Death to Spies!

Austrian Informants for Western Intelligence Services and Soviet Capital Punishment during the Occupation of Austria

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I implore you—I who stand before you orphaned, stateless, without helpers or friends—only spare my wretched life—only spare me this grisly death. I beseech this High Court to have mercy on me, to recognize that my years, few as they are, have been spent in a desperate struggle for simple existence. And, should she but grant me this mercy and spare my life, I give the Russian State my sacred oath that I will pour out all my skills, all my work, all my diligence, every particle of my goodwill for her and her alone. I will prove to you all in the Soviet Union that a young Viennese maiden can atone for her terrible error with the gift of her whole life, poured out for you in labor and with a good heart. . . . I beg the members of the court to open their hearts to these words of mine and through their great mercy to spare me the grisly penalty of death.  

This desperate plea for mercy was sent to the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Soviet by an Austrian, Hermine Rotter, in July 1951. A few days earlier, the 24-year-old accountant had been condemned to death in the picturesque town of Baden near Vienna by the Military Tribunal of the Central Group of Military Forces (Tsentral’naya gruppa voisk or TsGV) for “anti-Soviet espionage.” Her appeal for mercy went unheard. Rotter was sent to Moscow in a secret transport and shot in the local Butyrka Prison on 9 October 1951. Her executioner, Vasilii M. Blokhin, prepared for his task by dressing up as a butcher in a brown-tipped cap, a long leather apron, and gloves that reached past the elbows. Rotter’s corpse was burnt during the night in the Moscow


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crematorium of the former Donskoe Monastery, and her ashes were interred in a mass grave only a few paces away. Her relatives were not notified of her death until the late 1950s and then only with a fabricated “natural” cause of death. (The Soviet Union’s falsely anodyne death notifications were reminiscent of the Nazi practice of appending invented natural causes to the notifications given to the families of victims of Hitler’s T4 program—“euthanasia.”) The true circumstances of Rotter’s death would not come to light for another five decades.

Rotter was one of at least 89 people sentenced to death by the Soviet Military Tribunal of the Army Unit No. 28990 in Baden and executed in Moscow from 1950 until Iosif Stalin’s death in March 1953. Those put to death were primarily Austrians (at least 70), but also included several Germans, “stateless people,” and Soviet citizens. Furthermore, at least nine Austrians were executed after being convicted in Moscow, five were executed after being convicted by Soviet Military Tribunal No. 48240 in East Germany, and one German citizen living in Lower Austria was sentenced to death by Military Tribunal No. 26308. Not until 2009 did the Russian authorities disclose what had happened to these 104 people, whose remains are buried in Moscow’s Donskoe Cemetery.

The total number of Soviet death sentences in Austria was, however, considerably higher. From 1945 to 1947 at least 72 more Austrians were sentenced to death by Soviet tribunals and executed. Where they are buried is unknown. The way a verdict was reached and carried out reflects the terror intrinsic to the Stalinist system. The political agenda behind these executions,


the way in which they were carried out, and the inadequate procedures for the taking of evidence all ensured that the trials bore no resemblance to Western notions of due process.

Using newly released sources from Russian archives, this article discusses the status of the Soviet-controlled zone of Austria during the postwar occupation as a principal spying ground in Central Europe. The Western occupation powers hired many Austrians to gather information about the deployments of the Soviet Army and the Soviet authorities’ exploitation of the “German assets” they had seized in their zone of occupation in 1946. The Austrians’ principal incentive to spy was financial; they were well paid by their Western handlers. Austrian women got involved in love affairs with Soviet soldiers and officers and then served as double agents for the West until the Soviet intelligence services caught up with them. Soviet counterintelligence apprehended many of these Western informants. From 1947 onward, some 500 Austrians disappeared within Stalin’s penal system after being detained as spies. First incarcerated and brutally interrogated by their jailers at the Soviet headquarters in Baden on the outskirts of Vienna, they were then sent to Moscow jails, where many were executed as “spies.” In retrospect the mismatch between the actions of these Austrian “spies” and the penalties meted out to them is striking. The story of how the Soviet penal system was exported to occupied areas during the Cold War in intelligence games against the West has been almost totally overlooked in Cold War scholarship. This essay aims to put the record straight.

“Traitors to the Fatherland, Spies, Subversives, Saboteurs”: The Reintroduction of Capital Punishment in 1950

With the liberation and occupation of Austria in 1945, the Soviet Union exported its judicial policies to the eastern part of the country for some ten


7. In this respect, eastern Austria was second only to Berlin. See David E. Murphy, Sergei A. Kondrashev, and George Bailey, Battleground Berlin: CIA vs. KGB in the Cold War (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997).

8. A total of more than 2,200 Austrians were whisked away by the Soviet state security organs during this period. Most were kidnapped in broad daylight or from their apartments. Around 1,000 were given prison sentences—mostly long ones, which they served in the camps or prisons of the USSR’s notorious Gulag system. This corresponds to around 0.1 per cent of the population living in the Soviet Occupation Zone in 1946. The last of these so-called civil convicts returned home in December 1956, a year-and-a-half after the completion of the Austrian State Treaty. See Harald Knoll and Barbara Stelzl-Marx, “Sowjetische Strafjustiz in Österreich: Verhaftungen und Verurteilungen 1945–
years. In Austria, as in Germany, Soviet judges began immediately after the entry of the Red Army to apply Soviet legal ideas, concepts of social order, and judicial practices. Soviet statutory norms steeped in a highly ideological worldview came into operation. “Counterrevolutionary” threats and “vermin” of all types had to be combated in the same way that the supposedly omnipresent internal and external opponents were dealt with within the Soviet Union itself.9

In this context, the history of the death penalty in the Soviet Union against both Austrians and Germans divides into two phases. The first begins with the invasion of the Red Army in the spring of 1945 and ends with the decree of the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Soviet of 26 May 1947 regarding the abolition of capital punishment.10 In the subsequent three years, “25 years’ imprisonment” was regarded as the maximum penalty. This break symbolized Moscow’s new internal and external self-confidence and provided excellent propaganda.11 Were those sentenced during this interval “lucky” to face a mere 25 years in a labor camp? The sentence was still harsh, but before May 1947 and—in the case of political offenses such as “espionage”—after January 1950 a conviction could have meant death by shooting.

On 12 January 1950 the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Soviet adopted resolution no. 68/1 “On the Application of the Death Penalty against Traitors to the Fatherland, Spies, Subversives and Saboteurs.” This measure was initiated not by the court or by penal authorities but by Communist Party (VKP(b)) Secretary Georgii M. Malenkov and Chairman of the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Soviet Nikolai M. Shvernik. The VKP(b) Politburo ap-
proved the measure on 9 January 1950. The motto “Death to Spies,” which in compressed form (SMERSH) became the designation of Soviet military counterintelligence during World War II, was both topical and apposite.

Initially, the activity of the tribunals was characterized by a lack of clarity. The question was posed, for example, whether capital punishment should be applied even when the alleged deed had been committed prior to the issuing of the decree on 13 January 1950. Behind the scenes, discussion centered on which articles of the Criminal Code of the Russian Soviet Federation of Socialist Republics (RSFSR) to invoke to impose the death penalty. Among these were Articles 58-1 (“treason against the fatherland”), 58-6 (“espionage”), and 58-9 (“sabotage”). Ukaz (Decree) No. 43, issued on 19 April 1943 to specify sentences for “war crimes,” had called for 25 years’ imprisonment. For extant cases, the decree of 12 January 1950 was to be applied only if the accused had not yet been convicted. This meant that prison sentences already handed down could not be converted to death sentences. Trials were to be carried out by military tribunals, and death sentences could be handed down only by district tribunals and courts-martial of the Soviet Army and Navy, not by lower courts.

On 12 April 1950 the VKP(b) Politburo confirmed the ruling of the Plenum of the Supreme Court, which had stipulated that the death penalty could be passed in accordance with articles 58-2 (“armed revolt”), 58-7 (“subversion”), and 58-8 (“terrorism”). Later that year, the executions in Moscow began again. At least 1,015 people were executed on the basis of death sentences passed in Germany and Austria alone. The Moscow-based human rights organization Memorial estimates the total number of victims secretly

buried in the Donskoe Cemetery at around 10,000. Short biographies of 5,065 of the people executed and buried there in the two decades from 1934 to 1955 have already been published.  

Military Tribunals of the Central Group of Military Forces: The Executioners

For both Austria and Germany a military tribunal of the Red Army’s TsGV was set up in June 1945 in Baden, 26 kilometers from Vienna. The tribunal operated under the designation “Military Tribunal of Army Unit No. 28990” or “Voennyi tribunal Voennoi chasti 28990” (VT V. ch. 28990). The TsGV established its headquarters (Army Unit No. 32750) in a former high school building in the center of Baden, with the counterintelligence directorate located in several neighboring villas.

From the reintroduction of the death penalty in 1950 until the time immediately after Stalin’s death in March 1953, the military tribunal sentenced to death at least 90 people, most of them citizens of Austria. In at least five other cases the death sentence was passed but commuted to a prison sentence following appeal proceedings. Additionally, five Austrian citizens were shot in Moscow following conviction in the German Democratic Republic (GDR). Furthermore, nine Austrians were brought before the military tribunal of the Moscow Military District before also being executed in Butyrka Prison.

The youngest of those convicted, Hartmut Fechner (1930–1951), had not yet turned 21 at the time of his execution. The oldest, Gustav Grimm (1887–1953), was 65. In his appeal for clemency, Grimm described himself as an “old man broken in body and soul.”
Among those executed were ten women, all of whom had been sentenced to death for espionage. Half had come under suspicion because of their connections to Soviet occupation soldiers. For them, “hot love in the Cold War” proved fatal.

The first shootings of those condemned by Military Tribunal No. 28990 took place on 28 August 1950, when Lyudmila Zwinger and Egon Franz, condemned on 21 and 31 January 1950 respectively, were shot in Moscow’s Butyrka Prison and buried in the Donskoe Cemetery. The Military Tribunal of the TsGV in Austria was unusually quick in implementing the decree of 12 January 1950. By contrast, the Military Tribunal of the Soviet Occupation Troops in Germany (Military Tribunal V. ch. 48240) did not condemn its first four Germans to death until May 1950.24

On 2 February 1953, some three years after the reintroduction of the death penalty, the last two Austrians, Walter Bittner and Franz Drechsler, were executed. With Stalin’s death the situation changed abruptly. The Military Council of the Supreme Court followed the general toning down of the policy of repression and commuted death sentences passed but not yet carried out to prison sentences, generally of 25 years.25

Death Sentences against Foreign Nationals in Austria

Military Tribunal No. 28990 was responsible for death sentences not only against Austrians but also against foreign nationals who had been arrested on Austrian territory.26 In the period 1950–1953, these included at least one German, a 25-year-old named Wilhelm Aichele from Oberboihingen/Württemberg. On 25 December 1951 he was sentenced to death in Baden on a charge of espionage for the U.S. Counter Intelligence Corps (CIC). He had been arrested shortly before in Melk during a return journey from Vienna. The military tribunal accused Aichele of having passed on information regarding patrols on the Austria-Hungary border and the location of Soviet garrisons in St. Pölten and Amstetten. He was shot in Moscow on 28 March 1952.27

In addition, Military Tribunal No. 28990 sentenced to death several

Soviet émigrés and Soviet soldiers stationed in Austria. At least nine such cases occurred during the period 1951–1953, including six Soviet soldiers. The charges related both to offenses committed during the occupation period (such as “treason against the fatherland” and “terrorism”) and to crimes committed during the Second World War. Thanks to a pardon conferred by the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Soviet, an original death sentence was commuted to a prison sentence in two of these cases.

Reasons for Convictions

Most of the death sentences meted out by the Soviet tribunals against Austrians involved Article 58-6 (“espionage”) of the RSFSR Criminal Code. Similarly, this article predominated in the conviction of Germans, being cited in almost 90 per cent of the cases. By contrast, Articles 58-2 (“armed revolt”), 58-8 (“terrorism”), 58-10 (“anti-Soviet propaganda”), 58-11 (“counterrevolutionary organization”), and 58-14 (“sabotage”) and “Ukaz No. 43” (“war crimes”) did not serve as the basis for a single conviction.

“Anti-Soviet Espionage”

The quadripartite division of Vienna, and of Austria as a whole, into zones of occupation made the country an ideal venue for espionage in the decade from 1945 until the occupation ended in 1955. Austria emerged as an operational territory and front line in the game of espionage played out against the backdrop of the Cold War, pitting the intelligence agencies of the two superpowers and their allies against those of the other side. Austria was less the aim than the setting for the two blocs’ military intelligence operations. The Western intelligence services increasingly shifted their focus from the security-political

field and denazification at the end of the 1940s to the Soviet occupation forces and the combat strength of the Soviet and East European militaries.32

Carrying through these challenging tasks was made much harder from the end of 1945 by a manpower shortage and a lack of language skills among key personnel.33 As a result, the intelligence services increasingly relied on natives, who were much better versed in the field of operations, though they did not always prove trustworthy.34 The situation was no different for the Soviet Union. According to a former officer of the Soviet Ministry for State Security (MGB), Petr Deriabin, who operated in Vienna from September 1953 and defected to the Americans in 1954, the MGB foreign intelligence service’s operations in Austria were based at the Soviet embassy, which was in contact with approximately 40 Austrian and Soviet informants. Until the early 1960s, more than 4,000 “collaborators” in Austria were at the disposal of Soviet agencies.35

U.S. diplomat Coburn Kidd estimated in October 1950 that one-quarter of the population of Salzburg was cooperating with at least one of the many


intelligence services operating in Austria. According to Kidd, payments to Austrians for espionage activity represented “the main invisible export from Austria, which saves the country’s otherwise adverse, unfavorable balance of payments.”36 In the difficult economic environment in Austria in the immediate postwar period, employment as an informant constituted an important source of income that could mean the difference between starvation and having a reasonably decent life. At the end of the 1940s in particular, when the black market was no longer flourishing in centers like Vienna and Berlin, “intelligence was certainly the major industry” in the absence of other gainful occupations.37

Most of the Austrians sentenced to death by the Soviet military tribunals cited their economic distress, not realizing that the Soviet authorities regarded a flow of money from Western intelligence services as additional proof of guilt. However, only “anti-Soviet” espionage was so perilous that it could in the worst case be punished with death.

By August 1948, Soviet kidnappings in Austria had reached alarming proportions. At least 90 people had by this time been sentenced to long prison sentences for espionage.38 Many escaped the death penalty only because it was in abeyance. The CIC identified several kidnapping programs and concluded in a study analyzing the pattern that

Most of the abductions involved persons suspected of espionage or of associations with the United States or other Western intelligence activities. Such kidnappings were the result of Soviet counter intelligence activity, primarily out of considerations of military security. Former German intelligence personnel were added to Western agents on the Soviet wanted lists. . . . A special objective of the kidnappings was to destroy networks of Austrian informants employed by CIC. The Russians were relentless in the abduction of their own informants who were believed to have doubled as agents for the West.39

The Soviet authorities’ response was especially severe when the alleged espionage activities related to the stationing and transfer of Soviet occupation troops in eastern Austria, the activity of headquarters or censorship posts, the patrol of borders and zone checkpoints, the Communist Party of Austria (KPÖ), the Directorate for Soviet Property in Austria (USIA), and the Soviet Petroleum Administration (SMV) in Austria.40 The death penalty was also

40. Siegfried Beer, “Target Central Europe: American Intelligence Efforts Regarding Nazi and Early
leveled against former prisoners of war who had provided information on the situation in the USSR. Even rummaging through rubbish bins near Soviet troop locations was deemed to be espionage. Regardless of the actual value of the information provided, the “spies” paid for it with their lives.

The information passed on to Western intelligence services largely related to areas that were commonly accessible. From today’s perspective, they constituted neither military nor state secrets. Even during the occupation period, many of the so-called agents were not aware of the potential consequences of their activities. For example, Isabella Lederer, who was condemned to death, made this declaration: “I do not plead guilty to having conducted this alleged espionage, inasmuch as the information that I obtained was already known in Graz.” Facing accusations of “espionage activity” in regard to a U.S. Information Agency shop in Baden, Michael Maczejka declared: “These questions and my answers seem to me to be completely harmless, considering that all these things were witnessed publicly and were generally known.” August Heinrich defended himself in a similar way: “I also did not think that I was committing any crime when I passed on the names of approximately twenty Communists from Baden, because with many of them it is a matter of official record.”

Nevertheless, during this tense early phase of the Cold War, Soviet officials viewed such activity as a capital offense. Indeed, Western intelligence agencies did attach extraordinary importance to all military and economic information from the Soviet occupation zone in Austria and from East Germany. Like pieces of a jigsaw, the individual bits of information could be put together to form a much larger picture. Seemingly trivial observations regarding the location of Soviet troops, military goods transports, vehicle license plates, or even members of the military could facilitate intelligence analysis in the West. The CIC was particularly interested in the Soviet spies active in


41. Such bins might include sensitive documents that had mistakenly been discarded. Moreover, empty envelopes from Soviet military personnel could indicate the names of occupation troops or numbers of troop units. Both Wilfried Hejl and Roman Ryzewski were accused of such “espionage activity.”


45. On East Germany, see, for example, Jörg Rudolph, Frank Drauschke, and Alexander Sachse,

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Austria, as well as Soviet deserters, refugees, and defectors from neighboring Communist states.\footnote{46}

U.S. intelligence officers, for their part, kept Soviet spies under systematic surveillance. A prominent example is the scientist Engelbert Broda, who carried out nuclear weapons espionage for the Soviet Union. Soviet intelligence materials reveal that Broda, a brother of Austrian Minister of Justice Christian Broda, transferred thousands of pages of highly classified documents from the British and U.S. nuclear research program to his Soviet handlers. In August 1943, Soviet foreign intelligence even described Broda as “at pres., the main source of info. on work being done on E. [“Enormous,” the code name for the Manhattan Project], both in England and in the USA.”\footnote{47} Broda was also in touch with Kim Philby of the “Cambridge Five” informants recruited at Cambridge University by Soviet intelligence officials.\footnote{48}

In 1948, Broda ended his exile in Britain and returned to Austria, where despite his first-class academic reputation he received only a minor teaching assignment at the Institute for Physics of the University of Vienna.\footnote{49} The British Security Service regarded him as suspicious but was unable to find solid enough evidence: “We feel sure that Broda was engaged in espionage during the war, although we have no proof of it.”\footnote{50} In 1950, the CIC recruited a student, Karl Engelmann to spy on Broda (who was Engelmann’s doctoral supervisor), to read his letters, to make note of every correspondent, and to observe his private and professional contacts. However, Engelmann fell victim to the Soviet state security organs before he could complete his assignment. He was arrested on 5 September 1951 at the demarcation line near Gaflenz, sentenced to death on 10 November 1952 by Military Tribunal No. 28990, and

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\item[50.] Haynes, Klehr, and Vassiliev, Spies, p. 68.
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shot in Moscow on 31 December 1952. Broda died a free man in Austria in 1983, and his espionage activities on behalf of Stalin were not conclusively demonstrated until the release of Alexander Vassiliev’s notebooks in 2009.

From the other side of the fence, Soviet intelligence agencies used all means at their disposal to collect information. In the spring of 1949, Soviet Minister for State Security Viktor Abakumov urged the Ministerial Council of the USSR to maintain censorship in Austria. He argued that his ministry (the MGB) had uncovered and exploited “an impressive number of materials on underground organizations active against the USSR, traitors to the fatherland and war criminals, on the activity of American and English secret service organs etc.”

On the ground, the Military Counterintelligence Directorate (UKR) of the MGB attached to the TsGV countered “hostile” espionage activity and was responsible for arrests and interrogations. In early 1950 the UKR chief, Mikhail I. Belkin, informed Abakumov about the activities of U.S. intelligence agencies in Austria. They were recruiting agents among the local population to smuggle “criminals” into the Western occupation zone or to organize “hostile activity” against Soviet troops. The MGB’s counterespionage organs had arrested some people who, on behalf of the United States, had taken “hostile elements” such as GDR refugees over the demarcation line. Abakumov claimed “that the American occupying power in Austria is systematically violating the agreements regarding the occupation regime.”

The individual organs of the Soviet occupation apparatus worked together closely in this area. In 1951, the VKP(b) Politburo called on the Soviet Section of the Allied Commission for Austria (SChSK) “to take all necessary measures to intensify the struggle against espionage and sabotage by the Austrian and foreign secret services and against other hostile elements in the Soviet petroleum extraction facilities and in the industrial territories of the


52. Haynes, Klehr, and Vassiliev, Spies, p. 68.


Soviet occupation zone in Austria." Soon afterward, the VKP(b) Foreign Policy Commission criticized the situation by stating that the “intelligence agencies of the Austrian and foreign espionage organs” were “active in the Soviet zone and in particular within Soviet enterprises.”

Western intelligence agencies were also active in recruiting “spies.” Countless appeals for clemency contain references to pressure and blackmail. August Heinrich described his first contact with a member of the CIC as follows:

At the end of January 1949 I was sitting drunk and alone in a Vienna tavern. An American I’d never seen before took up with me. After he had gotten me blind drunk, he exploited my condition and got it out of me that I worked as an officer of the criminal police in Baden. Using base and crude moral blackmail and threatening reprisals against my family, he forced me into the espionage activities I subsequently carried out.

A similar description was provided by Rudolf Lixl, who claimed to have been forced into the role of “double agent” for the Soviet MGB and the American CIC. He landed in a Soviet prison for the first time in April 1948. MGB officers pressured him to turn over information to Soviet counterespionage about his work for the CIC, warning him that he should never forget that his mother was living in the Soviet occupation zone. He reported his agreement with the MGB to the CIC, only to be detained by the latter: “When I was not released, I told them the truth on the 5th day. During the subsequent interrogation I was beaten badly, sustaining a nasty head wound and a perforated eardrum. I suggested to the Americans that I should work as a double agent.” Appealing for clemency, Lixl emphasized: “I did not do all this out of loyalty to the Americans, but out of fear that something would indeed happen to my mother in the event that I did not turn up at the arranged meeting place with the Soviet officers.”

If the agents fell into the clutches of Soviet counterintelligence, neither they nor their families could expect any U.S. help or financial assistance.

following the “disappearance” of Roman Ryzewski, his son received nothing more than a box of sweets. After that, all contact was broken off.\(^9\)

**The “Honey Trap”**

Love affairs between Austrian women and Soviet occupation troops proved to be particularly dangerous.\(^6\) The women were accused of using their personal contacts on behalf of Western intelligence agencies to obtain secret information or to induce Soviet military personnel to defect. As early as July 1945, Soviet counterintelligence officials criticized relationships between Soviet soldiers and foreign women as “politically momentous” and the men in question as “morally unstable.” The Soviet officers warned that the Austrian women would elicit military and state secrets from “enchanted” soldiers during “intimate relations.”\(^6^1\) Traditional Stalinist ways of thinking and concepts of the enemy prevailed here. After all, thousands of U.S., British, and French occupation soldiers married Austrian women and took their brides back to their home countries.\(^6^2\) Falling in love with a Soviet soldier or officer, however, might land the woman concerned in prison or in a mass grave.

Hermine Rotter failed to grasp this risk when she emphasized her relationship with Soviet employees of USIA as an extenuating circumstance in her appeal for clemency: She explained that a Soviet accountant in the mechanical engineering department at USIA fell in love, as he said, with me and so we became closer. I felt a lot of affection for this man and often talked with him, although his German was poor. Surely this proves that I was no enemy of the Russians; I’d hardly have done such a thing if I were. In December 1950, I took up a post with the USIA ORS [Department for Work Assignment] as an accountant and went on to enjoy

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\(^{59}\) Paul G. Roberts, information provided to Barbara Stelzl-Marx, Vienna, 24 April 2009.


good relations with the main accountant there, Kozlov, and ended up having an affair with this man.63

The Supreme Court was unconvinced by these arguments and confirmed her sentence.64

Western intelligence services did use such sources of information. For example, the Soviet military tribunal accused Rosalia Dederichs of recruiting Viktoria Lohmar, the girlfriend of a Soviet occupation employee, as a British agent.65 In her appeal for clemency, Dederichs described the event as follows: “In October 1949, he [Johann Birner] asked me whether I know a girl or a woman who was acquainted with Soviet officers or soldiers, and I brought him Viktoria Lohmar.”66 Birner had apparently been commissioned by the British intelligence service to recruit Austrian women in liaisons with Soviet military personnel. Military Tribunal No. 28990 thereupon sentenced Viktoria Lohmar on 12 January 1951 to twenty years’ imprisonment for “anti-Soviet” espionage.67

On 12 January 1951, Dederichs, together with Birner, Michael Maczejka, and Johanna Vozelka, was condemned to death in Baden for “espionage.” The Soviet authorities accused Vozelka of having systematically “exploited her acquaintance with soldiers of the Red Army and her knowledge of the Russian language.” These contacts, the authorities claimed, allowed the British Secret Intelligence Service to learn the training location of a tank division, biographical details of Soviet officers, and other matters.68

In a similar fashion, Hungarian-born Georg Berényi was commissioned by U.S. intelligence to persuade Soviet military personnel to desert to the American occupation zone in Austria. He reportedly recruited the two Austrian women Gerda Swirak and Albina Redman. The Soviet Military Tribunal accused the two women of trying, in vain, to entice Soviet officers to commit

63. Appeal for Clemency from Hermine Rotter, Ll. 94–95.
68. Response of the Supreme Court to the Appeals for Clemency from Johann Birner, Rosalia Dederichs, Michael Maczejka, and Johanna Vozelka, Ll. 136–137.
“treason against their homeland.” 69 Redman was nevertheless sentenced on 7 October 1950 to 25 years in the gulag for “anti-Soviet espionage.” 70

A relationship with a Soviet officer also sealed the fate of Ingeborg Louzek, who as a 19-year-old from Vienna, became romantically involved with Captain Venyamin Kolesnikov in Austria in mid-1946. 71 After being demobilized in 1947, Kolesnikov eluded repatriation to the Soviet Union and remained hidden in Louzek’s apartment, but in April 1947 he was arrested as a “traitor to the fatherland.” Nonetheless, two months later, Kolesnikov escaped with Louzek’s help to the American zone. Louzek soon followed him and was allegedly recruited by the CIC as an agent for “espionage against the Soviet occupation forces in Austria.” 72

Louzek traveled back to Vienna and allegedly recruited Edeltraude Kolaček-Grešková and another Austrian woman for the CIC and brought them to the American occupation zone. The Soviet authorities accused Louzek of then helping deserters from the Soviet Army to flee. 73 In March 1950 the military tribunal in Baden sentenced Kolaček-Grešková to death for “espionage.” Her appeal for clemency was dismissed by the Supreme Court, which further alleged that she had established contact with French intelligence as early as March 1947 and that in May 1948 she had recruited “the former Soviet Army serviceman and traitor to his homeland Kostikov [Kolesnikov] for the U.S. secret services.” The indictment did not mention that Kolaček-Grešková had supposedly been recruited by Louzek. On the contrary, when appealing for clemency, Kolaček-Grešková claimed to have ties to French and U.S. intelligence: “And once again, by an unfortunate coincidence I met the deserter Kostikov [Kolesnikov], who, as he told me, had been hiding himself already for a year and wanted to flee because an Austrian woman was pregnant with his child and he wanted to marry her. I brought him to the French and received money in return.” 74

71. According to another version, the name of the officer was “Kostikov.” See Response of the Supreme Court to the Appeals for Clemency from Aleksandr Achtyrskij, Alois Kolber, and Edeltraude Kolaček-Grešková, 19 April 1950, in GARF, F. 7532, Op. 66, D. 102, Ll. 45–48.
73. Ibid., Ll. 109–110.
Louzek was arrested on 12 August 1950 and on 21 October was condemned to death by Military Tribunal No. 28990 based on Articles 58-6 (“espionage”) and 17-58-1a (“aiding and abetting treason against the fatherland”). She was executed on 9 January 1951 in Moscow. Kolesnikov had already been sentenced to death in April 1950 by the Military Council of the USSR Supreme Court. His interrogation, like those of Aleksandr Achtyrskii and Kolaček-Grešková, had allegedly “convicted Louzek of the charges against her.” With the execution of Louzek and Kolesnikov, their two-and-a-half-year-old son became an orphan. Nearly sixty years later, in April 2009, the son contacted the Ludwig Boltzmann Institute for Research on War’s Consequences (BIK), where he learned for the first time not only about the execution of both parents but also his father’s name and some information about him.

“National Alliance of Russian Solidarists”: NTS

Contact with the National Alliance of Russian Solidarists (Narodno-trudovoi soyuž, or NTS, meaning literally “People’s Labor Union”) sealed the fate of many Austrians. This anti-Communist organization was established in the early 1930s by White Russian émigrés to resist the Stalinist dictatorship and continue the White Army’s military struggle against Soviet Communism through ideological means. The NTS distributed anti-Soviet leaflets in Russian in the Soviet occupation zones of Germany and Austria, as well as materials aimed at persuading army personnel to desert. After 1945, the NTS received U.S. financial assistance and conveyed information about the Soviet Union to the CIC.

The verdict against Isabella Lederer underscores Moscow’s view of the NTS as a “terrorist and anti-Soviet organization.” NTS agents had allegedly given Lederer many tasks:

- To detect the location of Soviet formations and their supply centers; to compile a diagram of the locations of the formations and the organizational designations as well as the most suitable place for the dissemination of writings in their vicinity; to induce Soviet military personnel to cross the demarcation line; and to recruit women who are at least 25 years old and men who are at least 35 years old to disseminate writings for the NTS.

75. Response of the Supreme Court to the Appeal for Clemency from Ingeborg Louzek, Ll. 108, 110.
77. Response of the Supreme Court to the Appeals for Clemency from Isabella Lederer and Rolf Ravenegg, 23 August 1952, in GARF, F. 7523, Op. 76, D. 108, Ll. 141–142. On Isabella Lederer and
Lederer was arrested on 1 May 1952 in a Vienna hotel, together with her 17-year-old son, Horst, and his schoolmate Norbert Kern. That same day, the Soviet authorities arrested Rolf Ravenegg, an NTS go-between and associate of Lederer’s brother, Richard Ernst. On 18 July 1952, Military Tribunal No. 28990 sentenced Lederer and Ravenegg to death on the basis of Articles 58-2 (“armed revolt” or “infiltration of Soviet territory”), 58-6 (“espionage”), 58-8 (“terror”), 58-10 (“anti-Soviet propaganda”), and 58-11 (“membership of a counterrevolutionary organization”). Kern acted during closed proceedings as a witness and was released without punishment. Horst Lederer, who had helped his mother to distribute leaflets only once, was sentenced to 25 years in the Gulag.

“War Crimes”

After January 1950 four Austrian civilians were executed for war crimes or crimes against humanity. Soviet courts prosecuted “German-fascist evildoers guilty of murdering and maltreating the Soviet civilian population and captured Red Army soldiers” on the basis of Ukaz 43 of 19 April 1943. Although war crimes against non-Soviet persons did not fall within the Soviet courts’ jurisdiction, roughly 90 Austrian civilians were arraigned before Soviet criminal judges during the decade of occupation for crimes against Soviet civilian workers and prisoners of war and almost 110 for war crimes in the USSR. Among the latter were 50 former policemen who had maltreated and murdered Jews in Galicia. The usual penalty was 25 years of hard labor.

Two former Austrian policemen, Josef Dunkl and Erwin Linauer, who initially were held in Austrian custody, were condemned to death for actions...
in Galicia.83 They had been transferred to Soviet custody in October 1950 together with five other former policemen. The Baden Military Tribunal accused Dunkl of having taken part “actively in crimes” against Soviet citizens, in particular the murder of Jews, as a policeman in Ivano-Frankivs’k (Stanislaviv). He was said to have been involved at the end of 1942 in the transportation from the ghetto to the Ivano-Frankivs’k railway station of about 2,000 Soviet Jews, who were taken from there to an extermination camp. During the march from the ghetto, shootings took place. The relevant witness testimony had been recorded by the Austrian police in 1947 and 1948 and presumably passed on to the Soviet authorities. New interviews of the witnesses were infeasible because they were living in the western occupation zones.84

On 28 January 1952, Military Tribunal No. 28990 condemned Dunkl and Linauer to death in accordance with Ukaz 43 and Articles 54-2 (“armed infiltration of the USSR”) and 54-11 (“counterrevolutionary activity”) of the Ukrainian SSR.85 The reason for invoking the criminal code of Ukraine—and not, as was otherwise customary, of Russia—may well have been that the crime scene was Galicia, within Ukrainian territory. The execution of Dunkl and Linauer took place on 28 May 1952. In the 1990s the Main Office of the Military Public Prosecutor of the Russian Federation rejected any rehabilitation of either man.86

“Terror and Treason against the Fatherland”

Military Tribunal No. 28990 in Baden also meted out death sentences against several Soviet occupation soldiers and Soviet émigrés. Two of the military personnel were convicted of murder: Leonard Volkov, a decorated war veteran, allegedly murdered a Hungarian on 13 August 1950 during an argument, whereupon he fled his unit and hid in Austria. In Wiener Neustadt, he was ar-


85. Ibid., L. 172–173.

86. AdBIK, Database of Austrian Civil Convicts in the USSR.
rested by two Soviet soldiers, whom he proceeded to shoot with stolen pistols in a “terrorist act.” On the night of 15 August, he killed an Austrian chauffeur in his car. Around a week later, the deserter was arrested following “the usual search actions.” Volkov, who had been on duty with the occupation troops in Austria and Hungary since 1945, was also accused of “being systematically in contact with foreign women and of drinking.” On 30 October 1950, Military Tribunal No. 28990 sentenced him to death in accordance with, among others, Article 58-1 (“treason against the fatherland”), Article 58-8 (“terror”), and Article 2 of the Resolution of the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Soviet of 4 June 1947 “On Penal Responsibility for the Robbery of State and Public Property.” His appeal for clemency was rejected by the Supreme Court.87

Military Tribunal No. 28990 accused a former collective farmer, Ivan Sychev from the district of Kursk, of “treason against the fatherland” and “anti-Soviet propaganda.” According to the tribunal, he facilitated the seizure of Soviet partisans during the war and served in the Russian Liberation Army (ROA). After the war, he joined the army “by hushing up his service for the Germans and his real date of birth.” In December 1950, when he was serving with the Soviet occupation troops in Austria, he plotted, according to the Supreme Court, “with his partner, the Austrian Oberger Margarita,” and “aimed to flee to the American occupation zone in Austria. He could not carry out this plan because he was arrested on 13 December 1950.”88

During Sychev’s imprisonment in Baden, another charge—“anti-Soviet agitation and propaganda”—was added to the accusation of “treason against the fatherland.” In his cell, Sychev was said to have told “anti-Soviet” jokes, praised the “capitalist system,” and denounced the party leadership and the whole Soviet government. He testified during the inquiry: “When I found myself with cellmates in the cell, I regaled them with anecdotes of a counter-revolutionary nature. I denigrated the Soviet system and showered the Soviet party and government leadership with insults as I spoke. At the same time, I praised bourgeois structures, in particular life in Austria. I declared that my home was not the Soviet Union but Austria.” Witnesses verified the “anti-Soviet remarks” in court.89

On 9 May 1951, Military Tribunal No. 28990 sentenced him to death in accordance with Articles 58-1 (“treason against the fatherland”) and 58-10

(“anti-Soviet propaganda”) and also ordered that the valuables seized during his arrest be confiscated and that he be stripped of the medal he had been awarded for “30 Years of Service with the Soviet Army and Navy.” In Moscow, his appeal for clemency was rejected.90

**The Procedure from Arrest to Execution**

Even in Austria, Stalinist legal practice was characterized by almost complete secrecy: “One day, he went out early in the morning and never came back,” is how Anna-Maria Melichar recalls the day her brother, Emil Dallapozza, was arrested.91 Upon being arrested, detainees simply “disappeared.” Neither relatives nor the Austrian authorities received any information about their fate.92 The “kidnappings,” as the Socialist *Arbeiter-Zeitung* dubbed the arrests that generally took place in mysterious circumstances, were followed by months and years of waiting and oppressive uncertainty for the families of those who had vanished.93 Anna-Maria Melichar had to wait until 2007 to learn what happened to her brother. Despite the tragedy, she expressed relief: “One feels a kind of liberation when one knows what happened. It is good to be able to come to terms with it at last.”94

From the moment of arrest, the mills of the Soviet judicial apparatus and the bureaucracy began to grind—and they ground thoroughly. Although most of the prisoners remained in Austria until their conviction, they were trapped in a Soviet microcosm with its own rules, hermetically sealed off from the outside world. Protracted examinations and interrogations, secret debriefings of witnesses, and identity line-ups systematically demoralized the accused. The prevention of all contact with the outside world was deliberate. In most cases, a confession of “guilt” by the “criminal” was only a matter of time.

The criminal case records preserved in the former Soviet state security archive document the meticulously conducted proceedings down to the last detail.95 Hundreds of pages, mostly archived in one or two volumes, allow a

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90. Response of the Supreme Court to the Appeal for Clemency from Ivan Sychev, Ll. 75–78.
94. AdBIK, Anna-Maria Melichar, information provided to Barbara Stelzl-Marx, Vienna, 17 March 2008.
detailed look at the ordeal of those concerned. The uniformity of the proceedings indicates that the verdicts were preordained. For almost all of those condemned to death, appeals for clemency can be reconstructed from the records stored in the State Archive of the Russian Federation. All such cases were eventually handled by the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Soviet.

The procedure was similar in all cases: arrest in the Soviet occupation zone by Soviet state security forces or on their behalf, exhaustive compilation of personal details, body search, interrogations, identity line-ups with co-defendants, selection of potential witnesses or suspects, transfer of the case to the TsGV Military Tribunal, indictment, confinement in a holding facility, closed court proceedings in Baden, death sentence, appeal for clemency to the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet, submission of evidence by the state security organs, transfer of the appeal to the Military Council of the USSR Supreme Court, draft judgment rendered by the Supreme Court, decision by the Soviet Politburo, reaffirmation by the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet, execution by shooting in Moscow’s Butyrka Prison, immediate incineration in the crematorium of the Donskoe Cemetery, and burial of the ashes in a mass grave located there.

All the leading Communist Party and government authorities interacted...
in the passing of death sentences. Usually, two to six weeks elapsed from the
time the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet rejected an appeal for clemency and
the execution. Even before a final decision was made, the condemned prisoner
was brought to Butyrka Prison, a fortress-like barracks from the eighteenth
century that served from 1879 on as a holding facility for political prisoners.99
Convicted “spies” whose appeals for clemency were rejected were normally
transported in groups to the Soviet Union and executed within a month.
Usually, the group of condemned prisoners were shot to death simultaneously
or in rapid succession.100

The Soviet judiciary and state security organs informed neither relatives
nor the Austrian authorities about these executions. Such extreme secrecy was
inherent in the Soviet justice system. Since the mid-1930s the Soviet security
apparatus had systematically kept all information from the relatives of prison-
ers.101 Not until 1955, two years after Stalin’s death, did the Soviet Main Ad-
ministration of the Militia—Archive for Records of Civil Status start to pro-
vide “certificates of death” to foreign governments (the Austrian included) for
their citizens who had been executed by Soviet forces. These “sugar-coated”
notifications made no mention of execution: “military tuberculosis,” “cancer
of the bladder, septicemia,” “tuberculosis meningitis,” “peritonitis,” “ulcerous
mastoiditis with complications brought on by meningitis,” “endocarditis, se-
pticemia,” “abcess of the liver,” or occasionally “rupture of the aorta,” a cir-
cumscription of the cause of death that is as cynical as it is, strictly speaking,
correct. In the case of the Austrian victims, the stated date of death usually
was the actual date.102

Act of Grace by the USSR Supreme Soviet

The military tribunals attached little weight to the appeals for clemency and
rejected the vast majority of them. When rare exceptions occurred, the rea-

100. Lavinskaja, “Zum Tode verurteilt,” pp. 335–336. The appeals for clemency that were rejected on
any one day were all entered into a protocol of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR. For
example, Johann Birner, Rosalia Dederichs, Michael Maczejka, and Johanna Vocelka were convicted
together on 12 January 1951 by Military Tribunal No. 28990, the Supreme Court of the USSR re-
jected on 6 March their appeals for clemency from 17 and 19 January, and the Presidium of the Su-
preme Soviet of the USSR composed on 30 March the definitive decision regarding their execution.
All four were executed on 5 May 1951. See: Response of the Supreme Court to the Appeals for Clem-
ency from Johann Birner, Rosalia Dederichs, Michael Maczejka, and Johanna Vocelka, Ll. 134–138.
102. This is evidently in contrast to the victims from Germany and the Soviet Union, where Moscow
intentionally provided false dates of death. Only from 1963 did the Soviet authorities inform Soviet
citizens about the actual circumstances of the death of their relatives. With foreigners (including Aus-

sons were often murky. The pardon in the case of Hermine Valdevit illustrates this point. Her appeal for clemency from 18 January 1952 comprised the following sentence: “I, Valdevit, Hermine, accused, request that the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Soviet grant me a pardon.” The chairman of the Supreme Court of the USSR noted: “In her appeal for clemency, Valdevit begs for her life, although she makes reference neither to the crimes committed nor to any motives. I consider the verdict of the military tribunal to be correct.” The Presidium of the USSR Supreme Soviet overruled the Supreme Court’s recommendation and changed Valdevit’s verdict to twenty years in the Gulag on 26 April 1952. She returned to Austria in December 1956 and was rehabilitated in 2001.

In the phase that started in 1950, at least seven Austrians and two Soviet citizens sentenced to death by the Baden Military Tribunal escaped with their lives. The last two Austrians to be sentenced to death by Military Tribunal No. 28990 were indirectly helped by Stalin’s death and the resulting relaxation of the policy of repression: Pius Lintner and Walter Brunner had been sentenced to death on 20 May 1953 for espionage for the CIC, yet the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet pardoned them two months later. Ultimately, there had been “no necessity to apply the maximum sentence in his [Lintner’s] case.” The argument that “Lintner, on his own initiative, had ended relations with American intelligence at the end of 1950” was new. Before Stalin’s death in March 1953, such an argument would almost certainly not have led to commutation.

**Motives in the Looking Glass of Appeals for Clemency**

I beg you, the Supreme Council of the Soviet Union, and all your people for humble forgiveness in the name of my relatives, I beg for my young life, I want...
to atone for my grievous guilt through honest work in your country. Please be magnanimous and grant me my life, help me to lead my youthful, confused senses to the light, for the rest of my life I want to be your devoted servant. My spirit and my soul are not criminal in nature, I had never previously been convicted. Through work I want to atone for what I have done, if you grant me my life, the life to which every human being clings. As a ridiculous little agent, I could not imagine the consequences, I did not work out of political or any other kind of conviction; when I realized what terrible mistakes I had made it was already too late. But not too late to make up for these mistakes, provided that I am given the opportunity to do so. I beg you, the Supreme Council of the Soviet Union, your great nation, for mercy; for my life. With tears in my eyes, hoping and begging for your great mercy—Beck, Josef.\(^{109}\)

With these words, the 24-year-old from Vienna concluded his appeal for clemency to the USSR Supreme Soviet on 9 February 1951. Beck’s willingness to show regret and atonement stemmed from his awareness that his life was at stake. He knew that shows of contrition could play an important role in appeals. His emphasis on having become a “ridiculous little agent” for financial and not political reasons was intended as a mitigating circumstance. In no way, he stated, could he have measured the consequences of his actions—the debriefing of former prisoners of war in the Soviet Union. Like most of the condemned, he had probably underestimated the danger posed by contacts with foreign intelligence officials. Beck’s appeal for clemency was turned down, and he was executed on 5 May 1951.\(^{110}\)

In this context, one is confronted with the question of what circumstances and motives led to cooperation with Western intelligence or to “anti-Soviet” activity. One thing is clear from the available documents: In the case of convictions for espionage, there had generally been at least a certain flow of information to the West relating to the Soviet Union.\(^{111}\) The fact that sentences bore no relation to the damage caused and that the majority of those executed have been rehabilitated in recent years and cleared of all guilt points to the excesses of the Stalinist perception of legality.

The appeals for clemency by those condemned to death from 1950 on often allow a direct insight into their outlook. Only a few limited themselves to putting down in writing the mere request for mercy. Appeals that were kept short are similar in style and even choice of words, perhaps based on a tem-

110. Eremina, ed., Rasstrelye spiski, p. 43.
plate. By contrast, Ingeborg Louzek emphasized: “Excuse me for not writing everything exactly, for not putting things together properly, my apologies that the style is not always smooth, but I have not the faintest idea of how one writes such things.” She added: “What mental torments have I borne, how inwardly bewildered I was; this I cannot write; to convey this is impossible.”

Alois Kolber dispensed with this option. The Presidium of the Supreme Soviet returned his case to the Supreme Court “without appraisal” because he “has not requested a pardon.” Most of the others, however, highlighted the poverty and other adverse conditions that had allegedly induced them to work for Western intelligence agencies.

Many emphasized that they had not wanted to damage the Soviet Union and had not acted out of ideological or political conviction. Only a few claimed to have cooperated with Western secret services out of ideological idealism or a personal desire for revenge against the Soviet regime. One example is Josef Hassler, in whose case personal disappointment and anger at the Soviet occupation appear to have been decisive. Following his dismissal from the Soviet censorship office in Vienna, he contacted the CIC, passed on information about his work at the Soviet censorship office, and was allegedly recruited as an “agent for espionage activities against the USSR.”

Half of the women who were executed for anti-Soviet espionage had been involved in love affairs with Soviet soldiers. They were a particularly valuable target group for Western intelligence services, who lured them by offering to solve their money problems for seemingly harmless transfers of information. Soviet officials were aware of the Western efforts and were particularly suspicious of these women.

The bulk of the appeals for clemency give the impression that a certain naïveté or a fatal underestimation of the potential consequences played a decisive role. “He did not think anything of it,” Helmut Thalhammer said of his father, Leor. The majority were lured by what looked like easy money at a time of severe economic hardship.

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113. Chancellery Chief of the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Soviet, N. Kozlov, to the Chairman of the Military Council of the USSR Supreme Court, A. A. Cheptsov, regarding Alois Kolber, 14 July 1950, in GARF, F. 7523, Op. 66, D. 102, Ll. 44.
Economic Upheaval and Financial Lures

It was the money that lured me into espionage. I saw only the money; I never thought about the consequences that these criminal activities could have. From the company I received 650 shillings and the work was very hard; but through espionage I received 2,500 to 3,000 shillings and hardly had to do anything physical at all.\textsuperscript{117}

Richard Rupitsch of Carinthia, accused of espionage, attempted with these words to gain clemency. His plea for the Supreme Soviet to “take notice of” his motives was of no avail.\textsuperscript{118}

Many other appeals suggest that the promise of money was a key motive. The Austrian postwar economy was in the doldrums, the black markets were thriving and bore no relation to wages, and housing shortages were acute. Famine threatened Vienna in 1945. An egg cost 230 shillings on the black market, one-third of the monthly income of Stefan Buger, an employee of the Austrian Railway. After being arrested by Soviet forces, he argued that his “financial and material hardship” had been “meanly and shamefully” exploited by a French intelligence officer in 1946:

I had a monthly income of 690 shillings and received nothing on food ration cards; everything had to be bought on the black market. 1 kg lard: 400 shillings; sugar: 220 shillings; flour: 45 shillings; a single egg: 230 shillings; meat: 300–350 shillings. Our farmers sold goods for a lot of money. My family was undernourished; my children were hungry and we did not have even the required amounts of bread and butter at home. . . . This spy “Fucsek” [Fuczik] gave me 100 shillings as a gift the second time we met and 50 shillings the third time, until I succumbed at the fourth meeting.\textsuperscript{119}

In return for information on the frequency and cargo of Soviet goods trains on the Eastern Railway Line, Buger allegedly received “4,000–5,000 shillings in the form of money or as commodities such as lard, flour, sugar, etc. at the contraband price.”\textsuperscript{120} In 1948, following the “disappearance” of Fuczik, Buger broke off all contact with foreign intelligence. What he did not know was that Fuczik had already been sentenced to 25 years in the gulag on


\textsuperscript{119}. Appeal for Clemency from Stefan Buger, 1 April 1952, in GARF, F. 7523, Op. 76, D. 95, Ll. 74–76.

\textsuperscript{120}. Ibid.
espionage charges and had testified against Buger. Four years later, Buger appeared before the Soviet Military Tribunal in Baden. His execution took place on 11 July 1952.

Like Buger, many of those sentenced to death stated during interrogation or in their appeal how much they had supposedly been paid by U.S., British, French, Swiss, or Yugoslav intelligence services or the NTS. The alleged payments constituted up to 10,000 shillings. Some claimed they had received 250, 500, 1,000 or even 4,700 shillings a month. According to Soviet data, 4,700 shillings would have been ten times the average monthly income of an Austrian carpenter at the end of 1947. Soviet officials estimated that a four-person Austrian family spent around 400 shillings a month, although food ration cards rather than black market prices served as the basis for this calculation.

“The earnings from espionage activity were the main source of income in my life,” the Viennese journalist Raimund Strangl explained to the Soviet military tribunal. The Supreme Court interpreted such comments as a further confession of guilt. In the case of Margarete Henfling, for example, the court stated: “For the passing on of espionage information, Henfling received up to 250–300 shillings each month from Cadouse [a French intelligence official] and 400 shillings from von Schachner.” The daughter of Ernst Feichtinger, Jutta Weissböck, remembers invitations to her family from a CIC officer and the food her father received: “He of course brought something with him from the CIC, . . . he brought these doughnuts every day. Then pure coffee and other foodstuffs, for example, chocolate frosting. Other people could only dream of these things. He had a car. It was all worth having.”

Conclusions

During the ten years of postwar occupation, Austria and especially Vienna became an arena for every major intelligence service. Soviet forces knew full well

that Western intelligence services were trying to hire Austrian informers to spy on Soviet troop deployments in Austria and Eastern Europe and to track Soviet economic exploitation of “German assets” in eastern Austria. Some Austrians spied for the West to gain compensation at a time of often desperate poverty and hardship, whereas others acted out of political or personal motivations. Women who had become romantically involved with Soviet soldiers were often especially useful as sources of intelligence for the West. Although the information these alleged spies provided was trivial in most cases, the penalties they faced under Soviet occupation were drastic: kidnapping, incarceration, and in some cases execution. Most of the Austrians had never anticipated the risk of death.

After almost eight years of occupation, the executions of Austrian civilians in Moscow came to an end. Following Stalin’s death in March 1953, Military Tribunal No. 28990 imposed no more death sentences. Austrian civilians who had been sentenced to death and were then pardoned were able to return to Austria in 1956. That year, relatives of the executed received the first notification from the Soviet Union—with falsified causes of death. The declassification of materials from the former Soviet state security archive and the assistance provided by the Memorial center have been crucial in tracing what happened to these Austrians as well as other victims of Stalinism in Austria. The plaque commemorating the Austrian victims of Stalinist repression, unveiled at Donskoe Cemetery in September 2009, is a reminder of the cruelty of the Stalinist regime and the Soviet occupation.126

Acknowledgments

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126. On this, see, for example, Eduard Steiner, “‘Natürlicher Tod’ war Genickschuss: Gedenkstein für österreichisches Stalin-Opfer auf Moskauer Friedhof enthüllt,” Die Presse, 10 September 2008, p. 7.