

ARCHIV HORST VON WÄCHTER

Audio recordings

Summary

RG-90.147.0006 part 1 of 2

Kassette 8, Seite 1 [28.53 minutes]

Label: "Am 24.XI.1976 Münch[en?] Anlässlich ein [sic] Besuch v. Dr. Fischer, der ein Kamerad v. Otto (mein Mann) war u. im gleichen Jahr geboren war 1901, hatten wir ein Gespräch über die Zeiten. – Krakau, Lemberg, Wien. Sein Lebensbild."

Written underneath in pencil: "26.2.86 FB"

CW speaks with an old comrade of Otto Wächter (OW), a Dr. Fischer (F)

F recounts that he met OW in Vienna in 1918/1919. [tape skips] F speaks of Krumau (Czesky Krumlov) during World War I, how he met OW in the Falstaff café near the Volksoper ca. 1919; how he met OW 1927/1928 again at a reunion of the "Krumauer" veteran group but that they then lost sight of each other; since 1927 F led the Staatspolizeiliche Kriminalbeamtengruppe in Salzburg; how F was not politically active then but that he had "certain political convictions," i.e. that he was a Monarchist and a Pan-German; F recounts how on July 5, 1934 he was arrested and accused of bomb attacks and high treason; on July 25, 1934 he was in prison; a few days later he was accused to be one of the planners of the Dollfuss attack; F recounts how he was in July 1934 in Baden and how he returned to Vienna and this led to the suspicions that he was involved in the Dollfuss attack; how the official who accused him was the police chief of Salzburg, a certain "Ingomar Iwasiuk" [?] and who had been present in Sarajevo at the assassination of the Archduke; F recounts how he exposed a false witness who recanted his testimony against him; who was behind the false accusations; F recounts how after he was released from prison he was picked up by "Oberstritter" von Pohl (possibly **Maximilian von Pohl**) who was a friend of OW and that Pohl offered his help; how F went to Berlin with the help of a certain Dr. Riegele in Linz who was **Hermann Göring's** brother-in-law and was married to **Paula Göring**; this led to a position in the Reichssicherheitshauptamt (RSHA) in the "Spionageabwehr" (department IV A3); CW asks whether they met at the RSHA in Berlin as OW was also in the RSHA in 1935/1936; F responds that he thought that OW was in prison at that time; CW replies "no, he was never in prison, he would have been hung." F responds that he confused OW with his old boss **Otto Steinhäusl** (head of police in Vienna and a co-conspirator of the failed Dollfuss putsch). F replies that he did not meet CW in Berlin. F states that at the RSHA he worked with a Dr. Best and made many trips outside of Germany, how 1938 he was encouraged to transfer to Austria but that he declined because he wanted to avoid former friends who were anti-National Socialist; instead he entered Czechoslovakia in October 1938 with a SS group and by chance ended up in his childhood town; how he was reprimanded

because he refused an order to arrest a certain Dr. Schaurig [?] and had to report back to the RSHA in Berlin; how, when he declared the reasons why he refused to arrest the man, he was reinstated and how it later was proven that the man was "einwandfrei" ("unobjectionable"). On August 17, 1939 he arrived with a SS unit to Vienna; how he was in a soldiers' barrack near Schönbrunn from where his SS departed on August 18 via Stockerau, Lundenburg, Neu Deutschheim [?], a few days in Schloss Partschendorf, and then on September 1 via Wardowice to Cracow where F became the head of the "Spionageabwehr" for the district of Cracow but that he was responsible for the entirety of Poland. In December 1939 a group of officers was invited by the Governor of Cracow, i.e. OW; after the official ceremony, F spoke with OW and, among other things, discovered that F's father was friends with OW's father and grandfather; how F was invited to OW's villa outside of Cracow with other officials, including a certain Oberst Pibil [?] who was a former teacher of F and had good connections in Cracow and in Poland. In 1941 F was notified by a customs official that at the border at Kattowice a chauffeur for Governor Lasch [likely **Karl Lasch**] in Lemberg was found with a large number of fur coats and a large amount of food and how he ordered the chauffeur arrested; how on Himmler's direct order a search of Lasch's house was performed that led to the finding of a great amount of fur coats, jewelry, and food provisions; how Lasch volunteered for the Luftwaffe in order to avoid arrest but that he was arrested nevertheless and convicted to death; how Lasch even got married at the very end; Unterstaatssekretär Kundt [?], 2 to 3 years older than F, who was a friend of F's from youth, told F that he had been present at a meeting in Berlin with Hitler during which Hitler was alleged to have said that "This thing with Lasch, now we need the best man in Lemberg; this, I am told, can only be the Governor of Cracow, Otto Wächter." This is how OW came to Lemberg, F can't quite remember the date, CW and F go back and forth what year it could have been, CW concludes that it had to have been early 1941; F remembers that at the end of October 1941 he had orders to pick up the "young" **Romanian King Michael** and his mother Helena in Sniatyn and accompany them to Italy; he did so with 5 SS members in civilian clothing via Lemberg, Breslau, Berlin (where Michael was seen by Hitler) [tape skips] "and then the same day we drove to the Italian border" where, at the Brenner mountain, F disbanded the protection unit and King Michael continued his journey with Italian officers to Rome. In Lemberg, F remembers, that OW was at the train station, ca. Oct. 31, 1941. After that he no longer encountered OW because F wanted to get away from Cracow because he feared for his life as a result of having punished several SS officers with "severe sentences"; he was given this task in addition to his anti-espionage responsibilities because he was also the "Disziplinarreferent" of the SS in charge of disciplinary matters for the district of Cracow; F's request to be allowed to transfer to the Wehrmacht was denied and he was transferred under the Kommandeur der Sicherheitspolizei Prag, or rather took over the district offices in Jungbunzlau (Mlada Bodeslav) and Jitschin (Jicin); from there F went to the headquarters office in Prague and from there to Pilsen as head of the district office; from 1944 on he was "Leiter

der Partisanenabwehr", his last commanding officer was **Feldmarschall Schörner** and he was responsible for 2,000 SS and Wehrmacht troops in charge of combating partisan units who, for the most part, consisted of paratroopers airlifted in from the Russian side. F continues to explain the make-up of the German anti-espionage troops and their tactics. Contends that the captured Russian partisans "enjoyed a very good life" in German captivity. In 1945 F was wounded badly by Czech partisans, was captured by the Americans, came into the camp Grafenwehr where he claims to have been "terribly mistreated" by two Jews, one of whom was from Vienna and F had previously arrested him in Salzburg for Communist activities. "This man ended up working for the American military police." F claims that as soon as he told him "I know exactly who you are" the mistreatment stopped and the "second American" was asked to leave the room; F says that "the Jew from Vienna" wanted to discuss what had happened but F refused to do so but did tell him that F, or rather F's employees, had not mistreated him back when he was under arrest. As far as F knows, the man got 14 days of arrest. In 1950, F was appointed by the Americans as a criminal investigator for the IRO (?) in Munich. In Feb. 1952, he was arrested by the criminal police in Salzburg. The police director of Salzburg, a certain Dr. Böhm, was a distant relative, whom F had helped get released from the concentration camp although he was told not to help individuals with anti-Nazi tendencies. Böhm then went to Berlin where he led a good life and it was he who had F arrested as "an alleged war criminal." From Salzburg, F was transferred to the Volksgericht/Landesgericht in Linz where F met Albert Pavlo (?) in prison who also had been a good friend of OW. The judge at the Landesgericht Linz criticized F by asking him how he, as a German, could work for the Americans and F replied "who was it who liberated you from the KZ. Was it the Germans or the Americans?" Lastly, it was revealed that all the accusations against F were false and the Ratskammer in Linz decided that ... [tape ends abruptly at 28.53]

RG-90.147.0006 part 2 of 2

Kassette 8, Seite 2 [28.48 minutes]

Interview with Dr. Fischer (F) conducted by Charlotte Wächter (CW) - continued.

Recording starts in the middle of a sentence by F in which he recalls the decision to set him free on August 8, 1952 despite the ministry's objections. Upon his return from Munich, he rejoined the military and served until 1963 when he was honorably discharged. Since then, he has lived a quiet life. Over 20 times he has served as an expert witness on spying and intelligence matters before the courts. F states that he has always told the truth and only in one single case did he think that the defendant deserved the death penalty. This defendant, a certain Krüger, received a well deserved life sentence. F maintains that he would have dismissed Krüger from the SS as early as 1939 because he mistreated Ukrainians. Krüger was Dienststellenleiter in Stanislau and acted there as a despot. Ironically, he had a Jewish orchestra that performed for him, the members of which were dressed in white evening jackets. This was also mentioned during

Krüger's trial and was verified by witnesses. F states that he is now over 75 years old. Mentions a "Czech historian" who wrote two books about partisan combat and spy craft. "This man," who had organized enemy flights from England against the Germans and also engaged in spy craft, wrote to F that he [i.e. the Czech author] went lightly on F in his books, to which F replied that he does not give a damn about that, that he had only done his duty and his only responsibility it towards God ["dem Herrgott"]. A second book was written by a certain Ströbinger [or Strebinger?] by the title "Spion auf beiden Seiten" in which F is a main character leading the anti-spying efforts and is responsible for the uncovering of numerous persons engaged in resistance activities. The hero of the book is a certain Rene Holm, a German from Saxony who since 1933 has worked as a Czech agent against the German Reich but who also was the confidant ["Vertrauensmann"] of Canaris. As far as F knows, this man was executed in the "Polizeigefängnis Theresienstadt" in April 1945. F goes on to state that in March of this year he received a book in Lithuanian written by a woman in Hot Springs, United States. This book contains a few pages on F's activities in the "Partisanenkampf" and in the "Abwehrtätigkeit in der Tschechoslovakei." As far as F is concerned, what was written about him is "exaggeratingly flattering." F does not know much about the author except that she is the wife of a former Czech gendarme whose life F had saved and who commanded the protection unit for President Masaryk to whom he was related. This officer by the name of Kodek [?] died about six years ago in Hot Springs. Based on Kodek's various awards and citations the woman probably wrote the book. An English translation of the book is being prepared now. F maintains that he is no longer politically engaged. He only is writing his memoirs for his children and grandchildren although he was offered money from a publisher, an offer which he declined. F concludes by stating "That's all. Is there anything else you would like to know?"

CW asks F what his father had to say about "General Wächter" (i.e. Otto Wächter's father). F confirms that his father knew General Wächter as a young man. Calls him a very goal oriented, ambitious officer. CW acknowledges this, recalls that she had been told that he had first studied chemistry but that the career possibilities as an officer in the military were more appealing to him. F agrees, states that his father knew General Wächter around 1905, 1906 or 1908 when he was a major. F briefly recalls General Wächter's career until he ended up at the ministry where he had a conflict with Körner (probably **Theodor Körner**). CW recalls how OW and his parents fared poorly after World War I. CW suddenly jumps to OW's death on July 13, 1949, only a few days after his birthday on July 8. How she had postponed travelling to Rome to see him because of the children and their schooling and the need to find them a safe place to stay in her absence. How the righthand man ["Adjutant"] of Schirach [Baldur von Schirach] had offered to help OW. How Rome became OW's undoing. How he should not have gone to Rome. F states that he does not agree with **Albert Speer**, finds him dishonest. CW is surprised, mentions how OW held Speer in high regard. "Back then, yes," F maintains, "but not anymore." CW tells F that it is difficult, "our past has outgrown history." CW tells F that a good friend of hers, the CDU

politician Heinrich Mosch (probably **Martin Georg Erich Heinrich von Mosch**, October 31, 1930 – October 20, 2014) kept telling her that Hitler was our undoing but that she told him that he, “Heini”, was still too young at the time to understand properly, that “we only had two choices: either National Socialism or Communism.” F heartily agrees. CW continues how Stalin was the worst mass murderer in world history, together with Cesar. As she told “Heini Mosch,” the alternative would have been for all of Germany to be under Communist rule and not only Germany but all of Europe. Germany would have been destroyed. Still people keep saying that Hitler is to blame for everything but she, CW, cannot agree with this assessment, that Hitler surely made big mistakes but ... F interjects “Don’t forget Heydrich and Himmler.” CW agrees, calls them grave diggers. F adds “And Bormann. Those three are responsible.” F continues to talk about Hitler’s little known humanitarian nature which he learned about from Hitler’s housekeeper **Anna Winter**. Describes her as a very intelligent woman who rejected generous financial offers for her story. She always maintained “[Hitler] was a good person.” How she always defended Hitler but she, too, hated Himmler, Bormann and Heydrich. F goes on a tirade against Heydrich, how much he hated him because he was such an ice-cold person. CW goes on to talk about OW’s nemesis in the Ukraine whose name she can’t recall but whom she adds to the list of despicable characters. How he was the reason Fischböck packed his bags and left to join **Arthur Seiss-Inquart** who was well respected. F recalls his dealings with Seiss-Inquart, including that Seiss-Inquart allegedly went to church on a daily basis. Calls him a “good person.” How the Poles respected Seiss-Inquart, just as they respected OW. CW states that in Cracow OW unfortunately did not yet have the same decision-making power as he did in Lemberg (Lviv) due to the fact that he was Frank’s right hand man. How OW would have much preferred getting his own governor position somewhere else but that there were no available posts and how the Lasch affair complicated matters. How Frank had tried to protect Lasch but that Lasch had gone too far.

CW asks F about a book, “Kaput” by Malaparte which features her, Frank and his wife, and OW. How it is very detailed. She is looking for it. CW recalls how much she admired Frank, how musically gifted he was, blames Krüger for pushing Frank into terrible situations. Recalls how Krüger and Frank were the worst of enemies, how OW told both of them “already towards the end of the good times that we had in the East” that they will only start to see eye to eye when they both are facing the guillotine. F says that OW inherited his honesty from his father. CW continues by stating that OW as early as 1943 kept telling her that the situation had become too messy, that too many mistakes had been made, that not even a miracle could correct all the mistakes. CW and F discuss a certain **Rudolf Pavlo** [?] and **Otto Pavlo** [?]. How they agreed with OW that this was not the way to win a war, with a lack of supplies, a lack of munitions, etc.

CW asks F if he knew a certain writer or editor by the name of Proksch [**Rudolf Proksch**, father of Udo Proksch]. CW goes on to say that his son is now the owner of the Demel coffee house in

Vienna (**Udo Proksch**, 1934 – 2001). CW continues to philosophize about those who are now judged to have no character, that times were different then, mentions a certain Kappler (**Herbert Kappler**, 1907 - 1978) who has been in prison for 30 years now, F interjects that Kappler is dying of cancer, there is some confusion between CW and F whether it is Kappler or Raeder who is dying of cancer, F maintains that it is indeed Kappler who is terminally ill, CW asks F what Raeder is in prison for, F mentions that Raeder also is in prison for the alleged execution of hostages, CW waves this off as something many others did during the war “Ja mein Gott, das haben die anderen ja auch gemacht.”, they both chuckle in agreement. Calls Kappler an old, broken man. As one gets older one finds one’s way to God. CW states that she always kept her religion (“Ich habe meine Religion immer behalten.”), that she was a Protestant, that she since has become a devout Catholic, that religion is everything to her now. How she tries to follow the teachings of Christ, how she tries to be a good and humble person, how she tells herself that she has lived her life to the fullest, how she could not have done any better than she did, and how she lives in the service of God. F calls this interesting, mentions that his daughter Hannelore converted from Protestantism to Catholicism in 1976. CW asks if it was this June 1976 before her death, F affirms this. CW surmises that maybe this is the reason she died so easily. CW goes on to say that the Catholic Church also has made many mistakes, that this is human nature, no institution is free from mistakes. Someone as deeply involved in religion as she is, CW maintains, becomes more forgiving and milder, without malice to anyone. Recalls how Horst, her son, keeps reminding her that these are all misunderstandings, even between parents and children there are misunderstandings. F states that every day he asks God for the gift of humility. CW surmises that he must have found humility by now. F agrees that he has. CW goes on to express her disappointment with the “Christlich-Soziale Partei” [presumably the Christlich Demokratische Union Deutschlands] and **Helmut Kohl** and **Franz Josef Strauss** in particular, how the party lacks Christian humility and benevolence. CW and F briefly discuss contemporary German politics. CW offers F a ride home, he demurs that he will take the streetcar home. [tape ends at 28:48]