

Sch. Dr. Hilger

An Feys v. Schreppenburg

An Dr. Vogelsang

26.10.66

Dr.

Lt. Auskunft vom 25. 10. 1971 nicht
mehr in Händen von Dr. Vogelsang.

Dr.

26. 10. 1971

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MUSTER Hilger

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CONVERSATION WITH HILGER, - AUGUST 13, 1945 G.N.S.

The Treaty of Rapallo (April 16, 1922) was, in Hilger's opinion, a sort of climax in Russo-German relations as determined by proximity and the outcome of World War I. On April 19, 1920, the two countries signed an agreement concerning prisoners of war; and during June Hilger went to Moscow as German plenipotentiary. On July 7, 1920, a further agreement was reached concerning the status of heads of delegations representing the two countries. On May 6, 1921, a second agreement was signed, regulating personnel matters and making a modest beginning of economic relations. Behrendt now represented Germany; Aaron Scheinman, a Georgian, represented Russia for a time. During September 1921, Winterfeld replaced Hilger. During his incumbency, the Rapallo Treaty was signed. It did not in Hilger's opinion, carry any military clauses. Brockdorff-Rantzau came to Moscow in 1922. He was motivated by resentment of France and desirous of working with Russia to counteract French hegemony. Chicherin and he became close friends. On Oct. 12, 1925, the Grosser Handelsvertrag. This great treaty implemented the Rapallo Vertrag.

By way of background Hilger emphasized that Soviet policy at this time was dominated by an interest in internationalism. The orthodox Marxist position was that Communism could be established only in "ripe capitalist" countries and that Russia was Marxist only by reason of an historical accident. Therefore the major objective was to seize power in western Europe. But by 1923, Communist revolutions had broken down in Munich, Budapest, Hamburg, and Saxony. The conclusion was then drawn that Europe was not yet "ripe" and that accordingly the emphasis should be on defense. A fear lest Soviet Russia be encircled and attacked became dominant. After Lenin's death (but not because of it) this mood prevailed more and more. The Russians sought economic autarchy for military purposes. Their relations with Germany were good, but they mistrusted all, especially the German Social Democrats. When August Mueller was proposed as Wildenfeld's successor, Moscow declared him persona non grata.

During this period numerous incidents reflected Russian feeling. In 1925 two German students were accused of a plot to poison Stalin and Trotsky. Because of the Cheka Trial, Stalin sought to implicate Hilger; and it was not until August that the matter was dropped. There followed the far more sensational Schachtli trial, involving German engineers accused of sabotage. Brockdorff-Rantzau fought hard against this trend, and concern with it may well have hastened his death. It was now clear that

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really cordial relations, in the sense in which Brockdorff-Rantzau understood the term, were not possible. From the German point of view, inability to control Communist agents was a complicating factor, and everybody knew that the German KPD was absolutely dependent on the comintern.

Stalin succeeded Lenin because of his skill in managing the Party organization. Now he substituted "defense of the Russian state" for Trotsky's "permanent revolution". The Communist ideology was now propagated indirectly, and emphasis was placed on strengthening Russia. Through the Revolution, 25,000,000 farmers now owned the land. But such a system afforded no produce surpluses, such as had been earned by the large estates, and only such surpluses enabled Russia to exchange produce for manufactured goods and technical services. Therefore, after a temporary experiment with Kulaks, Stalin restored the large estates through enforced collectivization. This meant that he could use only the poorer farmers. The others were ruthlessly exterminated. But the end was achieved, and in other ways Stalin proved a resolute manipulator. He could always succeed in blaming mishaps on others.

German relations, in so far as they were economic, developed very well. Dirksen was an excellent ambassador. German engineers were needed for the first 5 Year Plan, which ran until December 1932. Dirksen signed credit agreements with Germany. In 1931, 919.2 millions of marks were expended for German goods. On January 1, 1933, Russia owed Germany 1.2 milliards. They always paid debts, wanting their credit to be good. But they extracted every penny from the citizenry, and their private stores were likewise extortion devices for securing foreign exchange.

There were minor military arrangements. Russian officers were trained in Germany; and in Lipetzki, German officers were permitted to experiment with military aircraft. The Germans were not, however, able to overcome Russian suspicion, so that this kind of cooperation could not develop. German diplomats and business representatives had just as little chance for private association with Russians as did other foreigners. Even the rise of Hitler did not alter the situation, because his first pronouncements were so moderate that the Russians were favorably impressed, though suspicious. After 1934, things became much more difficult.

Dirksen stayed until 1933. He was a well-liked chief, though not as gifted a man as Brockdorff-Rantzau. He was succeeded by Madolney, who had served in St. Petersburg as a young man and wanted very much to serve in the Moscow Embassy. But he was very dissatisfied, when his suggestions to Hitler came to nothing. His successor was Count Schulenburg, fairly well described in Garfenkus' "Les Preliminaires de la Guerre a l'Est". Everybody, even Doviea liked him. He was a diplomatic grand seigneur but "pulled no stars out of the sky." But he managed to manoeuver well in a most perilous situation.

During this time the Russians kept on asking: "Why this Hitler

nonsense?" The officials read Mein Kampf assiduously and took it seriously. Russian and German officers broke off relations. Then the purge of 1937-1939 overcast Russian skies. German military men were not involved in this. Tukachevsky had certain Bonapartistic qualities which Stalin mistrusted. But the reason for the purge, in Hilger's opinion, was that Stalin, convinced that war with Germany was inevitable, decided to make his own position absolute. He wanted no ideological competitor, and was resolved to abandon all old Party slogans about the family, divorce, etc. Initiative was to be encouraged. Stalin may, indeed, have in this instance taken a leaf from Hitler's 1934 book. Hilger says that he reported to Berlin quite freely that the purge was rooted in distrust of Germany. Meanwhile Litvinov's policy of the security pacts was fostered, and an alliance with France was agreed upon.

Then suddenly on March 10, 1939, Stalin spoke at a Party Convocation and declared that there was no reason why antipathy between Russia and Germany should persist. This speech contained a malicious indirect reference to Britain. It also stressed Russian interest in the Baltic States, which Britain apparently had not been willing to concede. On May 3, 1939, Litvinov was dismissed. This meant that Stalin was either bringing pressure on the British, or that he was dissatisfied with the progress of negotiations. Hitler saw an opportunity now to solve the Polish problem in his own style. The British diplomatic representative called the Russians "damned treacherous blighters".

Hitler now informed Russia through Schulenburg that he could not postpone a settlement with Poland. The ambassador was also instructed to go to the Kremlin and tell the Soviet Government that Germany was prepared to sign a non-aggression pact with Russia on the basis of the existing boundaries of both countries' interests, and that Germany was ready to disavow its interests in the Baltic. When Schulenburg went to see Molotov with these proposals, he was astounded. This meeting took place during the early days of August. Molotov answered that proposals of such importance would have to be discussed with his government and that he would inform the German ambassador as soon as possible of the answer. Twenty-three minutes later, Schulenburg was called to the Kremlin. He was then told by Molotov that his government was ready to discuss the suggestions with Germany. Then Ribbentrop arrived to discuss the non-aggression pact. Bessarabia was discussed, and Ribbentrop assented to the Russian proposals. Bukovina was not discussed. Lithuania was to remain in the Germans orbit; the Polish boundary line was to be Vistula. Later on (between August 23 and Sept. 28) Stalin suggested that he would exchange the territory of Lublin for Lithuania, and the Germans assented. The only dispute was a German demand for Lemberg, on account of the oil in that region. Stalin offered 300,000 tons of oil from this province.

This was the Russian-German honeymoon. On Sept 28, the "Friendship and Boundary Agreement" was signed; and during October Ritter arrived to discuss the economic agreement. Stalin now wanted goods

for goods (barter) but acceded to Germany some quotas of raw materials in advance, since it took longer to supply manufactured goods. Hilger saw Stalin for the first time at Ribbentrop's reception, but thereafter he was accessible. He was very cautious about military undertakings, and didn't march into Poland until the war was over from every practical point of view. As a matter of fact the German army had crossed the line agreed upon, and called Moscow in order to find out what to do next. Then only did Stalin give the march order, and added that he had to protect White Russians and Ukrainians. The Russians promised some things meanwhile which they didn't actually give - for instance, naval bases in the North.

The situation was extraordinarily good for the Germans. Hilger said that in his own opinion and that of his colleagues Stalin was no doubt playing a very realistic game. He felt that through his Polish venture Hitler was getting into serious conflict with Western Europe and that through this conflict Russia would at least gain time in which to consolidate its position. No doubt the Russians were greatly surprised by the speed of the German advance through Poland, and later on by the course of events in Western Europe.

When Hilger returned to Germany in October 1940, he believed firmly that Russo-German relations had been settled for many years. He was surprised to learn, in his own family, that many Germans considered the whole arrangement transitory. During November Molotov came to Berlin. The invitation was presented by Schulenburg and Hilger. On the 11th (Molotov stayed until the 13th), Molotov saw Ribbentrop, who said virtually the same things Hitler was to say on the next day. Ribbentrop declared that Britain was defeated, and that all that remained was for Russia and Germany to discuss the legacy. Ribbentrop added that access to the sea was a legitimate Russian aspiration, and that no doubt Moscow would seek that outlet in the East. Molotov was rather non-committal about such proposals, but on the next day made certain concrete proposals.

Molotov asked the following questions, after indicating that possibly the Russo-German treaties might need improvement: Why were German troops in Finland, supposedly within the Russian sphere of influence? Why did Germany deem it necessary to offer Rumania a boundary guarantee, and against whom was that guarantee directed? Since the treaty between us provides for friendly consultation, why does not Germany consult us on such matters as the Rumanian boundary question? What would be the attitude of the German government if Russia entered into a similar agreement with Bulgaria, which is in our sphere of influence? And what is the attitude of the German government toward the Dardanelles?

Hitler's answers, according to Hilger, were vague and inconclusive. On the subject of Finland he declared that "he" had no political interests but was concerned with holding Petsamo, because of its nickel mines. His comment on the Rumanian question stressed

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the negotiations with Hungary, and stated that in order to keep the Rumanians in line it had been necessary to offer them something. Regarding Bulgaria, he stated that he would wish to discuss any proposals with Italy and Bulgaria. The Dardanelles, he added could be discussed later on. Molotov was visibly dissatisfied, and the meeting, though not stormy, was unsatisfactory and inconclusive.

Matters drifted. In April, Schulenburg, realizing that a state of war was imminent, prepared a memorandum outlining the advantages of the pact for Germany and stressing the military strength of Russia. In Berlin, however, he was induced to tone down this document by advisers who held that Hitler would toss the original aside without reading it. The effect was negligible. On April 30, Schulenburg told Helger that the situation was hopeless.

Hilger believed in 1939 that Hitler had really changed the course of his policy. He maintained that the German Embassy in Moscow had tried hard to present a realistic impression of Russian strength. Even so, after war was declared, the situation would not have been hopeless if the Nazis had appointed intelligent persons to positions of responsibility in the Ukraine and White Russia.

There were submitted to him a few additional questions his answers to which are appended.

Hilger was a first-rate German Foreign Office official.

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Hilger

Gustav HILGER
vormals Botschaftsrat
an der Deutschen Botschaft
in Moskau

Seckenheim
C/ Mannheim, 14 August 1945

Institut für Zeitgeschichte	
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Antworten auf die mir gestellten 6 Fragen

1. Die Erkenntnis, dass trotz der Niederlagen, die das russische zaristische Heer seit 1914 erlitten hatte, ein Sieg über Russland und damit eine Beendigung des Krieges in Osten mit militärischen Mitteln allein nicht zu erzielen war, brachte die deutsche militärische Führung in Sommer 1917 auf den Gedanken, die in Russland bestehende revolutionäre Spannung für ihre Zwecke auszunutzen. Nach der Abdankung des Zaren hatte die auf liberalistisch-demokratischen Grundlagen errichtete provisorische russische Regierung unter dem Fürsten Lwow und anschliessend unter Kerensky die Fortführung des Krieges an der Seite der Alliierten "bis zum siegreichen Ende" proklamiert und diesen ihren Willen in offensiven militärischen Handlungen bekundet. Im Gegensatz hierzu vertraten die in der Emigration lebenden Bolschewiken mit Lenin an der Spitze und dessen Anhänger in Russland den Standpunkt, dass eine Umwälzung in Russland und die Errichtung einer sozialistischen Republik nur auf dem Wege über einen völligen militärischen Zusammenbruch möglich sei. General Hoffmann, auf dessen Initiative und Betreiben die Durchreise der führenden Bolschewiken mit Lenin an der Spitze aus der Schweiz durch Deutschland "in plainbierten Eisenbahncoagen" zustande kam, ging bei der Durchführung dieses Planes von der Hoffnung aus, dass das Erscheinen der Bolschewiken in Russland zu einem Bürgerkrieg und damit zu einer völligen Zersetzung der Zustände führen würde, und dass Deutschland auf diese Weise seinen östlichen Gegner würde niederringen können.

Diese Annahme erwies sich als gerechtfertigt. Um zur Macht zu gelangen, versprachen die Bolschewiken dem Volke das verprochen, was es im Augenblick am meisten begehrte, d.h. eine Beendigung des Krieges und einen Frieden mit Deutschland. Dieses Versprechen wurde von den Bolschewiken in der Weise realisiert, dass sie den Krieg für tatsächlich beendet erklärten, eine Verbrüderung der russischen Armee mit den deutschen Truppen anordneten, durch die Anwendung des berühmten Befehls Nr 1 jegliche Disziplin für der Armee zerstörten und auf Deutschland's Verlangen den Friedensvertrag von Brest-Litowsk unterzeichneten. Der Abschluss dieses Vertrages war ein Werk Lenin's, der sich in dieser Frage gegen die Widersacker innerhalb seiner eigenen Partei durchsetzte (Trotzky war ein Gegner des Abschlusses eines Vertrages mit Deutschland) und sich über den Widerstand der Sozial-Revolutionäre hinwegsetzte (die Ermordung des deutschen Gesandten Graf Mirbach am 6 Juli 1918 in Moskau durch die Sozial-Revolutionäre war ein misslungener Versuch dieser Partei die Brest Litowsker "Friedenpolitik" Lenin's zu sabotieren und seinen neuen Krieg mit Deutschland zu entfesseln).

Lenin ging bei der Propagandierung des Brest-Litowsker Vertrages von dem Gedanken aus das die junge, auf schwachen Füßen stehende

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Lowjetrepublik unbedingt einer "Atempause" bedürfte. Er war überzeugt davon, dass Deutschland auf die Dauer gegen die Übermacht der Alliierten nicht würde bestehen können und dass die kommende Niederlage Deutschland die Lowjetrepublik von den ihr auferlegten Fesseln befreien und darüber hinaus eine kommunistische, Revolution in Deutschland entfachen würde, wodurch der entscheidende Schritt auf dem Wege zur Weltrevolution getan werden wäre.

Die Bedingungen, die der Lowjetrepublik in Brest-Litowsk von Deutschland auferlegt wurden, waren sehr hart. Die Lowjetregierung hat diese Bedingungen nur in dem Masse erfüllt, in dem es ihr jeweilig als unumgänglich erschien. Der wirtschaftliche Nutzen für Deutschland war gering, umso grösser dagegen war die Enttäuschung, die das Verhalten Deutschlands in Brest Litowsk im russischen Volke auslöste.

Auf die Frage nach den Folgen des Vertrages von Brest-Litowsk kann es daher auf Grund der späteren Entwicklung nur die Antwort geben, dass Lenin seinen Zweck erreicht hat, während Deutschland aus dem Vertrag von Brest-Litowsk auch nicht annähernd die Vorteile ziehen konnte, die es von ihm erwartet hatte.

2. Für Alles was in der Welt auf politischem, wirtschaftlichem, wissenschaftlichem und kulturellem Gebiet getan und geschrieben wurde bestand in der Lowjetunion von Anfang an das grösste Interesse. Hierzu gehörten auch die Haushofer'schen geopolitischen Gedankengänge, die bei der Lowjetregierung natürlich auf Misstrauen und Ablehnung stiessen, weil sich aus ihnen deutsche territoriale Ansprüche im Osten ergaben.

3. Die Berichterstattung der Deutschen Botschaft in Moskau und ihres letzten Militärattachés hat nie einen Zweifel über die Erfolge der russischen Industrialisierung und das Mass der Aufrüstung der Lowjetunion gelassen. Den Berichten ist offenbar nicht die gebührende Beachtung geschenkt worden. Unverantwortliche oder ungeliebt unterzeichnete Elemente nutzten die Gelegenheit, auf ihre eigene, der national-sozialistischen Führung Deutschlands genehmere Auffassung über die militärische Potenz der Lowjetunion zur Geltung zu bringen.

4. Die Antikomintern verdankt ihre Entstehung der Erkenntnis der Gefahr, von der Deutschland seitens der kommunistischen Bewegung bedroht war. Ausserdem wurde sie als geeignetes Propagandamittel ein Kampf der nationalsozialistischen Partei um die Erlangung der Macht in Deutschland betrachtet. Der Abschluss der Antikomintern Paktes mit Italien, das sich in einer ähnlichen Lage befand wie Deutschland, erschien darüber hinaus geeignet, als Grundlage für das politische Ziel einer Annäherung zwischen den beiden Staaten zu dienen.

Wer der eigentliche Verfasser des Antikominternpaktes war, ist mir nicht bekannt. Vielfach wird der ehemalige Reichsaussenminister von Ribbentrop dafür gehalten. Über die Einzelheiten der Entstehung des Antikominternpaktes bin ich nicht unterrichtet, da die Deutsche Botschaft in Moskau mit dieser Aufgelegenheit aus naheliegenden Gründen in keiner Weise befasst worden ist.

Durch den Abochleep des Antikominternpaktes ist jedoch die Stellung der Moskauer Botschaft weiter erschlovert worden. Zumal das Argeument, dass der Pakt zwar gegen das Wirken der Kommunistischen Partei, nicht aber gegen die Lowjetunion gerichtet sei, bei der Lowjetregierung wenig glauben fand.

5. Am 22 June 1941 um 4:30 morgens gab der deutsche Botsdrafter Graf von der Schulenburg auf Weisung seiner Regierung dem Sowjetischen Volkskommissar für auswärtige Angelegenheiten W.M. Molotow die Erklärung ab, dass die Reichsregierung die von der Sowjetregierung an der Westgranze der Sowjetunion vorgekommenen Truppenkonzentrationen als eintragbar ansche und sich daher entschlossen habe, Gegenmaßnahmen zu ergreifen.

Molotow erwiderte, dass ein Zweifel über den Sinn der ihm soeben gemachten Mitteilung nicht mehr bestehen könne, da die Kriegshandlungen bereits seit 1 1/2 Hunder in Gange seien.

Auf die Bitte des Grafen Schulenburg die Mitglieder der deutschen Botschaft sowie des sonstigen Reichsdeutschen nach wölkerrichtlichen Grundsätzen zu behandeln und alsbald ausreisen zu lassen, sagte Molotow, dass diese Frage streng auf der Grundlage der Gegenseichigkeit geregelt werden würde.

Die Verabschiedung von Molotow erfolgte in üblicher Weise durch Handschlag.

Die Mitglieder der Botschaft wurden am abend des 22 Juni in zwei der Botschaft zur Verfügung stehenden Gebäuden interniert und am 24 Juni mit der Eisenbahn in die Nähe von Kostroma an der Wolga abtransportiert, wo sie am 26 Juni früh eintrafen. Dort waren sie während 5 Tagen in 2 Holzhäusern untergebracht, die als sommerliche Eholungsheime für Arbeiter der Textilfabriken von Kostroma gedient hatten. Die Unterbringung war primitice, die Verpflegung ausreichend, die Behandlung karrekt.

Aus Kostroma wurden die Mitglieder der Botschaft nebst den in Moska w und Leningrad anwesenden Reichsdeutschen mit der Eisenbahn durch ganz Russland nach Leninkan an der armenisch-türkischen, grenze befördert, um dort den Türken übergeben zu werden, die als Treichänder in der Austausch angelegenheit - Reichsdeutsche in der Sowjetunion gegen Sowjetstaatsangehörige in Deutschland fungierten.

Die Reise durch die Sowjetunion verlief ohne Zwischenfälle.

Der durch eine Verzögerung der Austauschverhandlungen verursachte 8-tägige Aufenthalt in Leninkan bei tropischer Hitze in verschlossenen Eisenlakniowgen war sehr beschwerlich und führte zu zahlreichen gastrischen Erkrankungen.

Die Zahl der ausgetauschten Reichsdeutschen betrug etwa 300 gegen rund 1000 Russen, die sich in Gegenzug bekanden und in Swilengrad an der bulgarisch-türkischen Grenze den Türken übergeben wurden.

6. Ich halte mich nicht für kompetent, diese Frage zu beantworten, da mir die Vorgänge, die zu der Erklärung des Bestehens eines Kriegszustandes zwischen den USA und Deutschland geführt haben, nicht geläufig genug sind. Locoeit ich unterrichtet bin, sind die gründe hierfür in einer Note niedergelegt, die der deutsche Regierung der Regierung der USA am 11 Dezember 1941 übermittelt hat.

/s/ Gustav Hilger