The Mysterious FRIEND
An exercise in Swedish Venona

In memory of Sven Wäsström

C.G. McKay

Counterespionage officers do not have to be told about the importance of the past in the analysis of the present. Although the original American project to read Soviet traffic concurrently failed to deliver on time, Venona would emerge post bellum as a triumph of retrospective spyspotting and indeed spyswatting. Pursued as an international undertaking in close harmony with British intelligence, its publicity-shy initiates soon found themselves scouring the globe for unused but promising stores of Russian wartime traffic. Sweden filled the bill admirably in this respect and was eventually invited on board without a splash being heard to disturb the sweet dreams of more dogmatic defenders of neutrality. Even the Norwegians who prided themselves on congenial and close relations in intelligence matters with the Swedes, the British and the Americans were slightly miffed when they eventually discovered that their big brother Vikings to the East, were participating with the British in what was arguably one of the West’s major counterespionage initiatives. But then Norway, despite its Nato status, had no store of wartime Soviet telegrams. Ironically it was the Norwegian Security Service which was first to breach the watertight security surrounding Venona when Ørnulf Tofte published verbatim the decrypts of two Soviet telegrams from the Stockholm traffic in his book Spaneren (1987) long before the official American disclosure at Langley, Virginia on July 11, 1995.

So much by way of general introduction. In this essay I would like to say something about Venona and a much debated incident in wartime secret diplomacy. My starting point is a telegram to be found in Soviet traffic passing between Stockholm and Moscow during the war and the telegram I have in mind is Nr 2978 from VALERIAN to VIKTOR dated 12/11/1943. [See Appendix 1] It deals with a letter sent to the Soviet legation in Stockholm by a certain person identified merely by the cover name DRUG i.e. à la russe FRIEND. It is one of a trio of messages containing an explicit mention of DRUG [See also Appendices 2,3]. To appreciate the full story behind this telegram, it is necessary to go back some way in time to 1942 and to

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1 I owe much to my many discussions, through the course of the years, about the history of intelligence with my friend, the late Sven Wäsström. A secret servant of the old school, Sven had inter alia a special responsibility for Venona at FRA.

2 A detailed account of the activities of Klaus-Kleist is provided by Ingeborg Fleischhauer in her Die Chance des Sonderfriedens. (Berlin: Siedler Verlag, 1986). I reviewed this book for Intelligence and National Security, see I&NS, Vol.4, Nr 2, April 1989, pp. 401-405. Wilhelm Agrell has provided a most useful survey of Sweden and the Venona in Venona, Spåren från ett underrättelsekrig (Lund: Historiska Media, 2003)

3 The word DRUG occurs also as a VENONA acronym on par with JADE, BRIDE etc. See Agrell, op.cit. p.98.
examine a puzzle which presented itself to the Swedish counter-espionage authorities.

As has been explained at length elsewhere⁴, the greatest coup of wartime Swedish intelligence was undoubtedly the solution of German Geheimschreiber traffic and its exploitation. This success, however, was somewhat dimmed when the Germans discovered the breach in their security. As a result, successive countermeasures were introduced from mid-June 1942 onward. Although the traffic between Stockholm and Berlin continued to be read after this by the Swedes, the interest of the traffic declined markedly in 1943 when the most important messages were moved out of the reach of large-scale predatory cryptanalysis by one countermeasure or another.⁵ For example, there are infinitely tedious telegrams from the Press Department of Auswärtiges Amt, the importance of which is inversely proportional to their length. Nonetheless in the interim period- between mid 1942 and the end of the year- some genuinely top secret German intelligence material was still being read by the Swedes.

Indeed it was just such material which produced an interesting problem for the Swedish counterespionage authorities. The traffic showed that German military intelligence- the Abwehr- in Stockholm controlled an apparently well-placed agent reporting on the Soviet Union [See Appendices 5-8]⁶. This source had the cover name SCHÖNEMANN. So the question was: who was SCHÖNEMANN?

This problem was soon solved in a way that was fairly characteristic. You will observe at the bottom of the telegram shown in Appendix 8, the name of another person called von Lossow at the Abwehr HQ in Berlin. The Swedes knew that a meeting had been scheduled between von Lossow and SCHÖNEMANN in Copenhagen but this had been cancelled because it was considered uncertain that SCHÖNEMANN would be allowed to re-enter Sweden. So it was decided instead to send von Lossow to Stockholm. Forewarned about this change of plan, the Swedish Security Service stepped up its surveillance of the German Legation, prior to the arrival of von Lossow. As a result, a treff⁷ was observed between von Lossow and two other people. One was Werner Boening who worked with films in the Cultural Department of the German Legation. The other was Edgar Klaus [Appendix 9 ], a mysterious Baltic businessman, residing at the Carlton Hotel. It did not take the Swedish authorities long to work out that SCHÖNEMANN was Klaus. As for Boening, it would later emerge that he had been Klaus’ initial case officer in Sweden before the Baltic businessman was transferred to Dr. Hans Wagner, the Head of the Abwehr Station, in Stockholm.

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⁵ One of the more significant windows into Geheimsschreiber traffic at the close of the war came about through the recruitment of an agent in the German Air Attaché’s teleprinter office, not through cryptanalysis.
⁶ The collection of intercepts relating to Klaus, are to be found in Curt Kempffs archive,ÖV1:3 at Krigsarkivet,Stockholm.
⁷ i.e. a conspiratorial meeting
While the identification of Klaus as SCHÖNEMANN seemed clear, it proved more difficult to establish who exactly Klaus was. Paradoxically this was due to not so much to a complete absence of information, but rather to a host of conflicting information, a great deal of it put into circulation by Klaus himself. Not unlike many such characters before or since, he seemed to glory in the role of *éminence grise.* There was general agreement that he was a German speaking Balt, that he had at some time lived in Russia and was knowledgeable about Russian affairs. His life-style at Hotel Carlton suggested that he was a man of substance. His much younger Swedish wife prompted smiles. His principal business was reputedly in film distribution. He was known to enjoy contacts with the German Legation in Stockholm but simultaneously his appearance invited doubts among National Socialist true believers in the local German community that the man was *rein arisch* and as a result Klaus was the target of malicious local gossip, some of it suggesting that the fellow was a Soviet spy.

In due course, his true identity became clearer. The Swedes had probably discovered that a person of surname Klaus had figured in one of their old 1919 Ministry for Foreign Affairs reports [See Appendix 10]. At that time, he was described as a German subject working as a Secretary at the Danish Legation in Riga. When the Danes were approached for further information, they produced more precise details [See Appendix 11]. But apart from this, there were still conspicuous gaps in Swedish knowledge. For example it was probably not known that Klaus had been on the books of German Intelligence in Lithuania before the war [Appendix 12] where he was run, I might add, by the old fox Fritz Cramer⁸ nor yet again that he had also figured as a putative agent of the Soviet and French secret services in the so-called 1939 Riga List drawn up by the German authorities and which set out probable foreign intelligence agents in Latvia [Appendix 13]. Altogether then, Klaus was a most curious figure about whom conflicting signals abounded.

There now occurred a curious intermezzo when the Swedish authorities refused to renew Klaus’s residence permit which expired mid-1942. Indeed, they succeeded in briefly shunting Klaus back to Germany. Canaris meanwhile had personally appealed to a highly-placed Swedish intelligence contact A (probably Adlercreutz⁹) to intervene. A was willing to try, but asked as a *quid pro quo* if some at least of the material Klaus was collecting could be placed at the disposal of Swedish intelligence. We do not know if this occurred. What we do know, however, is that Klaus was re-admitted to Sweden later in 1942 after a brief sojourn in Berlin and took up residence at the Hotel Carlton in Stockholm as if nothing had happened.

With their agent Klaus once more in place, the *Abwehr* had reason to rejoice. But after a few months had elapsed, there was an incident which should have been a

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⁸ Cramer was highly considered as a counterespionage officer. He was later stationed in Lisbon during the war. As far as is known, he had no further link with Klaus. For the connection Cramer-Klaus, see e.g. Julius Mader, *Hitlers Spionagegenerale sagen aus,* (Berlin: Verlag der Nation, 1970). See page 223. According to this account, Klaus was sent to Stockholm on the instructions of Colonel Emil Just.

⁹ Until the autumn of 1942, the head of Swedish Military Intelligence. It is possible that Adlercreutz was also interested in using the Klaus incident to obtain some compensatory service from the Abwehr regarding the Swedish engineers arrested by the Germans in Poland and held under threat of the death sentence.
wake-up call for the Abwehr HQ on the Tirpitzufer in Berlin. On November 6, 1942, the HQ sent a telegram to Stockholm requesting some information [See Appendix 6]. This request was linked in turn with an earlier telegram [See Appendix 5] hinting at Klaus’ impressive sources. In effect, Klaus had clearly been claiming that some of his information ultimately came from Taradin, the Soviet Naval Attaché in Stockholm. A reply with information from Klaus was sent from Stockholm three days later on 9 November [Appendix 7]. On November 24, the Abwehr sent back to its Stockholm its evaluation of the Klaus material [See Appendix 8]. Key co-ordinates which Klaus had supplied were inaccurate. In addition, the Abwehr singled out for criticism another piece of Klaus information, namely a code said to be used for some Russian – Rumanian communications. The information supplied by Klaus was said to be “invented” and it was stated somewhat more encouragingly that the agent had been a victim of deception and had been supplied with worthless material. That the information was freely invented was undoubtedly true: but could one assume so readily, as the Abwehr was wont to do, that the agent in this particular case was not a willing party to the deception?\(^\text{10}\) It has to be said that the Abwehr was badly served by its intelligence assessment routines.

Despite this incident, the Abwehr retained Klaus services and he remained officially on their books until mid-1943 when the Stockholm Station (like others) was asked to discontinue running any agents of Jewish descent. This had repercussions for Edgar Klaus and his career as an Abwehr spy. But the mysterious guest of the Carlton Hotel was soon engaged in other two other complicated projects. One was to purchase the freedom of certain Jews in German occupied territories. The second was to act as midwife to some Soviet-German Separate Peace Agreement. Today I shall focus entirely on the latter.

Round the turn of the year 1942-43, Boening- the original Klaus Abwehr contact in Stockholm - bumped into an old acquaintance, namely Dr. Peter Kleist, a man believed to have the ear of Ribbentrop, Hitler’s Foreign Minister. Kleist had carved out a foreign affairs career as a specialist on Eastern Europe and was associated as one of the background boys in bringing about the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact of August 1939. He was well known to the Russians as anyone can verify who cares to glance at the set of official diplomatic documents on the run-up to war, which were later issued by the Soviet Union\(^\text{11}\). Kleist’s presence in Stockholm was to be explained by the fact that in the course of his official duties in the Political Department of Rosenberg’s Ostministerium, he had become involved with the problem of the so-

\(^{10}\) Several other examples of misleading information passed by Klaus to the Abwehr exist. Schellenberg, the Head of SD Ausland, latterly wrote him off as a venal crook who was probably controlled by the Russians. In a postwar interrogation by the Swedish Security service, Klaus claimed that the coordinates he had given the Germans, had been obtained from listening to the radio station Gustav Siegfried Eins. It is unclear whether he realised that this was a British controlled black propaganda station. The story is of course preposterous and was presumably produced to obscure the fact that the Russians had supplied the data.

called Estonian Swedes - those Swedish speaking fishermen and farmers whose forefathers had for many centuries occupied the coast and islands of Estonia. As reports of their situation arrived in Stockholm, a committee was set up to look after their interests and to work towards bringing them over safely to Sweden. The German-Swedish negotiations on this issue provided Kleist with a convenient excuse for visiting Stockholm relatively frequently. Soon he had carved out a niche for himself as an understanding fellow and went down well with not a few of his Swedish talking partners.  

In the course of his conversation with Boening, Kleist mentioned that Ribbentrop had given him the task of making contacts with the Russians with a view to reaching a peace settlement between Germany and Russia. On hearing this, it struck Boening that it might be a brilliant idea to introduce Kleist to his friend Dr. Klaus. If anybody knew the Russians, it was Dr. Klaus. As a result, a sequence of furtive initiatives took place which began 1943, ran through 1944 and even into 1945, in which the tireless trio Klaus, Kleist and Boening dabbled in secret diplomacy in an apparent effort to arrive at a separate peace between Germany - with or without Hitler - and the Soviet Union. They were - of course - not the only ones involved in the peace-brokering business. Between the Spring of 1943 and July 1944, a veritable army of German emissaries descended on the neutral capitals with proposals to end the war or to sound out the enemy about what policy they would adopt if Hitler were to be pushed aside. The mission of Schellenberg, Head of SD Ausland to Stockholm and his discussion with the American Abraham Hewett are well known as are the visits of Adam von Trott, one of the heroes of the German Resistance, in 1944. Much less seems to be known about a visit of Himmler’s lawyer Langbehn, to Stockholm in 1943 and of course there are shadowy incidents which have never surfaced at all in the open historical literature. Take, for example, the brief appearance of Dr. Weissauer in Stockholm in October 1943. Dr. Weissauer is fascinating because he was a seasoned hand at secret diplomacy. In September 1940, he had been sent to Stockholm as a special emissary to sound out the British about a negotiated peace. In October 1943, his task would appear to have been different. What engaged the attention of the Swedes who were of course keeping an eye on him, was that on the October 19 he went to the Spa Hotel at Saltsjöbaden outside Stockholm. So what? Well at that time, Madame Kollontay the Soviet Minister in Sweden was residing at the hotel, recuperating from the continuing after-effects of her stroke in August 1942. So the question naturally arises: was Weissauer’s trip to Saltsjöbaden a mere coincidence?

I shall not pursue this matter further. I mention it merely to convey something of the diplomatic atmosphere in Stockholm at a time when the talk was full of rumours and the town was full of spies. Instead I shall fix my attention more narrowly on messrs Klaus and Kleist and their part in these furtive diplomatic

12 Another to profit for assisting with the Estonian Swedes was SS Hauptsturmführer Ludwig Lienhardt.
13 This visit deserves further investigation but documentation is sparse.
manoeuvres. Indeed, to narrow my focus still further, I shall concentrate on the events of 1943. In actual fact- *nota bene!*- Kleist and Klaus remained highly active to the very end of 1944.

Let’s begin in February 1943, when Dr Wagner, the Head of the *Abwehr* in Stockholm and a sociable fellow, asked Klaus over for a chat. This turned out to be about German-Soviet Peace negotiations. Wagner informed him that this matter was now in the hands of Werner Dankwort, the Counsellor at the German Legation and in his view, this approach would be successful. Dankwort was working through a Russian who was employed as an interpreter at the Japanese Legation in Stockholm, a man apparently in contact with the NKVD Resident Boris Jartsev (real name Rybkin).

It is now time to look at the Venona telegram which interests me, namely Nr 2978 from VALERIAN to VIKTOR dated 12/11/1943. [See Appendix 1]. VIKTOR was Pavel Fitin, the Head of NKVD Foreign Intelligence while VALERIAN was the then NKVD resident in Stockholm. His real name was apparently Tishchenko aka (in Stockholm) RAZIN aka ROSCHIN. He had been an early member of the Foreign Dept. of OGPU, stationed in Harbin, Manchuria and after various career ups and downs, he had ended up in Stockholm as Resident in succession to Rybkin and his wife Zoja who was also a key officer of the NKVD.

The information being supplied by VALERIAN is the text of a letter sent to the Soviet Legation from a person called FRIEND (Russian: *DRUG*). The expository notes attached to the telegram do not identify DRUG. But you will immediately recognise in the text the telltale names of Dmitriewski and Dankwort. The decrypted telegram, however, is a fragment: typically for Venona, there are crucial gaps in it.

In fact, it is useful to pause and reflect for a moment on how very different the products were which emerged from the reading of German *Geheimschreiber* traffic on the one hand and the retrospective reading of wartime Russian diplomatic traffic on the other. In the German case, the work of interpretation is comparatively straightforward. The text is usually complete. In the Russian case, there are often many gaps. In addition, the Germans were sometimes surprisingly simple minded when it came to using cover-names. For example, they had a tendency- admittedly far from a hundred per cent- to begin the cover-name often with the same letter as the real name. So that Boening for example was BERGER etc. The cover name SCHÖNEMANN for Klaus was obviously ironic. The Russians by contrast were usually more careful. FRIEND, for example tells us very little. So the point is this: in the case of Venona, we are very often left with a major problem of interpretation. As a result, following the release of the Venona telegrams to the public domain, there

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14 Around this time, Klaus began circulating rumours, picked up by the Swedish Security Service, that Wied had been dismissed as German minister in Sweden because he had refused to enter into separate peace negotiations with the Russians. I am grateful to Professor Agrell for reminding me of this fact.

15 In his book on Venona (see page 186), Wilhelm Agrell identifies him as Rostjin. However, David Murphy who co-operated with Serge Kondrashev on the book “Battleground Berlin” has told me that Razin’s real name was in fact Tishchenko. He was of Cossack origin and an old hand of the Soviet Secret Services who somehow managed to survive the Purges. Murphy got his information directly from Kondrashev who ought to know: Tishchenko was K’s father-in-law. After the war, Tishchenko did a stint as Resident in Berlin.
has been no shortage at large of doubting Thomases who use differences of opinion about the proper interpretation of the contents of some telegram to impugn the reliability and objectivity of the insights which can be obtained from the Venona program and even in extreme cases to discredit it as a whole. Now in the case of the inside expert, this doubt can often be swiftly dissipated simply by the fact that one is frequently in a position to calibrate the events described in the texts arising from cryptanalysis with events which are known to have taken place on the basis of independent evidence e.g. from counterespionage surveillance. In the optimal case—which I suspect is infrequent- one can actually calibrate not just events with events, but texts with texts. In other words, one can correlate the decrypted text with a known text available by independent means. Now this is usually and legitimately the province of the expert. But on occasion, the old historian has his pennyworth to give.

Thus consider for a minute appendix 14. Here I have managed to reconstruct a a very fragmentary Venona telegram as it was finally issued, filling in important blanks in the text. Let me explain how I did it.

I recalled that I had seen many years ago in the files of the wartime Swedish Security Service a copy of a letter handed in to the Russian Legation in Stockholm. At that time, I knew that the letter was from Klaus. But the only problem was that later on I could no longer find the letter where it ought to have been, namely in Klaus’ own file. However, I had another important lead, namely the name Dmitrievski. It was very well know to me. Sergius Dmitrievski was an early defector: he was a former Soviet diplomat who had served in Greece and then in Stockholm where he defected in 1926. Thereafter, he had earned his daily bread by writing books about the Soviet Union. Less well known, was the fact that Dmitrievski acted as an occasional source of information for not just one but at least THREE secret services—namely those of Germany, Britain and Japan. Incidentally, as I pointed out in my book *From Information to Intrigue*, he was one of the people whom William Stephenson- so-called INTREPID- later head of British Security Co-ordination in New York, consulted when he visited Sweden at the end of 1939 when the Winter War between Finland and the Soviet Union was in full swing.

To cut a long story short, I found the text of the Klaus letter that I sought in Dmitrievski’s file. Now it should be noted that the text of the letter I discovered was not a copy of the original text but a transcript in Swedish. [Appendix 15]. Appended to this transcript, there was an explanatory note [Appendix 16]. It read as follows: "It has not been possible to establish the identity of the letter writer, since a photocopy of the original document was not made."

This explains why the transcript was not placed in Klaus’ own file at the time. It is also the case that there is no indication in the file of the language in which the original intercepted letter was written. However, since the telegram of November 12 explicitly alludes to a new letter from DRUG in Russian and then goes on to give the text relating to Dmitrievski and Dankwort etc., it is reasonable to suppose that this letter was in fact composed in Russian.
Regarding the supplementary text in English I have provided by way of filling in the gaps, I have to admit with due regard for scholarly exactitude that because one is dealing with “a translation of a translation”, the probability of introducing small linguistic perturbations is increased.

But having said that, I have no doubt whatsoever that the decrypted Venona text and the wholly independent text I have unearthed, really coincide.

Moreover, I am perfectly convinced that Edgar Klaus was DRUG.

Apart from the telegram of 12 November, Swedish Venona contains a follow-up telegram [Appendix 2] from Stockholm of 14 November which explicitly states that DRUG had mentioned a German industrial concern associated with a person called Stumm.

Now it so happens that on November 6, 1943 i.e. about a week before the despatch of the aforementioned Venona telegram- Klaus had a telephone conversation with his lawyer Arran Hamilton in Stockholm. We know that because the Swedish Security Service was listening in [Appendix 17]. During the conversation, Klaus explicitly mentioned the Stumm concern. It was something that he had discussed with Peter Kleist.

So once more, the events in a Venona decrypt can be calibrated with events which are known independently to have taken place around the same time. This calibration also, in my view, provides a clue as to a possible plausible identification of UCN 37.

The connection between the telegram of December 5 [Appendix 4]and the other DRUG telegrams is much less obvious, but I think that one can establish such a connection with a little extra effort. The Kühlmann who figures in the telegram was Richard von Kühlmann, a former Secretary of State at the German Foreign Office and the man incidentally who led the German delegation sent to negotiate a peace settlement with the Russians at Brest-Litowsk in March 1918. Independently we know that von Kühlmann visited Stockholm in the second half of November 1943. Now it so happens that von Kuhlmann’s first wife, was Margareta von Stumm, a member of the Stumm industrial dynasty. So there is after all an ongoing and concrete connection with the various hints that Klaus had been dropping earlier.

Now all these rumours of German peace feelers whether directed to the East or the West did very little to improve confidence and trust between the two Allied sides, which even at the best of times was very far from 100%. Indeed this may well have been one of the intended effects of the German peace feelers: namely as a **provocation** designed to sow the seeds of disharmony. In this connection, I would draw your attention to the fact that the Venona telegram of November 12 [Appendix 1] speaks of Klaus having **provided the Russians with statements of Western statesmen criticizing the Soviet Union**. Anyhow an important step in trying to establish more openness and trust was taken at the Foreign Ministers’ Conference in Moscow in October 1943 whereby the Soviet, American and British governments agreed to inform each other immediately of any enemy peace feeler they received.
One of the first fruits of this allied agreement was a memorandum from Molotov to Harriman, dated November 12 and received by the American Embassy at 11.00 the following morning. It deserves to be quoted in full:

I consider it necessary to inform you for communication to the Government of the United States of certain peace feelers on the part of the Germans which took place recently in Stockholm. In the beginning of November the people’s Commissar for Foreign Affairs received a communication to the following effect:

The Soviet Mission in Sweden received by post a letter in the middle of October in which the author without giving his name but mentioning an agreed address, communicated his willingness to turn over to the Soviet Government information which might be of use for the liquidation of the war in 1943. While not attaching much significance to this letter, the Soviet Mission nevertheless did not refuse to listen to this information and authorized one of the staff to do so. This staff member also met the author of the above mentioned letter.

It turned out the author of the letter was one Edgar Klaus, a German citizen and businessman. Klaus told the member of staff of the Soviet Mission the following:

In Germany there allegedly exists a group of industrialists headed by a representative Kleist of the firm Stuum [sic] (it has not been possible up to the present to establish whether or not such a firm or such a person exists). This group is in close contact with Ribbentrop and the members of the group are in favor of the conclusion of a separate peace with the Soviet Union. With a view to seeking contact with Soviet representatives for conversations in conclusion of a separate peace, several representatives of this group of industrialists are said to have come to Stockholm in the autumn of this year in order, it is alleged, to establish contact with the Soviet representative in Sweden, but they did not find any suitable intermediary and this attempt ended in failure. The second attempt to establish contact was undertaken by these German industrialists through the above mentioned German businessman Klaus, who also sent to the Soviet Mission the letter referred to above. Klaus referring to the instructions, he had from Kleist and other industrialists, declared to our staff member that the Germans would agree to everything that the Soviet Government demands and are prepared (to accept) even the 1914 frontiers. Klaus declared in this connection that it is clear to the Germans that they have lost the war, that the morale of the people is catastrophically worsening and that Germany has not sufficient armed forces for the further prosecution of the war (the ruling circles are disturbed over the Moscow Conference and the retreat of the German Army on the Soviet-German frontier). In conclusion, Klaus enquired whether he could promise the person who had sent him the possibility of establishing
contact with Soviet representatives and whether someone from the Soviet representatives did not desire to meet Ribbentrop.

The Staff member of the Soviet Mission, on instructions from the Chargé d’Affaires, replied to Klaus that there could be absolutely no question of contact with Soviet representatives and that they refused to carry on any conversations whatsoever or have any further meetings with the above mentioned person. The Soviet Government confirmed to the Chargé d’Affaires the correctness of his answer.\textsuperscript{16}

For many years, the Molotov memorandum was the most authoritative statement presenting the Soviet official standpoint with regard to the Klaus-Kleist intermezzo. However after 1991, new possibilities of throwing some additional light on this episode presented themselves. One initiative was taken by Leif Leifland, a former Under-Secretary of State at the Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs and also a keen student of modern diplomatic history. Working via Örjan Berner, then at the Swedish Embassy in Moscow, Leifland asked if further Russian documentation relating to the activities of Klaus and Kleist could be released. The answer obtained from the acting Head of the Historical Diplomatic Archive, Vladimir W. Sokolow, was that the cypher telegrams which formed part of the file, were \textit{not} releasable. However, Sokolow did provide Berner with an outline of the main points in the development of the case as seen from the standpoint of the Soviet Foreign Ministry. This summary (as rendered by Berner) I shall refer to as Berner’s memorandum\textsuperscript{17}. It covers a period from October 11, 1942 to September 4, 1944. As far as the secret letters of 1943 are concerned, the account in Berner’s memorandum does not quite agree one hundred per cent with Molotov’s memorandum, although the differences are perhaps more of nuance than of central importance. In Berner, for example, the impression is given that the Russians established the identity of Klaus and the importance of Kleist slightly later than in fact they clearly did as is spelled out in Molotov’s statement. On the other hand, Berner’s memorandum allows us to attach a specific date to the earlier Klaus letter of October, namely October 11, exactly one month before the letter of November 12. Berner’s memorandum also amusingly notes that the letter of October 11 sent to the Legation was written by Klaus “in bad Russian”, an interesting comment on the agent’s linguistic skills\textsuperscript{18}.

What is more interesting, are the differences between what is revealed in the Venona telegrams and what emerges in the diplomatic explanations which are naturally coy when it comes to the role played by the NKVD in all this. In the Venona telegram of November 12, there are two points which are particularly

\textsuperscript{16}\textit{United States Department of State / Foreign relations of the United States diplomatic papers, 1943. General Volume I (1943), p.502.}

\textsuperscript{17}I am most grateful to Leif Leifland for providing me with a copy of Berner’s account at the time and also for his most interesting unpublished essay in German on the Klaus-Kleist intermezzo entitled \textit{Deutsche Friedensführer in Stockholm 1944: -ein Blick in sowjetische Archive.}

\textsuperscript{18}At another point in the Berner memorandum, the anonymous letter writer is referred to as a "bekannter deutscher Händler namens Edgar Klaus, der schlecht russisch sprach…".
tantalising. The first is the phrase “DRUG who is known to you –you in this case being FITIN, the Head of NKVD Foreign Intelligence. The second is the statement: “He [DRUG] says that he is operating as an agent [B% planted] by the Germans”.

Tantalising, but not alas unambiguous! Take the first phrase “DRUG who is known to you”. The problem is: who is saying this? Is it DRUG himself who is saying that he is known to Fitin - the really interesting alternative- or is it VALERIAN, the NKVD Resident in Stockholm who is merely reporting that DRUG is known to Fitin through e.g. earlier reports – much less interesting.

The second point- the statement “He [DRUG] says that he is operating as an agent [B%planted] by the Germans”. This is extraordinary in two different ways: why would someone like DRUG make such a statement in the first place? And secondly why would Fitin need to be told this if he already knows DRUG?

Some of you will perhaps feel that I am being overly pedantic. Surely you will say there can be little doubt that Klaus is merely just another example of a double-agent and the tricks that they get up to. And it is quite true, as I have indicated, that the way in which Klaus at an earlier staged passed fallacious information to the Abwehr, suggests that he was actively being used to feed deception material. So the double agent hypothesis is plausible. At the same time, I would defend my pedanticism regarding the interpretation of certain phrases in the telegram of November 12 on the grounds that if we really want to get to the bottom of the matter we should in general be extremely careful not to read things into the material before us. We have to admit- which can be a difficult thing for intelligence people to do- that we simply at present do not know.

The other Venona telegrams linked to FRIEND’s intervention allow us to identify various NKVD operatives like ABRAM – Igor Spitchkine – who was apparently involved in the practical mechanics of the Klaus case. I should add that Spitchkine was also deployed as an intermediary in a parallel and not unimportant incident of secret diplomacy in Stockholm, namely in discussing peace terms with the Rumanians. The telegrams also mention other people such as KLARA and KhOChEV who were brought in to check out some of the information arising from the Klaus-Kleist intervention. KLARA (= GUSTI STRIDSBERG ) was one of the more alluring assets of the NKVD Resident in Stockholm with many excellent contacts and also an important recruiter. She evidently supplied information about von Kühlmann and perhaps about various other currents of opposition in Germany. The identity of KhOChEV, by contrast, is not in the public domain although it can be established with precision. I can reveal that KhOChEV was an individual who was employed in the Commercial Section of the German Legation in Stockholm and

19 However, there is also the following to consider. Vladimir and Evdokia Petrov who defected in Australia, had served in Sweden during the war. Their debriefing was a crucial source of information about Soviet intelligence activities in Sweden. In their statements, I have found no reference to Klaus as a Soviet controlled agent.

20 According to the Petrovs, KLARA turned out to be a double agent and was at some stage “turned” by the Swedes. She herself published after the war a curious short piece about a person who was thought to be a spy but who in fact was a “double” loyally reporting back to the domestic security service.
therefore very well placed to discover whatever was needed about the Stumm concern.

Rather than meditate further on such operational details, I would like to comment on the larger picture. In many early presentations of the Klaus–Kleist affair in Stockholm—notably in that due to Kleist himself—the impression was created that the initiative for the negotiations came from the Russian side. However, my own analysis of the case suggests that this is without foundation. Throughout, the initiative was German in inspiration and it was the Germans who kept up the pressure in trying to make contact. The aim behind this German initiative may have been quite genuine—a desire for a dialogue with the Soviet side, linked also to the prospect of régime change in Germany. But at a stage of the war when German fortunes had taken a turn for the worse, it could also be seen purely as a provocation designed to split the enemy alliance. For their part, the Russians were prepared to meet Klaus in order to find out what he and his backers were up to. In the circumstances, it was standard procedure. A complication in later presenting the case to their Western allies may have arisen, I suspect, through the fact that Klaus had also been used by the Russians at an earlier stage to feed intelligence chickenfeed to the Abwehr. One has to admit that to have to relate to the Western Powers that the German seeking contact with the Soviet Legation in Stockholm was in fact a Soviet Agent was no easy sell! Despite this, when one takes into account the evidence supplied by Swedish security service surveillance, Venona telegrams, Molotov’s memorandum and Berner’s memorandum, my overall impression is that as regards the Klaus-Kleist intervention at least, the Russians played with a straight bat and gave what was largely an accurate account of what had transpired. There are two qualifications that should be noted. First of all, the NKVD Resident was quite prepared to discontinue briefing his diplomatic colleague Vladimir Semenov who deputised for Madame Kollontay during her illness, if Fitin so wished. As a result, in what followed, there may have been moves in the game about which the Soviet Ministry for Foreign Affairs knew nothing. Secondly I would be very careful about extrapolating from the Klaus-Kleist case. Whether there was similar glasnost about German-Soviet dialogues taking place in other, unexplored corners of the woods, is another matter. Quaeritur: what contingency plans had Stalin in hand if the attempted coup of July 20, 1944 had succeeded? I suspect that there are still some surprises in store for us in the Russian archives!

Let me close with a reflection. It will be recalled that the Venona program was originally set up by Colonel Carter Clarke, not in order to monitor Soviet espionage, but to monitor any attempts by the Soviet Union to arrive at a separate peace with Nazi Germany. In fact, the telegrams of FRIEND discussed above were the very thing that Clarke would have been all ears to hear about, even if his analysts—let us face it—might have had a job on their hands to make sense of the fragments. As it turned out, the years would go by and times would change before the decrypts became available. By then, worries about the extent of Soviet espionage and ongoing concerns about people in sensitive positions—Donald MacLean is a good example—who might still be
active, had taken centre stage. The original purpose of the project was quietly forgotten. The question of wartime Soviet-German peace feelers was as dead as a dodo. It had become a subject of purely historical concern.
Appendix 1 The Venona telegram of November 12, 1943

From: SPUCHVULM
To: MOSCOW
No: 2978
12th November 1943

[1 group unrecovered]

"DROG"[ii] who is known to you [1 group unrecovered] to send[a] a [C3 secret writing] letter by [1 group unrecovered] post addressed to our Minister [PREMIER][iii]. He says that he is operating as an agent [9p.planted] by the Germans. In his secret letter he sent a report on statements directed against the USSR by prominent British and American statesmen. This report was [99 directed]

[67 groups unrecovered]

new [C3 secret writing] letter from "DROG" in Russian [1 group unrecovered] on the instructions of Herr DANKO[iv] some fellow [B called] "MUTHEL"[v] [BM is attempting] to establish contact with you. "MUTHEL" announced

[21 groups unrecovered]

Herr DANKO....

[15 groups unrecovered]

- SINTENPP. Supreme Headquarters [1 group unrecovered] "HAUPTSTADTQUARTER" definitely wishes to achieve peace with RUSSIA regardless of the consequences and at all costs. My friend [93 DROG][vi] tells me and

[14 groups unrecovered]

[2 groups unrecovered]

[5 groups unrecovered]

his[.] Prayer if only German military circles would consent to [5 groups unrecovered] more. I passed this letter to DANKOV[iv] and he will obviously send it to the HAUPTSTADTQUARTER. If this is important to you I can in future refrain from giving these communications to anyone here and send them only to you. N.B. Among the Counsellors here at the German Legation, DANKOV is the chief man.

No. 599

[20 groups unrecovered]

VALERULM[viii]
Appendix 2 The Venona telegram of November 14, 1943 mentioning the involvement of the STUMM concern.
Appendix 3 The Venona telegram of November 26, 1943 in which Klaus gives the Soviet Legation information on air raids on Berlin.
Appendix 4. The Venona telegram of December 5, 1943, alluding to the visit of the veteran German diplomat Richard von Kühlmann.
Appendix 5 A Swedish *Geheimschreiber* intercept. SCHÖNEMANN claims to have acquired naval information from one Karpoff, a secretary to Kollontay. Karpoff had got it in turn from a Russian naval officer. The latter was Taradin, the Soviet Naval Attaché and responsible for Naval GRU activities in Stockholm. The identity of Karpoff was never fully established. But as Professor Agrell has very kindly and pertinently pointed out to me, it is highly interesting to note that Emmy Dabbert (born Schultz-Fegen) who was Kollontay's intimate friend and acted as her private secretary, had grown up in Riga and had worked for a Danish typewriter company there. During the First World War, Dabbert had a secretarial position at the American Legation in Petrograd where she had been concerned with German POW matters, before returning to Riga in 1918. Thus there might well have been an undisclosed link between Dabbert and Klaus. It is also certainly true that the NKVD worried about Dabbert's close relations with Kollontay.
Appendix 6 Swedish Geheimschreiber intercept showing the Abwehr’s request to SCHÖNEMANN = Klaus to obtain certain coordinates from Taradin and also to find out the names of the German seamen employed by Tardin as sources.
"Avsänt den 9/11 1942
Tjana SSD
Till GWOKA

Tidenr 1300
Från Mil Att St Holm Cl45

An GWOKA: Tm 2.
OKW Abwehrabteilung RÖm 1, für Abw RÖm eins H Ost N.
Für Abw RÖm eins M.
Geheime Kommandosache.

Bezug: dort.P3 Nr 4260/42 GKDOS v. 3.11.42.
Schönemann teilt soeben mit.

I. Zur Zeit befinden sich drei russische U-Boote in der
Ostsee. Hauptschlupfwinkel zwischen den Inseln Dagö, Non,
Worms auf Position 50,4 Nord 21,8 Ost- 58,5 Nord 23,0 Ost
Anlaufstelle gegen Fliegensicht sehr gut getarnt, war schon
vor dem Kriege vorbereitet für Proviant und Treibstoff.

II. In der Nacht vom 6.- 7. November sind aus Hafen Dorn-
noch (Firth of Forth) elf Schiffe mit 38000 Tonnen nach
Wurmansk ausgelaufen, weitere acht Schiffe mit rund 26000
Tonnen (Ladung Lebensmittel und Chemikalien) sollten 22
Stunden später auslaufen.

Verteiler: Abw RÖm eins H Ost N, Abw RÖm eins M.
Zu Punkt 2: AOK Norwegen, Ast Norwegen.
KO Schweden, Tgbnr 3§§11/42 GKDOS v. 9.11.42. Dr.Wagner."
Appendix 8 Swedish Geheimschreiber intercept showing Abwehr dissatisfaction with the work of SCHÖNEMANN=Klaus.
Appendix 9 Edgar Klaus, man of mystery (Photo reproduced in Fleischhauer)
Till Hans Excellens Herr Ministern för Utrikes Årenden.

Beskickningen har i dagarna haft besök av sekreteraren vid danska konsulatet i Riga, tyske undersåten Herr Claus. Jag begärde tillfälle att fråga honom, huruvida enligt hans åsikt någon möjlighet skulle finnas att sända omhandlad 10,000 Mark till Konsul Holmgren i Riga. Han svarade mig hörpå, att detta möjligen skulle kunna göras i den form, att en i dagarna dit återvändande bror till danske konsuln däremot, Herr Herekind, skulle lämna konsul Holmgren meddelande hänop och gärna försträcka honom önskade belopp, intill ovan angivna summa, vilket sedan kunde ersätta Herr Herekind. Däremot ansåge alltfor risikabelt att till Riga medföra beloppet. För sin del trodde Herr Claus, att Holmgren med all säkerhet i Riga hade möjlighet att förskafta sig försträckning.

Angående förhållanden i Riga skildrade Herr Claus dessa.
FIG 11 The Danes supplied the Swedes with more details about Klaus. It is said that his original name was Joseph Klaus, the son of Itzig Markus Klaus and Chaja Hausmann. He is described as a Jew and a former Russian citizen. In 1927, Klaus was apparently going about claiming to be a Danish Consul and Danish citizen.
Appendix 12 A letter from an informant to the German Foreign Office saying that Klaus had worked as an agent for the German Military Attaché in Kowno, Lithuania. However, it is simultaneously suggested that he is suspected of being a Russian agent.
K l a u s, Edgar, geb. 28.10.79 in Riga, getaufter Jude, Kommunist, vermutliche Wohnschrift Riga. Privilegialeise 80. früherer deutscher Kaiserpass Nr. 182 133/31, ausgestellt in Berlin am 20.3.1931. Jetzt Nansenpass Nr. 0 003 385 vom 16.5.39. Arbeitet im französischen und sowjetrussischen W.D.

Appendix 13 Entry for Klaus in the so-called Riga List, drawn up by the German authorities and containing the names of possible enemy agents. Klaus is said to a baptised Jew and to have worked for the French and Soviet Intelligence Services.
Appendix 14 Some important gaps in the fragmentary text of the telegram of November 12, 1943, filled in with the help of an independent text found in the Swedish Security Service archives.

On the instructions of Herr Dankwört some fellow called Dmitriewski [is attempting] to establish contact with you. Dmitriewski announced

Herr Dankwort

Ribbentrop, Supreme Headquarters “Fuhrer Hauptquartier” definitely wishes to achieve peace regardless of the consequences and at all costs.
As my friend tells me and

his Fuhrer if only German military circles would consent to power.

On behalf of Herr Dankwört, some fellow called Dmitriewsky is trying to contact you. This Dmitriewsky boasts that he is able to be in touch with you. This Herr Dmitriewsky has apparently served or serves the Japanese Legation in the capacity of Russian interpreter. This mission has not been given directly by Dankwort himself, but in accordance with instructions from Berlin directly given by von Ribbentrop.
The Headquarters the so-called “Fuhrer Hauptquartier” wishes unconditionally to obtain peace with Russia no matter the circumstances and cost. According what my friend has said and he is in a position to know it very well, one is prepared to accept the status quo ante 1914 in the event that Russia accepts a peace and even that villain Himmler is prepared to shove aside his Fuhrer if the German military circles agree to losing power with them.
Excuse me that I write badly in Russian because I have nearly forgotten everything.
Brev till Socialistiska Sovjetrepublikernas Legation,
U.d.S.J.R.
Stockholm
Vilagor 17.


På uppdrag av herr Bankwort (G.ä.), försöker en visa typ med namnet Dmitrovsky att komma i kontakt med er. Denne Dmitrovsky skryter med att han kan ha förbindelse med er? Denne herr Dmitrovsky skulle ha tjänstgjort eller tjänstgjort vid Japanska legationen i Stockholm i egenskap av rysk tolk.

Dessa uppdrag hav. ej givits direkt av Bankwort ejstl, men efter anvisningar från Berlin direkt av von Ribbentrop.

Högkvarteret det så kallade "Führer Hauptkvarter" önskar ovillkorligen att erhålla fred med Ryssland under vilka som helst förhållanden och vid det "in skulle kosta. Enligt vad min vän meddelar och han är i ständ att veta det mycket väl så i händelse av att USSR gör med på fred då där kan man med på Status que ante 1914. C. och t.o.m. denne usling Himler är oäven också att den svenska fraktionen skulle ha behag att tillsammans med dem tagna makt.

Ursäkta men jag skriver dåligt på ryska då jag har nästan glömt allt.

Appendix 15 The original Swedish transcript of the anonymous letter from Klaus quoted in the Venona telegram of November 12 (FIG 1)
Appendix 16 Covering letter to the transcript of the anonymous letter intercepted by the Swedish Security Service, stating that the identity of the author of the anonymous letter has not (yet) been established.
Appendix 17 A telephone conversation between Klaus and his lawyer Arran Hamilton, intercepted by the Swedish Security Service in which the Stumm concern is mentioned. This conversation took place on November 6. A week later the involvement of the Stumm concern in German peace feelers was the subject of a Soviet telegram. Hamilton’s link with Klaus is interesting because Hamilton was a business partner of a certain Åke Grönwall who was involved in a peace feeler (said to emanate from Himmler) in December 1943 extended to the British. Most such peace feelers were treated with the greatest suspicion in London and were invariably transferred to the special services (SOE /SIS) for any follow-up deemed necessary.