of Nottingham, Nottingham, NG7 2RD.
email margaret.walsh@nottingham.ac.uk

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Proletarian cadres en route: Austrian NKVD agents in Britain 1941-43*

Barry McLoughlin

Documentation Centre of the Austrian Resistance (DÖW)

A key question in the history of communism is the relation between the Soviet state, the Comintern and national communist parties.¹ It is generally accepted that the Soviet state was dominant and that the Comintern was an instrument of Soviet foreign policy, but few would accept the simple view of an international movement completely dominated by and responsive to orders from Moscow.² It is clear that the suppressed communist parties, whose cadres and leadership lived in exile in Russia, were in the most difficult position and subject to severe constraint, but there has been discussion even in such cases of the degree to which the parties' leading representatives operated with autonomy and developed views independently of those of Stalin. The Italian party of Togliatti perhaps provides the strongest evidence amongst the exiles for an autonomy interpretation, while the German party provides one of the weakest. The view of party policy and life which stresses autonomy appears most strongly, however, in the historiography of the national parties able to operate openly on their home ground.

Independence from Moscow is particularly stressed in recent work on the historiography of the British Communist Party.³ This work presents a generally favourable picture of party members as political agitators and union activists. Whilst their loyalty to the USSR is stressed there is little discussion of the uncomfortable fact that such loyalty might bend the good communist into intelligence operations on behalf of the Soviet Union. The role of agents, whether spies such as Dave Springhall and Percy Glading, or 'agents of influence' such as James Klugmann, is generally glossed over, avoided or underplayed.⁴ The point might be pressed: was it not the duty of 'the good communist' to carry out intelligence work which strengthened the USSR? Does not a rounded communist history need to integrate these issues in addressing the work of parties and the Comintern?

This essay presents material on this neglected aspect of communist history. It deals with the experience of a group of Austrian communists who appeared briefly in Britain during 1941 to 1943. They had been recruited as agents by the Soviet state security organisation (NKVD), and sent to Britain under the terms of an agreement with the wartime sab-

otage and subversion outfit, Special Operations Executive (SOE), for eventual dispatch to targets in their home country. The personal histories of these people has its particularly Austrian aspect, which we see in the 'culture' of their socialist upbringing, involvement in the Austrian Civil War, flight to Czechoslovakia, and eventual exile in Russia; but the general features of their ideological commitment and migration East were also experienced by comrades from other national parties. Their life in Russia and participation in the Spanish Civil War had ubiquitous communist features, and their experience with the NKVD and wartime operations was shared by others.

Thus, despite the uniquely Austrian and personal aspects of the situation of this group of communists, and the special wartime circumstances, some general patterns are observable. In the first place the biographies of the group point to the role of ideology in making the 'good proletarian' complicit in the production of the tragedy of his own fate. This clearly has implications for the 'autonomy' of party members and suggests that such interpretations have strict limits. Secondly, these biographies inject the question of the secret agent and espionage into communist historiography, for while their use appears here in the special circumstances of war and the fight against fascism, that forms part of a more general employment. Thirdly, the biographies are suggestive of Soviet attitudes towards their agents. These agents were obviously regarded as expendable and as such they are similar to other cadres of national parties, not excluding Soviet party members, who were caught up in the Gulag. There is something to be said for the view that each particular set of experiences, however unique in its detail, was symptomatic of wider tendencies operating within international communism. Two of the Austrian NKVD emissaries mentioned below were, for example, like Springhall and Glading, graduates of the International Lenin School (ILS). The role played by the school, the Comintern's most prestigious institute of learning, in Stalinist cadre formation is as yet insufficiently explored, but often promising students on an ILS course were transferred to one of longer duration, sometimes to attain 'aspirant' (lecturer) status in one of the school's sectors. Others were considered trustworthy enough to put at the disposal of the Comintern's courier and communications department (OMS), a career path taken by Dr Arnold Deutsch, Kim Philby's first handler in England.

Throughout the inter-war period, Austrian communists performed important intelligence-gathering tasks for three clandestine Soviet institutions. In the communications and courier service (OMS) of the Executive Committee (ECCI) of the Communist International (Comintern), between twenty and thirty members of the Austrian Communist Party (KPO) were dispatched as emissaries, forged documents or travelled

around the globe with papers and messages. In Vienna itself, at different times and for varying periods, the Communist International set up support machinery for at least nine communist parties which had been banned in their own countries – the Italian, Polish, Estonian, Latvian, Lithuanian, Hungarian, Yugoslavian, Romanian and Bulgarian Sections of the Comintern. A team of Viennese communists, who had – as was prescribed in such cases – suspended their KPÖ membership, serviced such rump central committees and radioed their reports to Moscow.⁵ A similarly ‘illegal’ group acted as operatives for the First Directorate (espionage abroad) of the Soviet state security organisation of whom Arnold Deutsch was the most prominent. Another was Georg Killich (Miller), a leading figure in the Directorate’s forgery workshop in Moscow, which supplied hundreds of agents with doctored passports for foreign missions.⁶ A third group of Austrian opponents of fascism was recruited by Russian military intelligence (GRU); that is, the Fourth Department of the General Staff of the Red Army. The most prominent GRU agents of Austrian extraction were Ruth von Mayenburg,⁷ the first wife of Ernst Fischer, Austria’s leading Marxist intellectual; and two men who attained a general’s rank in the intelligence community: Karl Nebenführ,⁸ who was murdered by his NKVD interrogators in Moscow in 1938, and Josef Dycka, who was killed in 1941 during a mission in Poland.

After Germany’s invasion of the Soviet Union, approximately thirty further Austrians resident there were trained as parachutist intelligence agents (*Fallschirmkundschafter*) and sent, by the secret Soviet organisations mentioned above, to target areas in Germany, Austria and the Far East. Agents destined for resistance, sabotage or mainly intelligence-gathering operations in the homelands of National Socialism – Germany and Austria – consisted mainly of German or Austrian anti-fascists who had sought refuge from prosecution by emigrating to the Soviet Union between 1933 and 1939. Others had migrated to Russia with their communist parents, and now as adults underwent training alongside politically experienced emigrés and deserters from the Wehrmacht at espionage schools deep in the Russian interior.

The experience of the particular group treated here illustrates the way in which the Soviet authorities generally treated ‘politically reliable’ emigrés living in the USSR and trained them for secret missions behind enemy lines. Those selected belonged to the elite of the Comintern’s ‘next generation’: they were expected to occupy important posts within the post-war communist movement in both Germany and Austria. The most important criterion for selection was a good ‘proletarian’ biographical and Party record. The ever-mistrustful NKVD operation leaders gave insufficient attention to other more important standards, elsewhere considered essential for agents in the service of the Allies – youth, enthusiasm,

physical fitness and sound military training. Soviet employment of Austrian or German-born parachutist agents was based primarily on political considerations. The most obvious explanation of the inadequate, sometimes criminally negligent ‘preparation’ of Soviet emissaries sent to Central Europe, is the primacy of the ideological factor in the higher echelons of the NKVD and the Comintern, which reflected Soviet reality. In Stalin’s Russia, human life was expendable; failure, whether on the industrial, military or espionage front, was attributed to ‘traitors’, ‘wreckers’ and ‘enemies of the people’, rather than bad planning or faulty premises. Although resistance to Nazi dominance in Austria was more widespread than in Germany, being based on a strong anti-Prussian patriotism which could transcend previous political affiliations, agents or guerrillas sent to Austria from Moscow soon discovered considerable support for the Nazis. They found that the most active resister, the KPÖ, had lost its leading cadres to the Gestapo in recurrent raids since 1938: its original fixation on factory cell structures and propaganda methods – the distribution of mimeographed papers and flysheets – had facilitated infiltration by Gestapo informers.⁹ By the winter of 1943-44 no central communist leadership existed so emphasis was placed on sabotage, guerrilla warfare and the setting up of an Austrian Freedom Front (ÖFF) across party lines.¹⁰ The ‘Lindwurm’ team, sent by the Comintern to Vienna via Poland in 1943, to co-ordinate ÖFF activities, had no illusions about what awaited them. Its leader Gregor Kersche said to one of his fellow agents before leaving Russia: ‘Well, if the Party decides that I have to die, I have to die, don’t I?’¹¹

THE NKVD-SOE PICKAXE MISSIONS

It was on the basis of an agreement signed in Moscow on 30 September 1941, that the British wartime sabotage and subversion organisation, SOE, pledged to train NKVD agents in Britain and arrange their dispatch to targets in Western Europe.¹² At least twenty-five such agents were successfully dropped by the RAF between 1942 and late August 1944.¹³ By the latter date, Soviet interest in further parachutist missions (‘Pickaxe parties’ in SOE parlance) had evaporated, primarily because the original reason for requesting SOE assistance no longer had strategic significance.¹⁴ The fortunes of the Red Army had changed dramatically for the better and the Soviet authorities no longer needed to rely on the RAF for aircraft with sufficient range to reach dropping areas in Western Europe. The co-operation between SOE and the NKVD was not a success story. For the British side little of intrinsic intelligence value was gained,¹⁵ as the historians of SOE have noted.¹⁶ The Soviets complained constantly that their agents were being refused outright for training or

being kept so long in Britain that their missions had become obsolete.¹⁷ The grounds for conflict between the two sides and the controversies arising had some bearing on the experience of the agents and their training.

Conflict arose firstly because the remit of SOE was a constant source of bureaucratic intrigue in wartime Whitehall. The Foreign Office demanded a consultative role regarding the sending of agents to Europe, especially to France and Belgium,¹⁸ and it went to great lengths to avoid controversies with governments-in-exile in London which were inimical to or suspicious of Soviet wartime strategy. The 'old' security establishment, especially the Secret Intelligence Service (SIS), was equally jealous of SOE's self-perceived role 'to set Europe ablaze' because it wished to uphold its predominance in the allocation of resources to missions during the world conflict. Furthermore the RAF, in resolutely adhering to its policy of mass bombing, was loath to release aircraft and aircrew for 'special missions'.¹⁹

Secondly, meteorological and technical difficulties hampered the speedy execution of flights. British aircraft were over eight hours in the air on a return flight to Austria, which made such missions impossible during the extended periods of daylight, from May to September. In the late autumn and winter months, storms, 'icing up' and bad visibility often forced the pilots of the ponderous bombers to turn back, with the agents still on board. Attempts to complete missions had to wait for the next 'moon period', when conditions would facilitate a pin-point drop.

Thirdly, fundamental strategic differences and hidden agendas ascribed to the respective partners weakened NKVD-SOE liaison from its inception. Within SOE itself, there were conflicting views on the question of deciding in favour of subversion and sabotage, as against the employment of small guerrilla groups operating like British Commandos.²⁰ Yet SOE executives were never quite sure which goals any one NKVD mission was supposed to fulfil.²¹ They correctly surmised that the NKVD emissaries were usually assigned classical intelligence tasks – collecting information on troop movements and on the armaments industry. Indeed, in April 1943, SOE's Russian section recommended that Pickaxe missions be suspended until it could be proved that NKVD agent-teams sent to Britain had been directed to concentrate on sabotage activities after landing behind German lines.²² Yet however great the misgivings regarding the strategy behind NKVD policy – whether they were seeking to establish networks for a post-war scenario, for example – the hands of SOE executives were tied by a passage in the record of the original Moscow discussions in which both sides agreed 'to give all possible assistance in introducing each other's agents into occupied territory. Such assistance will include the provision of documents and cover ... and the

introduction of each other's W/T sets'. Another important passage, which subsequently proved subject to contrary interpretations, declared:

In co-operating with and assisting each other the British and Soviet authorities do not wish to do anything that might endanger their organisations or unduly compromise their agents. The secret British and Soviet organisations will not be revealed to each other, nor will there normally be any contacts in the field, unless the heads of their respective organisations are assured that such contact would be advantageous.²³

All Pickaxe 'bodies' seem to have been forwarded by the NKVD's Fourth Directorate for Special Tasks and Guerrilla Warfare. The Directorate was headed by Pavel Sudoplatov; one of his section chiefs was Yakov Serebryansky, the Fourth Directorate's founder. Both had previously been involved in the planning and execution of 'wet jobs' (*mokry dela*) abroad. Their most spectacular success was the murder of Trotsky.²⁴

In 1941, Colonel Ivan Chichayev arrived in London to carry out liaison with SOE.²⁵ At irregular intervals, he visited his agents at SOE Special Training Schools (STS), holding establishments in the English countryside, or in 'safe' houses and flats rented by SOE in London. More frequently, these duties were delegated to one of his three assistants, usually to Captain Nikolai Toroptchenko. Meanwhile, SOE had set up a liaison office in Moscow (SAM), which was initially run by Lieutenant Colonel R.D. Guinness, later by Brigadier General George Hill, whose past as an old 'intelligence hand' in post-revolutionary Russia did not upset the NKVD unduly.²⁶

The Russian section of SOE in London consisted originally of a Country and a Liaison section, which were later merged under the command of Major A.D. Seddon.²⁷ Over fifty years of age when he joined SOE, Seddon probably served with British interventionist forces during the Russian Civil War, as had Gubbins, Chief of SOE. Daily dealings with the German-speaking agents in care of SOE were conducted by the section's lower ranks, most notably by Captain A.L. McLaughlin (ex-Territorial Army), female staff members (members of the First Aid Nursing Yeomanry, or FANY), and White Russian emigrés of NCO rank or officers who subsequently or temporarily served as SAM staff in Moscow (Captains W. Wild and J.G. Darton).

At least sixteen teams of NKVD agents reached Britain and fifteen were expedited after various delays: three each to Germany, Austria and Holland-Belgium, while France received five and Italy one. Judging from the final results, all missions to Germany and Austria were unmitigated disasters. The agents soon found themselves to be fish without water; the old supportive networks of the communist party were infiltrated by the Gestapo or did not exist. The greatest problems in the short period

between landing and arrest were finding safe quarters and obtaining ration cards; in other cases, the forged documentation issued to the agents by Moscow or London was either obsolete or obviously not genuine. Most of those captured were later executed, but some were spared, 'turned' and forced to play radio games (*Funkspiele*) with Moscow. A handful survived prison or concentration camp and one agent got clean away, to Switzerland. The full history of the Pickaxe bodies still has to be written, but the greatest amount of extant archival material concerns the agents of Austrian origin bearing the code name Coffee, our present concern. Of all the groups, they spent the longest time in England.²⁸

LEBENSSTATIONEN OF THE COFFEE TEAM: VIENNA-MADRID-MOSCOW²⁹

The electorate of the First Austrian Republic (1918-34) was rigidly divided into two political groupings: the bourgeois parties (the Christian Social and Greater German People's parties) and the Social Democratic Workers' Party (SDAP). From 1920 until its dissolution in 1934 during the Civil War, the SDAP was in parliamentary opposition, supported by over forty per cent of the voters. In 'Red' Vienna, it could rely on two-thirds of the population, due mainly to its enlightened social policies and to a finely meshed network of socialist organisations. Under the three pillars of the socialist movement – party, trade unions and co-operatives – a plethora of socialist-inspired clubs was established, representing such diverse groups as freethinkers, Esperantists, stamp collectors, hobby gardeners, anglers, socialist soldiers and children. This puritanical counter-culture (socialist footballers played only against fellow socialists; professional football was deemed bourgeois, as were modern dances such as the fox-trot and Charleston) was a world-within-world for hundreds of thousands. The political socialisation of a young male growing up under Austro-Marxist influence in inter-war Vienna had, at least in its linear predictability, affinities with the classical education of British contemporaries from upper-class backgrounds. At five, the Viennese boy was brought by his parents to the playgroups of the *Kinderfreunde*; at eleven he entered the left-wing scouts movement, *Rote Falken*; then followed, from fifteen, activity in the Socialist Youth (*Sozialistische Arbeiter-Jugend*, or SAJ); and three years later, recognition as a fully-fledged member of the SDAP and its military formation, *Republikanischer Schutzbund*.

After the massacre by police of over ninety demonstrators in Vienna on 15 July 1927,³⁰ the ruling bourgeois parties, sensing that the SDAP would never employ its armed wing, moved sharply to the right. Fascist private armies, under government patronage and financed by Hungary and Italy, grew in numbers and influence. Shortly after Hitler's accession to power, Federal Chancellor Dollfuss dissolved parliament and banned the Schutz-

bund. The SDAP leadership attempted to restrain its radical followers, especially Schutzbund members who were embittered by the inactivity of the party in the face of unilateral and widespread confiscation of weapons in the socialist-dominated areas. The resistance offered to one such provocative search for arms led, on 12 February 1934 in Linz, to a country-wide, yet unco-ordinated military response by Schutzbund units. The Dollfuss regime put this down, mercilessly, within three days, bombarding municipal flats and executing socialist leaders in the process.³¹

Until the army was called in, the Schutzbund unit in Florisdorf – the northern (21st) district of Vienna – ruled the streets between the apartment blocks and the largest industrial plants of the capital. Four members of what became the Coffee party took part in the fighting there: Willi Wagner, Albin Mayr, Anton Barak and Leopold Stancl. On the morning of 14 February, the Florisdorf Schutzbund members met in the local gasworks and, realising they were outgunned and outnumbered by the regular troops, decided to dump arms and disperse. A group of radicals elected Willi Wagner and his friend Franz Zartl to lead an armed column to the Czech border. Forty-seven, carrying their rifles, ammunition, heavy machine guns and grenades, reached the border after a fifteen-hour forced march.³² In the ensuing weeks, approximately 1,200 Schutzbund members from all over Austria, including Barak, Stand and Mayr, were granted political asylum in Czechoslovakia and accommodated in makeshift camps installed and financed by the Czech and German speaking socialist parties.

The Soviet Union invited the *Schutzbündler* in Czechoslovakia to live and work in 'the socialist sixth of the earth'.³³ Over 300, many of them neo-communists or, if not, at least glad of the opportunity to find work again after years of unemployment, left Prague for Moscow in late April 1934.³⁴ In the next two years another 400 to 500 followed and were often joined by their families or girlfriends. Austrian enclaves established themselves in Moscow, Leningrad, Gorki, Kharkov and Rostov on Don, supplementing small colonies of their countrymen who had settled there as skilled workers or engineers during the First Five Year Plan (1928-32). Despite their privileged status in terms of wages and accommodation, over 220 Schutzbund members managed, at great risk, to return home between 1934 and 1941; other potential repatriates were arrested before they could leave. The main economic reasons for returning were the closure of retail outlets offering cheap goods to foreigners (INSNAB shops) in July 1935, and the sharp drop in the value of real wages caused by the rise in work norms during the Stakhanov mania. Many never became used to the harsh climate, or to the bad quality and scarcity of food. The obligatory courses in Russian, technical education, paramilitary training and political propaganda in the evenings were inimical

to family life. A climate of mistrust, fostered by denunciatory practices and kangaroo courts (expulsion from the party was usually the prelude to arrest) within the KPÖ collective, reached a climax during the 'cadre examinations' after 1936. As in Soviet society as a whole, fear accelerated the atomisation process in the Austrian enclaves, corroding bonds of trust and old friendships.³⁵

Mayr, Stancl and Barak, good Party stalwarts and decorated Stakhanovites, escaped the worst excesses of Yezhov's terror by volunteering for the International Brigades in Spain. In the autumn of 1936, the trio was recommended by the KPÖ for the Spanish mission and accepted by the NKVD.³⁶ Over 150 Austrians resident in the USSR travelled to Spain using false passports and roundabout routes provided by OMS, the communications and courier service of the Comintern.³⁷ All three subsequently distinguished themselves in battle and held responsible posts.³⁸ Mayr, while serving with the XIth (German) International Brigade, took part in the defence of Madrid in late 1936, completed an officer's training course and, promoted to captain, led a company in most of the major battles during the following year. The Cadres Department in Albacete described Mayr as 'a good comrade, extremely brave, but soft'.³⁹ Anton Barak served in the multinational XIIIth (Chapayev) Brigade and was wounded in its first engagement, at Christmas 1936 in Teruel. Following a spell in hospital and his promotion to lieutenant, Barak received severe abdominal wounds during the July 1937 attack on Romanillos. He spent a further year in hospital and rest homes before he was evacuated to France.⁴⁰ Mayr, now Chief of Signals in the XIth Brigade, was badly injured in a car crash and sent as an invalid to France somewhat later. The career of Leopold Stancl in Spain ran along similar lines: he was Barak's company chief in the XIIIth Brigade, later commander of the Austrian '12. Feber' Battalion of the XIth Brigade, suffered recurrent bouts of typhus, and was wounded and evacuated to France. All three lived a semi-legal existence in France with accommodation and cover provided by the French Communist Party. The KPÖ leadership in Moscow considered them to be valuable Party cadres and arranged for their transportation back to the Soviet Union in March-April 1939.

Willi Wagner, the other member of the Coffee team, had a rather different experience. He witnessed the *Yezhovshchina* at first hand in Moscow, where roughly sixty Schutzbund members were arrested in the years 1936-38. While working in Elektroavod, the KPÖ recommended his enrolment at the International Lenin School (ILS), the cadre-smithy for future communist party leaders. Here, under the name Arnold Schmidt, Wagner met his future wife, Hilde Uxa (Hassler). She was from Vienna, a young woman who had lost her mother at an early age and had joined the communist movement as a teenager. At the ILS she made good academic

progress, but was not considered 'good material'.⁴¹ She committed two grave transgressions: breach of conspiracy and withholding biographical details from the school management at a time of 'heightened class vigilance'. All ILS students had pseudonyms and were forbidden to reveal their true identities or meet foreigners – in her case members of the Schutzbund – outside the school. More damaging than meeting old comrades from Vienna, however, was her omission to state when entering the ILS that she had once visited her uncle (in 1925, at the age of twelve years), a secret policeman in Prague; and that the husband of her Czech stepsister was also a policeman.⁴² In removing Hilde from the ILS, the KPÖ admitted that her lack of progress there was mainly due to the fact that she had been sick most of the time.⁴³ She also blotted her party record by protesting against – and temporarily postponing – the departure of her second husband, Willi Wagner, to the International Brigades in Spain.⁴⁴ Too late to be sent as a volunteer, he was given a secret mission – to accompany Soviet arms shipments by sea to Spain and to interpret for the crew should the naval forces of the Non-Intervention Committee stop the Russian steamer en route.⁴⁵

The returned Spanish veterans were not welcomed with open arms in Moscow but told to keep their counsel regarding their experiences in the International Brigades: in official Soviet eyes, Spain had been a hotbed of Trotskyism.⁴⁶ Stancl was now on permanent sick leave,⁴⁷ whereas Mayr, after an operation and recuperation, resumed work in Elektroavod. Barak applied for an invalid's income supplement and intended to take up a less strenuous job in Dynamo. His application was rejected without comment and, needing the full wages of a skilled worker, he once more spent his days in a stinking welder's cabin.⁴⁸

After Germany's invasion of the Soviet Union (22 June 1941), the NKVD organised the most trustworthy KPÖ members living in Moscow in a so-called Destruction Battalion. The unit, including the male Coffee agents, was transferred to a camp on the Kursk railway, south of Moscow. Following a course in basic military training, Wagner, Stancl and Barak were sent back to an espionage school in Moscow to improve their shooting skills and practise parachute jumping.⁴⁹ There they formally signed a statement that they were prepared to carry out a mission behind German lines for the NKVD. With the Germans on the outskirts of the city, the school was evacuated to Kuibyshev.⁵⁰ Meanwhile, Hilde Wagner had conferred with her husband and signed the solemn pledge to work for the NKVD in enemy territory.⁵¹ In November all four (the Wagner couple, Barak and Stancl) travelled to Archangel and embarked on *SS Hartlebury* for Britain. Albin Mayr, originally selected for a different secret mission, completed an intensive radio operator's course and left Archangel for Britain ten months later.⁵²

SOJOURN IN BRITAIN, DECEMBER 1941 TO MAY 1943

Misunderstandings arose in connection with some Pickaxe missions (Coffee was the third) because SOE expected the agents would arrive fully trained and equipped with w/t sets, possessing all necessary (forged) documentation, including the cover story to be used in the target country, sufficient reserve clothing, money and personal effects. According to SOE expectations, then, the sojourn of the agents in Britain would be spent mainly in training to parachute from a British aircraft and refreshing skills in sabotage, close combat and radio transmission.⁵³ Before undertaking training, the agents were photographed and issued with new identities (usually Swiss) to legitimise their position with Scotland Yard. SOE considered its obligation as primarily one of conveyance, ensuring that the agents' stay in Britain would be short and dispatch implemented in accordance with the wishes of Chichayev concerning their agreed dropping point, or the exigencies of weather and aircraft availability, under which the RAF had to operate. None of the prerequisites, taken for granted by SOE, applied to the Coffee team. The member of SAM staff who escorted them by plane from Kuibyshev to Archangel was aghast at their appearance: shabbily dressed, without winter clothing, their luggage wrapped in a few paper parcels. Insisting that the Wagner couple, Stancl and Barak should arrive in Britain 'complete with ears, fingers and toes', the SOE officer persuaded his NKVD counterpart to issue the party with suitable footwear, gloves and caps.⁵⁴

The Coffee quartet arrived in London in December 1941 and presented themselves to SOE as natives of Engels (Autonomous Socialist Republic of the Volga Germans). SOE soon had grave misgivings about the agents' suitability for a mission in occupied Europe. All were declared medically unfit for duty before undergoing further medical tests in the Parachute Training School at Ringway near Manchester in early January 1942.⁵⁵ The Medical Officer there found that Hilde Wagner, due to her thyroid gland operation in the Soviet Union, suffered dizzy spells; Barak still laboured under the after-effects of his Spanish wounds, as did Stancl, who was obviously an ill man. Recurrent attacks of dysentery and typhus in Spain had damaged his liver and it was attested that they would 'never be fit for severe physical training'.⁵⁶ The team spent some time at the nearby STS (Special Training School) 51, saw a parachute being packed and witnessed a demonstration drop. The STS commander refused to take responsibility for the outcome of any training jumps, despite Chichayev's insistence that the four should jump regardless of the unfavourable medical evidence.⁵⁷ Stancl's condition necessitated hospitalisation, and he was returned to the Soviet Union shortly afterwards.⁵⁸ Three weeks after the first abortive attempt, the Coffee trio returned to

the Parachute Training School and evinced alarming signs of low morale. Barak, who performed his jump with coolness, was considered to be 'very unpunctual' and of a 'resigned fatalistic nature'. According to the training staff, Willi Wagner was equally unenthusiastic and had to be ordered three times before he jumped from a barrage balloon, and afterwards from an aircraft. His wife showed little interest in the preliminaries and became so ill above ground that she did not jump at all.⁵⁹

In anticipation of Coffee's arrival in Britain, Chichayev had suggested to SOE operational staff a dropping zone in a wooded area south-west of Vienna.⁶⁰ The landing area and the projected date of departure (20 January 1942) were rejected by the group:⁶¹ they feared they would arouse suspicion, while making their way from landing in a rural area in the depths of a snowbound Austrian winter to the contact address (*Anlauf-adresse*) in Vienna. Instead, Willi Wagner suggested departure in the spring and asked to be dropped over the Lobau. This was an area of water meadows along the northern banks of the Danube near his home. He knew its uncharted paths and hiding places from childhood.⁶² Wagner's variant was probably rejected on the grounds that the aircraft would have to fly too close to the capital, thereby encountering strong anti-aircraft fire. Several alternative dropping zones were examined in discussions between Chichayev and SOE Air Liaison before the time and place of the parachute drop were finally fixed for December 1942, about thirty miles south-west of the Austrian capital.⁶³ Using the same arguments as before, the Coffee team, which now included Albin Mayr, rejected the date and area of the parachute drop. All four had now come to the conclusion that they were being ordered to carry out a suicide mission. Apart from what they apprehended as shoddy planning on the Soviet side, the quartet felt badly treated by Colonel Chichayev and his subordinates, who rarely visited or supplied them with money or adequate clothing. Hilde Wagner, indispensable as W/T operator of the group and as the person assigned the essential task of making first contact with resistance groups in Vienna after landing, had just cause for complaint. After much persuasion she finally completed two successful parachute jumps in August 1942, notwithstanding the opinion of the station's doctor that she should not be asked to do such training.⁶⁴ Moreover, she injured herself internally on landing, and, on the recommendation of a specialist, a bed was reserved for her in the surgical ward of a London hospital. Chichayev disallowed the operation at the last moment.⁶⁵ Of more importance were Coffee's misgivings in regard to Soviet preparations for the Vienna mission; namely, inaccuracies in the forged documentation they would have to use and the vagueness of the operations assigned to them in their native city.

Shortly before the arrival of the Coffee party in Britain, Chichayev had informed SOE that he expected the British to supply the team with the

necessary forged documents for the Vienna operation. These were a military call-up card with biographical data (*Wehrpass*); identity card (*Kennkarte*); work record (*Arbeitsbuch*); registration forms for residence (*Anmeldungsformulare*) and changes of residence (*Abmeldungsformulare*); and various membership forms for Nazi organisations. SOE had no facilities at that time to produce forged documentation.⁶⁶ They turned to 'C', Head of SIS, for assistance. SIS was not forthcoming, and plans to use Czech or Polish documentation from the relevant country sections of SOE were discarded because this solution would have entailed the delay of a further five to six months.⁶⁷

This hiatus postponed the departure of Coffee indefinitely, even after the Russians knew that they must send the doctored papers by the only route available: that is, by sea.⁶⁸ The tiresome affair seemed near solution when Albin Mayr, Stancl's replacement, sailed from Archangel to Scotland with documents for the whole group in September 1942. Mayr and two new Pickaxe teams en route to Britain were lucky to survive a U-boat attack which sank the ship and sent all Mayr's luggage, including the forged papers and w/t codes, to the seabed.⁶⁹ When the indispensable documentation finally did reach Britain in November 1942, the questionable authenticity of the fabricated identity cards and Chichayev's demand that the Coffee group 'go to some place 60 kilometres from Vienna in December and land by parachute in a temperature of 30° below zero' led to the final breach of trust between the potential agents and their Soviet superiors.⁷⁰ According to confidential remarks made by the most disaffected of the Coffee party to Captain McLaughlin, the forged papers for the agents' cover story in Vienna contained errors: these included the use, in all cases, of an identical photograph for documents purporting to have been issued over a period of ten years; and omission of medical reasons for being excused from active military service (physical incapacity).⁷¹

Neither McLaughlin nor any other SOE operative ever saw the documents, but they subsequently learned that the group had suggested to Chichayev that he should order new sets from Russia; failing that, the British be approached to provide the quartet with a new cover story. After consultation with Moscow, the Soviet colonel expressly forbade such an approach to SOE, and threatened the group with forcible repatriation should they not proceed to the target area with the documents as they were.⁷² Knowledge of the group's tasks after landing also stems from disclosures to McLaughlin: detailed instructions would be transmitted after radio contact with Moscow from Vienna,⁷³ but other direct references to operational goals suggest that the Coffee group was expected to carry out sabotage and assassination assignments in the Austrian capital.⁷⁴ By the time the group left Britain by ship for Murmansk in January 1943, none of its members wished to fulfil the mission. Individually, they all asked

SOE to arrange their naturalisation as British subjects, and the Wagner couple even requested permission to join the British armed forces before the Second Front was opened.⁷⁵ The SOE officers, bound by the terms of the charter with the NKVD, could do nothing and said as much.

The peregrinations of the Coffee party took an unexpected turn when their ship was forced into port in Western Scotland in early March after heavy storms dispersed the convoy. The ship's medical officer dispatched Barak and Hilde Wagner to hospital. Willi Wagner and Albin Mayr were sent to Inverness in the care of SOE staff. Although Toroptchenko, Chichayev's assistant, also ensconced himself in the hotel, SOE's Russian section now succeeded in learning the true identities and biographies of the group by inviting an officer from MI5 ('Captain Brown') to talk to Wagner and Mayr elsewhere in Inverness. On his way to Scotland, at a convalescent home outside London, 'Brown' (in the company of Captain McLaughlin) had heard Barak's life-story. The four – Wagner spoke in his wife's name as well as his own – were, however, at pains to conceal their membership of the KPÖ, and in the case of the Wagner couple, attendance at the International Lenin School. As SOE made it abundantly clear that all four, who now portrayed themselves as Social Democrats and Austrian patriots, could not be sent to Austria on a British remit nor be admitted to the British army, the Coffee team found themselves at the mercy of Soviet Embassy staff sent to Inverness. Colonel Graur of the NKVD listened to their request that they now wanted to be dropped over Austria and would take their chances with the faulty documentation. He said this was impossible, as some of the identity and ration cards were already obsolete.⁷⁶

The second departure of the Coffee team for the Soviet Union – from Middlesbrough in May 1943 (taking the route New York-Panama Canal-San Francisco-Vladivostok) – was final. SOE, believing the agents' fears of what awaited them in Moscow, held out the vague prospect that the FBI might rescue the party as the ship passed through the Panama Canal. After consultations with the Foreign Office, SOE desisted from making an official approach to the American authorities: a leak, indicating British connivance in the rescue of the Coffee party, would have had incalculably negative consequences for relations with the Soviets, especially at a time when SOE-NKVD co-operation was but marking time.⁷⁷ In May 1944, six months after their return to the Soviet Union, the Coffee agents were each sentenced in Moscow to ten years in the Gulag. Sudaplatov's investigation officials charged the four originally with spying and high treason (*za izmenu rodine*), but dropped the espionage charge before handing over the indictment to the sentencing body, a Special Board (OSO) of the NKVD. Barak committed suicide in the camp, while the others survived the strict slave labour regime and subsequent terms of banishment.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE COFFEE TEAM

The Coffee team corresponded to the social and political profile of other Pickaxe teams chosen for missions in Austria or Germany: a working-class background, political activity from an early age, a good communist party record, participation in the Spanish Civil War and/or attendance at the Comintern's International Lenin School. The negative aspects of daily life in the Soviet Union, especially the hardheartedness of its bureaucracy, were experienced by the Coffee party to a high degree. The state of health of all except Mayr should have precluded their selection in the first place. It was also their bad luck to have been sent to Britain at such an early stage in SOE-NKVD collaboration. Their training in Russia was minimal, the goal of their mission unclear and, more important in the long run, SOE was not prepared for such a group without adequate training, proper documentation and the requisite commitment. The obviously inadequate preparations for departure from Russia can be explained by the chaotic conditions prevailing in autumn 1941, especially after the hurried evacuation of ministries and secret institutions from Moscow to Kuibyshev. Other Pickaxe teams subsequently sent to Austria arrived in Britain suitably trained and documented, and the actual date of their dispatch to the drop zone depended on aircraft availability and little else. The Coffee party were shuttled back and forth across Britain between conspiratorial flats in London, Parachute Training School, Special Training School, hospitals and holding establishments, like Little Hansteads near St Albans. They were penniless and bored most of the time, despite the odd excursion undertaken for their diversion: fishing, visits to the pub, a West End show or a London restaurant.

The SOE officers with whom the quartet had most contact knew Austria and/or Russia and soon laughingly dismissed their 'Russian' identities as Volga Germans. Further attempts to crack the cover were forbidden by the SOE-NKVD charter, but this does not seem to have been a priority of SOE's Russian section. In any case, SOE was not dependent on the Russians in matters of recruitment: apart from the many officers and men who joined SOE from crack British army regiments, suitable agents could also be found among ex-soldiers who had fled with exiled governments (Poles, Czechs) or who had come to Britain in the 1930s as Austrian or German political refugees. Coffee's long stay in Britain and their unexpected return after the abortive departure for Murmansk, offered an unique opportunity, however, to plumb the depths of Russian cover identities. But even then, as in other Pickaxe cases, the British agency was hampered by its lack of knowledge concerning recent developments in the USSR (especially NKVD politics) and left-wing politics generally. Composed 'of the sensible military, as opposed to the

no-nonsense military, the hysterical military and the plain-silly military',⁷⁸ SOE saw its foremost obligation towards the Russians as being the transportation ('infiltration') of NKVD agents and not their recruitment. Being unversed in the intricacies of international communism, SOE officers were often deceived by good acting on the part of agents. Hermann Köhler, Organisational Secretary of the KPÖ (Sodawater Pickaxe party), was perceived to be 'a very typical Viennese ... with his native sense of humour intact ... anything but Communist'.⁷⁹ Likewise Albert Huttary (Everest Pickaxe party), a member of the KPÖ since 1929, who successfully mimed the good Austrian Social Democrat and Catholic.⁸⁰

In estimating the chances of Coffee's success had the agents carried out their mission, it may be instructive to examine three areas of NKVD training which were often treated in the most cavalier of manners and had lethal consequences for other emissaries. The first area was that of breaches of security. Parachutist teams destined for the same or adjacent target areas in Germany were sometimes trained together and knew when and where the other team was to land and operate.⁸¹ A similar lapse in precautionary measures occurred during Mayr's transportation to Britain. He was introduced to two other Pickaxe teams (Sodawater and Tonic) in Archangel and travelled with them to a Scottish port. He knew Köhler (party name: Konrad) well because this leading KPÖ functionary had run the party's illegal network in France before the war and organised the repatriation of Austrian members of the International Brigades from Spain to the USSR.⁸²

The second area of NKVD practice was that of documentation and equipment. The quality of the German identity documents forged in Moscow seems to have varied considerably.⁸³ In connection with the Pickaxe Whiskey mission, one of the two-man team professed dissatisfaction with the quality of the documentation issued to him by his NKVD superiors. SOE made some changes to the forged papers,⁸⁴ but in view of the agents' further objections, proposed that the Russians send new documentation instead of having the agents take 'unjustifiable risks'.⁸⁵ However, as Chichayev could convince his British counterparts of the mission's high priority,⁸⁶ the Whiskey duo was dispatched by the RAF. Whether the agents' papers would have passed muster in Nazi-occupied territory turned out to be of no consequence: the Halifax bomber crashed in Bavaria, and all crew and the agents perished.⁸⁷ Other items which parachutist-agents carried in their luggage could lead to arrest, torture and death. Wilhelm Pieck, Chairman of the German Communist Party (KPD) in Moscow exile, had sharp words with NKVD training staff on the question of equipment issued to his son-in-law Theo Winter, and co-agent Katja Niederkirchner, before their mission in 1943. Niederkirchner's handbag was of the shabbiest quality ('There is no other one

available!'), likewise her case and rucksack ('You are not travelling to a health resort!'), the amount of Reichsmark issued (125) was woefully inadequate and the ration cards expired two days before the date of the flight departure. Niederkirchner, apprehended during a train journey shortly after landing, was noticed by the police because of discrepancies in her forged identity card. Another problem concerned clothing. Whereas Theo Winter was fortunate to receive the tailor-made suit he had demanded from his NKVD superiors,⁸⁸ it is known from the pre-war period that many Austrian volunteers for the International Brigades en route from Moscow to Spain had awkward moments at various border checkpoints because of their uniform-type shoddy shoes and suits, or because they produced forged passports purported to have been issued by a state which they had never visited or in a language which they could not speak.⁸⁹ Similar misfortunes befell communist militants sent back to Austria by the Comintern to rebuild party and trade union structures between 1934 and 1938: their shoes – all the same model – gave them away to Viennese secret police stationed at the Austro-Czech border.⁹⁰

The third problem for the Coffee agents was ascertaining accurate and up-to-date data on conditions in the target area. Exaggeration of the actual level of resistance in the home countries had become second nature to the Austrian and German communist leadership in Moscow, as they reported, long before 1941, to the ECCI. Before Erna Eifler and her fellow agents left Moscow for East Prussia in 1942, they were briefed at the Hotel Lux by the KPD leaders, Pieck, Ulbrecht, Ackermann and Florin. The description of living and political conditions in Nazi Germany by the KPD leadership was hopelessly out of date; and their portrayal of existing communist networks and safe addresses over-optimistic and tragically misleading, as events would prove.⁹¹ Members of a different team dispatched to East Prussia at roughly the same time were instinctively sceptical of Comintern reports on Germany and demanded to meet German POWs at a transit camp outside Moscow. As a result, their uniformed fellow-countrymen provided detailed answers to such important questions as the rationing system, identity papers, police and army patrols on the railways and public highways. Moreover, the agents were left in no doubt that communist activities were weak and hardly noticeable in the bigger German cities; and that the bulk of the population still believed in the Nazi system.⁹²

It is clear that Pickaxe agents laboured under undue psychological pressures unknown to British agents sent by SOE to, say, France or Belgium. The latter jumped over enemy territory in the knowledge that, should the mission fail and they survive and return, their superiors in London would treat them decently. Agents in the service of the USSR could not sustain their self-confidence in like manner. Their fears began

with the unspoken question of what would happen if they refused to undertake the mission in question, and continued when they contemplated the outcome if it was unsuccessful. Their apprehensions were twofold – as they correctly anticipated, in many cases imprisonment by the Gestapo would be followed by incarceration in Russia as 'traitors'.⁹³ Finally, most of the Pickaxe agents selected for parachuting into Austria were unsuitable, by being too old, unfit, demoralised and burnt-out by constantly living on the edge, in Spain and in the treacherously unsafe Party milieu in Stalin's Moscow, where friends and acquaintances had disappeared overnight and forever.

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¹A balanced account of these complex dependencies is provided by Kevin McDermott and Jeremy Agnew, *The Comintern: A History of International Communism from Lenin to Stalin*, Houndmills, 1996.

²See Mikail Narinsky and Juergen Rohan (eds.), *Centre and Periphery: The History of the Comintern in the Light of New Documents*, Amsterdam, 1996. A volume of contributions on the national sections of the Communist International is being prepared by the same editors.

³See, for example, Henry Srebnik, *London Jews and British Communism*, 1995; Nina Fishman, *The British Communist Party and the Trade Unions 1933-45*, Aldershot, 1995; Kevin Morgan, *Against Fascism and War: Ruptures and Continuities in British Communist Politics 1935-41*, Manchester, 1989. These volumes are reviewed in *Science and Society*, vol. 61, no. 1, 1997. This number, edited by Kevin Morgan, also contains essays on various aspects of Communism in Britain and the British Empire.

⁴For the espionage cases of Dave Springhall and Percy Glading see Francis Beckett, *Enemy Within: The Rise and Fall of the British Communist Party*, 1995. Both had studied at the International Lenin School in Moscow in the late 1920s. For treatment of the Dave Springhall case in the official history of the British Communist Party, see Noreen Branson, *History of the Communist Party of Great Britain 1941-51*, 1997, pp. 72-4. There is no reference to Glading's role as an agent in the official history volumes, though it is not ignored by Willie Thompson, who comments in general and particular on the spy question, including some views expressed about Klugmann: see *The Good Old Cause: British Communism 1920-91*, 1992, pp. 51-2. There has been considerable, but so far apparently inconclusive comment on Klugmann, in *Labour History Review*, vol. 57, no. 2, 1992, pp. 3-4; vol. 58, no. 1, 1993, p. 5; vol. 58, no. 2, 1993, pp. 3-8.

⁵DÖW, Wien. Interviewprotokolle (IP) Antonia Lehr.

⁶See the standard works on Soviet espionage abroad: Christopher Andrew and Oleg Gordievsky, *KGB: The Inside Story of its Foreign Operations from Lenin to Gorbachev*, 1990; John Costello and Oleg Tsarev, *Deadly Illusions*, New York, 1993; W.G. Krivitzky, *I was Stalin's*

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⁷See her memoirs, *Blaues Blut und Rote Fahnen: Ein Leben unter vielen Namen*, Wien-München-Zürich, 1969.

⁸The tragic end of Nebenführ and his family is chronicled by Hans Schafranek, "Angehörigen von Volksfeinden können wir nicht helfen". Das Schicksal der Familie Nebenführ", in H. Schafranek (ed.), *Die Betrogenen: Österreicher als Opfer stalinistischer Terrors der Sowjetunion*, Wien, 1991, pp. 75-100.

⁹Radomir V. Luza, *The Resistance in Austria, 1938-1945*, Minncapolis, 1984, p. 102.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, pp. 151-53.

¹¹Marie Tidl, *Gregor Kersche (1892-19.): Ein Leben - nach Dokumenten und Erzählungen*, Wien/Millstatt, 1991, p. 60.

¹²PRO HS4/334, Agreed Record of Discussions between British and Soviet Representatives on the Question of Subversive Activities against Germany and her Allies, Copy No. 6. The files pertaining to SOE-NKVD collaboration were released by the Foreign Office to the Public Record Office, London, in June 1995. Prior to declassification of the papers, Mr Gervase Cowell, SOE Adviser in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, was unstinting in answering the author's many questions about Austrian anti-fascists trained by SOE in Britain.

¹³PRO HS4/334, Circular from Gubbins, 22 August 1944.

¹⁴At a time, ironically, when the SOE was prepared to handle 'more pickaxe missions than ever before': see *ibid.*, HS4/331, DP/W.20 to A.D., 15 May 1944.

¹⁵On the credit side, SOE listed the following examples of NKVD co-operation: exchange of currencies, espionage devices, German uniforms, German documents, defence plans (Le Havre); information on Bulgaria and shipping dates; visits of SOE officers to Russian training schools. (*Ibid.*, HS4/328, Balance Sheet, n.d.) More significant were the refusals on the debit side: to co-operate in Yugoslavia, Turkey and Rumania; to transfer arms to resistance groups in Poland and Czechoslovakia; to give information on NKVD activities in Germany or to employ Soviet POWs in German camps in joint operations. (*Ibid.*, HS4/334, Schedule 'A', n.d., autumn 1944.)

¹⁶See the short references in Nigel West, *Secret War: The Story of SOE, Britain's Wartime Sabotage Organisation*, 1992, pp. 91-92; M.R.D. Foot, *SOE: An Outline History of the Special Operations Executive 1940-46*, 1984, pp. 209-10; F.H. Hinsley, *British Intelligence in the Second World War*, vol. 2, 1981, p. 66; Gordievsky and Andrew, *KGB*, pp. 410-12; Peter Wilkinson and Joan Bright Astley, *Gubbins and SOE*, 1993, pp. 94-95.

¹⁷For the most comprehensive accounts of Russian dissatisfaction, see PRO HS4/328, Minutes of Meetings, 9 and 19 February 1943.

¹⁸See the correspondence in PRO HS4/329, 331 and 347; Wilkinson and Bright Astley, *Gubbins*, pp. 99-102.

¹⁹Wilkinson and Bright Astley, *Gubbins*, pp. 98-99, 123-27.

²⁰According to Wilkinson and Bright Astley, *Gubbins*, p. 89, Major General Sir Colin Gubbins, Chief (CD) of SOE, 1943-46, preferred 'straight' guerrilla warfare to the 'subversion and terrorism flavoured by some of the most fanatical members of SOE'. He may have been influenced by army service in Ireland, 1919-22, where he witnessed IRA use of both methods: *ibid.*, pp. 26f.

²¹The point was made in passing in a memorandum to Gubbins in 1943: 'SOE as such has so far received nothing from the NKVD in return from the assistance we have provided and there would be no advantage, from the purely SOE point of view, in intensifying that assistance. It is true that SOE gets very little out of assisting the Poles or the Czechs, but we do at least have some idea what the Poles and Czechs are doing, whereas we have no idea of what the NKVD agents are doing.' PRO HS4/337, A.D.1 to C.D., 23 May 1943.

²²PRO HS4/347, D/P to SAM, private cypher, 17 April 1943.

²³As note 12.

²⁴See Pavel and Anatoli Sudoplatov (with Jerrold L. and Leona P. Schechter), *The Memoirs of an Unwanted Witness - A Soviet Spymaster*, 1994, pp. 21, 32, 126-27.

²⁵According to Gordievsky and Andrew, *KGB*, p. 411, Chichayev (Vadim) also handled the Cambridge spy ring. After 1943, Konstantin Kukin (John), a higher ranking NKVD officer on the diplomatic staff in London, became 'resident' and enabled Chichayev to concentrate on liaison with SOE and governments-in-exile in Britain. See also, Genrikh Borovik, *The Philby Files: The Secret Life of a Master Spy - KGB Archives Revealed* (edited and with an introduction by Philip Knightley), 1995.

²⁶Such was the essence of a comforting letter from Guinness to Hugh Dalton, Minister for Economic Warfare, 24 October 1941, PRO HS4/355.

²⁷As the files of British Army officers are available to scholars only up to 1913, relatively little is known about the background of SOE staff. In internal SOE correspondence, symbols were used. The acronyms of some staff members have been deciphered by West, *Secret War*, pp. 327-46, while others are to be found in a PRO press-release of 9 June 1995 concerning the transfer of files (note 12 above). An army officer's career can sometimes be reconstructed by using the Army Lists in the PRO.

²⁸The fates of some Pickaxe agents are described, albeit with grave inaccuracies, in Gunther Nollau and Ludwig Zindel, *Gestapo ruft Moskau: Sowjetische Fallschirmagenten im 2. Weltkrieg*, München, 1979.

²⁹*Lebensstationen* can be translated as life phases, though *station* also refers in other contexts to a stopping place and a stage on a journey.

³⁰See the analysis of this key event in modern history in Winfried Garscha and Barry McLoughlin, *Wien 1927: Menetekel für die Republik*, Wien-Berlin, 1987.

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³²Rossilskii Tsentr Khraneniya i Isytcheniya Dokumentov Noveishei Istorii (Russian Centre for the Conservation and Study of Documents of Modern History, Moscow - hereafter RTsK), 495/197/3059, pp. 32-35, Cadre File (CF) Wilhelm Wagner, Autobiography, n.d. [1934]. The numbers cited refer in sequence to fund, registry volume, document, and page(s), in accordance with standard Russian archival practice. A somewhat exaggerated version of the fighting in Florisdorf was written by Heinz Roscher, the area Schutzbund commander: see RTsK 495/187/658, not paginated, Report, 12 May 1934. In a published version of the account, marred by communist polemics, Roscher also mentioned Wagner's contribution: see Heinz Roscher, *Die Februarkämpfe in Florisdorf*, Basel, 1934.

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³⁴The exile of the Austrian Left in Czechoslovakia is exhaustively treated in Manfred Marchalek (ed.), *Untergrund und Exil: Österreichs Sozialisten zwischen 1934 und 1945*, Wien, 1990.

³⁵See the case studies in the article by Barry McLoughlin and Hans Schafranek, 'Die Kaderpolitik der KPÖ-Führung in Moskau 1934 bis 1940', in Hermann Weber and Dietrich Staritz (eds.), *Kommunisten verfolgen Kommunisten: Stalinistischer Terror und 'Säuberungen' in den kommunistischen Parteien Europas seit den dreissigen Jahren*, Berlin, 1993, pp. 125-47.

³⁶Yet over sixty *Schutzbündler* resident in the Soviet Union were rejected by Stalin's secret police for service in Spain. See the list in RTsK 495, 80/558, pp. 100-01, 23 March 1937.

³⁷See Hans Landauer, 'Wien-Moskau-Madrid: Die Odysee österreichischer Schutz-

bündler 1934-45', in *Jahrbuch 1990 des Dokumentationsarchiv des österreichischen Widerstandes*, Wien, 1990, pp. 76-88.

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³⁹RTsK 495/187/2627, CF Albin Mayr, Notes from Gustav, 21 November 1939, 15 March 1940.

⁴⁰RTsK 495/187/1876, CF Anton Barak, Lebenslauf, 2 September 1940.

⁴¹RTsK 495/187/3020, p. 30, CF Hilde Wagner.

⁴²Ibid., p. 41. In the questionnaire for new students at the ILS Hilde Wagner had left the following query blank (original in German): '22) Has one of your relations ever served in the secret police, the normal police force or the criminal police? If so, in what position?'

⁴³Ibid., Report from Keller, 4 April 1937.

⁴⁴Ibid., Report from Kopleng and Fürnberg, 26 December 1943.

⁴⁵Interview with Willi Wagner, 18 August 1993.

⁴⁶Interview with Albin Mayr, 20 June 1990.

⁴⁷RTsK 495/80/558, List of KPO members in Moscow, n.d. [1940].

⁴⁸Ibid., CF Anton Barak, Autobiography, 2 September 1940.

⁴⁹Archive of the Ministry of Security of the Russian Federation, Moscow (AMBRF), File N-17522, Interrogation Protocol [IP] Albin Mayr, 19 November 1943.

⁵⁰Ibid., IP Anton Barak, 27 November 1943.

⁵¹Ibid., IP Hilde Wagner, 24 November 1943.

⁵²Ibid., IP Albin Mayr, 16 November 1943.

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⁵⁴PRO HS4/242, 'Security Arrangements for 5 Members Second Pickaxe Party on Journey from Kuibyshev to Archangel, Nov. 11/15th. 1941', from DP/102, Kuibyshev, 25.2.1942.

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⁵⁶PRO HS4/347, Medical Officer's Report, 8 January 1942.

⁵⁷Ibid., Parachute Training Report, 7 January 1942.

⁵⁸Ibid., Personalalia Karl Schwarz.

⁵⁹Ibid., Parachute Training Report, 30 January 1942.

⁶⁰Ibid., D/P.1. to MO, 4 November 1941.

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⁶²Interview with Willi Wagner, 14 November 1995.

⁶³PRO HS4/347, D/P.1. to M/OB, 26 January 1941; M/OB to D/P.1., 30 January 1942; Group Captain C. Grierson to A.I.2(C), 8 December 1942.

⁶⁴Ibid., Parachute Training Report, 29 August 1942.

⁶⁵Ibid., Report by A.L. McLaughlin, Coffee, 4 February 1943.

⁶⁶Wilkinson and Bright Astley, *Gubbins*, p. 115.

⁶⁷PRO HS4/347, A.D.4 to A.D., 12 December 1941; D/P.2 to A/D., 19 December 1941.

⁶⁸Ibid., D/P.2 to AD/O, 31 January 1942; D/P.1. to AD/O, 23 February 1942.

⁶⁹According to Mayr, the survivors were picked up by the liner *Queen Mary* and brought to Scotland via Iceland. Interview with Albin Mayr, 20 June 1990.

⁷⁰PRO HS4/347, Report from D.P.5 (n.d.).

⁷¹Ibid., D.P.4 to D/HV, 30 April 1943.

⁷²As note 65.

⁷³PRO HS4/347, Report on Georg Martens, n.d [April 1943].

⁷⁴Interviews with Willi Wagner, 25 August 1993 and 14 November 1995; AMBRF, File N-17522, IPs, 24 November 1943 (Hilde Wagner), 23 March 1944 (Anton Barak).

⁷⁵As note 65.

⁷⁶PRO HS4/347, JSAP to Loxley (Foreign Office), 3 May 1943; AMBRF, File N-17522, IP Albin Mayr, 13 December 1943.

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⁷⁸Kim Philby, *My Secret War*, 1968 edn., p. 42.

⁷⁹PRO HS4/344, Note on Koltsov (Juri Kruus), n.d.

⁸⁰PRO HS4/345, Report from Kratzoff on Albrecht Klein, n.d.

⁸¹See the examples of the Eißler/Fellendorf/Panndorf/Boerner and Trapp/Gersmann/Freund teams of Russian agents sent to East Prussia in 1942 recounted in Nollau and Zindel, *Gestapo ruft Moskau*, pp. 9-62.

⁸²Interview with Albin Mayr, 20 June 1990.

⁸³In August 1942 the Reichssicherheitshauptamt (RHSa) praised the quality of documents found hitherto on agents captured by the Gestapo or killed on landing. Bundesarchiv Koblenz, R 58/2.314, Schnellbrief Müller, 26 August 1942.

⁸⁴PRO HS4/342, D/T to D/P.2, 10 March 1942.

⁸⁵Ibid., Minute Sheet, 9 March 1942.

⁸⁶Ibid., ADDP/541, 3 April 1942; DPI/RU/842, 3 April 1942.

⁸⁷Michael Heim and Gregor Ruf, "Anthropoid" – oder der Tod der Agenten in den Blabergen', in *Tegernseer Tal*, nr. 102, 1989, pp. 18-23.

⁸⁸Nollau and Zindle, *Gestapo ruft Moskau*, pp. 77f; Stiftung Archiv der Parteien und Massenorganisation der DDR im Bundesarchiv (SAPMO), Berlin, NL 36/529, pp. 51-53, Handschriftliche Notizen von Wilhelm Pieck, September 1943.

⁸⁹Information from Hans Landauer, born 1921, the youngest Austrian volunteer in the forces of Republican Spain.

⁹⁰Interview with Heribert Hütter, 2 February 1983.

⁹¹SAPMO, Aussagen von Erna Eißler von der Gestapo im Hamburger Fallschirmagenten-Prozess, Verhör 23 November 1942.

⁹²SAPMO, Aussagen von Wilhelm Fellendorf im Hamburger Fallschirmagenten-Prozess, Verhör 23 November 1942.

⁹³Such was the fate of Lindwurm team, sent by the Comintern and dropped from a Russian bomber over Poland in 1943. The entire group was captured by the Vienna Gestapo in 1944 and re-arrested by SMERSH after the liberation of the city. See Leopold Spira and Hilde Mráz (eds.), *Österreichische Stalin-Opfer*, Wien, 1990, pp. 79-83.