

**FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION  
FREEDOM OF INFORMATION/PRIVACY ACTS SECTION**

**COVER SHEET**

**SUBJECT: HERMAN F. ERBEN  
FILE: 65-HQ-682**

1105 Mills Tower,  
San Francisco, California  
December 11, 1936

RE: DR. HERMAN S. ERBEN  
ESPIONAGE

Lieut. Colonel H. R. Oldfield,  
Office of the Assistant Chief of Staff  
for Military Intelligence (G-2),  
Headquarters Ninth Corps Area,  
Presidio of San Francisco,  
California

Dear Colonel Oldfield: PERSONAL AND CONFIDENTIAL

I wish to acknowledge receipt of your letter dated December 10, 1936 (your file G-2, 383.4 General), in which you quoted a report of the American Consul at Pernambuco, Brazil concerning the activities of Dr. Herman S. Erben, the doctor on the American steamer WEST MAJAH, of the Pacific-Brazil-Argentine Line.

This matter will receive appropriate attention by this Bureau, and you may be assured that your continued cooperation in connection with these matters is sincerely appreciated. U

Very truly yours,

N. L. LISTERMAN,  
Special Agent in Charge

WLL:MLA

CC Bureau ✓

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65-682-1

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# FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

Form No. 1  
THIS CASE ORIGINATED AT **San Francisco, California**

FILE NO. **65-31**

REPORT MADE AT <b>San Francisco, Calif.</b>	DATE WHEN MADE <b>1-17-37</b>	PERIOD FOR WHICH MADE <b>1-15-37</b>	REPORT MADE BY <b>[REDACTED]</b> - FD <b>b7c</b>
TITLE <b>DR. HERMAN S. ERBEN, alias Herman Frederick Erben; LLOYD UETINGER; (S. S. West Mahwah)</b>			CHARACTER OF CASE <b>Espionage Mutiny on the High Seas</b>

**SYNOPSIS OF FACTS:**

Dr. HERMAN S. ERBEN, Surgeon, S. S. WEST MAHWAH, a vessel of American Registry owned by McCORMICK STEAMSHIP CO., San Francisco, and LLOYD UETINGER, Seaman's Union Delegate on this vessel, are reported by this company to have been engaged in inciting a mutiny, intimidating the crew and passengers, and preventing longshoremen at foreign ports from unloading its cargo. Dr. ERBEN suspected of spying and communistic activities on this and other vessels, including the S. S. PRESIDENT GARFIELD, now at pier 9, New York City. Army Navy Intelligence and State Department, Washington, D. C., have reported Dr. ERBEN'S activities. Dr. ERBEN discharged from the S. S. WEST MAHWAH at Rio de Janeiro for his activities and is returning to the United States on the S. S. DEL NORTE, Delta Line, to arrive New Orleans February 3, 1937. S. S. WEST MAHWAH due to arrive at Los Angeles February 13, 1937, when complete information should be obtained from officers and others on that vessel as to the activities of Subjects. U

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**DETAILS:** Lieutenant Colonel W. R. OLDFIELD, Military Intelligence, United States Army, Presidio of San Francisco, addressed a letter to the San Francisco Field Division on December 10, 1936 quoting a report of the American Consul, Pernambuco, Brazil, dated November 16, 1936, reading as follows:

APPROVED AND FORWARDED <i>N. L. Litterman</i>	SPECIAL AGENT IN CHARGE	DO NOT WRITE IN THESE SPACES
COPIES OF THIS REPORT 3 Bureau 2 New York 2 Washington Field New Orleans Los Angeles		65-127 + 3 JAN 26 1937 JAN 26 1937 JAN 26 1937

On November 15th when the American steamer WEST MAHWAH of the Pacific-Brazil-Argentine Line was on the point of sailing from this port, Captain E. A. Jansen of that vessel requested me to inform the appropriate American authorities that he suspects his ship's doctor of being engaged in spying activities. The master's suspicions seem to have originated by excessive photographing on the part of the ship's doctor at all ports on the vessel's itinerary since leaving Los Angeles, especially while the vessel was in the Panama Canal Zone and at San Juan, Porto Rico. The Master's suspicions were heightened when, a few days ago, the doctor hastily concealed a document, seemingly of Austrian or German origin, of which the Captain happened to get a glimpse in a desk drawer in the doctor's cabin. The master was unable to ascertain the nature of the document.

The doctor is entered on the ship's articles as HERMAN S. ERBEN, thirty-nine years of age, born in Austria and naturalized as an American citizen. His height is six feet and, according to the Captain, he weighs about 230 pounds. His mother, Mrs. J. ERBEN, of Arenbergring 19, Vienna, Austria, is given as his nearest of kin. The Captain stated that Dr. ERBEN had been in Europe for approximately four years before joining the WEST MAHWAH on her present voyage, which is the first he has taken in this ship. He was apparently employed through the San Francisco office of the McCormick Steamship Company, that concern being the managing agent of the Pacific-Argentine-Brazil Line.

After cautioning the Captain to keep the doctor's activities under observation without arousing his suspicions in order to prevent flight or destruction of evidence in the event that he is really an agent of a foreign government instead of being merely an over-enthusiastic amateur photographer, it was suggested the Captain should also get into touch with the military or naval attache in Rio de Janeiro on his arrival at that port about three days hence. As the WEST MAHWAH was on the point of sailing, it was not possible to make any discreet full investigation at Pernambuco, but the Consulate General in Rio de Janeiro has been informed of the case by air mail so that preparations can be made at that port for any action which may be deemed advisable in the premises.

b7c id ✓

[redacted] Official of the McCormick Steamship Company, 461 Market Street, San Francisco, reported to the San Francisco Field Division that the "WEST MAHWAH" is operated by this company and is a ship of American Registry, that Dr. ERBEN, was the ship's surgeon on this vessel which sailed from San Francisco on a round-trip to Buenos Aires on September 27, 1936, and is due to return to the United States on or about February 13, 1937, Los Angeles, California being the first port of call in this country. u

Dr. HERMAN ERBEN was previously employed as Ship's Surgeon on the "WEST NOTUS" for a similar round trip during the year 1931, and upon return of that vessel to San Francisco, Dr. ERBEN was discharged and the McCormick Company had no further contact with him till he signed up for the voyage on the "WEST MAHWAH". Dr. ERBEN is said to have been a member of the National Geographic Society expedition in Tibet and later visited Germany for about a year subsequent to 1931. According to [redacted] this man is believed to be an American citizen. u

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Upon arrival of the "WEST MAHWAH" at San Juan, Puerto Rico, October 27, 1936, this vessel while in port did not unload cargo due to the mutinous action on part of the vessel's unlicensed personnel striking and refusing to furnish steam for winches in order to prevent discharge of the cargo. The MCCORMICK STEAMSHIP COMPANY received telegraphic reports from [redacted] that Dr. ERBEN was agitating among members of the crew, attempting to incite the Puerto Rican longshoremen to join in a sympathy strike, and conspiring with certain passengers and the sailors union delegate, Subject LLOYD USINGER, to instigate a law suit against the vessel and the company. u

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An excerpt from a letter written by [redacted] to the McCormick Company reads as follows: u

"Unfortunately there are certain radicals on this ship. Particularly one LLOYD USINGER, and the Doctor HERMAN ERBEN, who both seem to be able to intimidate the crew and passengers, and who take advantage of this whenever they see fit; however, with the exception of these two men, the crew seems to be made up of individuals of the highest character, so thereafter feel we will be able to continue our voyage uneventfully as long as the above mentioned men are forced to abandon their radical activities."

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[redacted] further reports that subsequent complaints were received from [redacted] reporting difficulties experienced during the course of the voyage to Buenos Aires, at the port of Buenos Aires, and on the return northbound voyage via Brazilian ports. A telegram from Rio de Janeiro dated January 6, 1937, was sent from [redacted] aboard this vessel concerning his personal observations of conditions aboard the vessel. The sender of this telegram may be located through the Master of the vessel. The telegram reads as follows:

"McCormick freighter WEST MAHWAH left here tonight [redacted] mutinous crew mostly drunk [redacted] abominable assures necessity prompt cable from McCormick requesting immediate action radical disciplinary measures necessary especially attributed mutinous fighting Doctor aboard. Agent, Captain, apparently powerless." U

[redacted] states further that it is evident that Subjects on this vessel were attempting to instigate the crew against Captain and officers, in violation of U. S. Code, Title 18, Section 483, P. 500. U

The McCormick Company received a cablegram from its Rio de Janeiro office, dated January 7, 1937, advising that the Ship's Surgeon, Dr. ERBEN was discharged. It was learned that Dr. ERBEN booked passage on the DELTA LINE, Steamer "DEL NORTE" due to sail from Rio de Janeiro on January 16, 1937, and to arrive at New Orleans on February 3, 1937. It appears from the facts, according to [redacted] that the action on the part of Dr. ERBEN was to incite revolt among other American citizens employed on the steamer "WEST MAHWAH", acts of insubordination hinging on actual violation of the Seamen's laws of Mutiny at Sea, collusion in attempt to instigate false legal suits against the vessel or owners. [redacted] furnished this Division a copy of a Report of Personal Injury wherein Subject LLOYD E. USINGER at 7:30 P. M. November 12, 1936, claimed to have injured his knee on the deck of this vessel. The injury report was signed by Subject ERBEN and witnessed by seven supposed witnesses who are E. R. POWERS, Messman, JOHN THOMPSON, LEONARD T. BASIL, RAFAEL MAESTRE, RALPH NORTON, HARVEY S. ANDERSON, and D. H. MARTIN. U

[redacted] states that Subject LLOYD USINGER is presently employed on the "S. S. WEST MAHWAH", which is expected to arrive in Los Angeles on February 13, 1937, that the McCormick Company first had difficulties with this man when he was a seaman on the "HOLLYWOOD" at the Port of Vancouver, B. C., early in August, 1936, that he was acting as Seamen's Union Delegate which position he seems to assume on the "S. S. WEST MAHWAH". Upon arrival of the "HOLLYWOOD" at Vancouver, B. C., this vessel was prevented from discharging or loading cargo because of prevailing labor controversies existing on the part of the American Seamen's Union toward the Canadian longshoremen's organization. When the Vancouver longshoremen proceeded to board the vessel, Subject LLOYD USINGER stood at the head of the ship's gangway and announced to the stevedores that they would not be permitted to board, unless they became members of the particular union organization which he represented. U

The Canadian authorities offered their powers of persuasion and intervention in the controversy since Subject USINGER'S actions comprised threats against citizens of a foreign country while aboard an American vessel in foreign waters. However, according to [redacted] for fear of possible violence occurring, it was finally decided that the vessel should return to the Port of Seattle. Negotiations were carried on, which ended in the assurance that should the vessel again return to Vancouver the former difficulties would not occur and the cargo could be discharged or other cargo loaded. Under this assurance from various union representatives, the vessel returned to Vancouver on August sixth, and the same situation occurred as in the former instance because of USINGER'S activities and the vessel again returned to Seattle. Upon arrival at Seattle, LLOYD USINGER left the vessel and upon leaving, is said to have made the following remarks to the Master of this vessel: "My job is done and I am well paid for it - the 'WEST IRA' is next on the list. We are now ready to stop all Norwegian and French ships at the Port of Vancouver." U

[redacted] stated that the next difficulty with Subject USINGER occurred when the McCormick Company made a request at the Seaman's Hall, San Francisco, for a seaman for the "WEST MAHWAH", this man, Subject USINGER, was assigned to occupy the vacancy in the vessel's crew. The protests made to the Union in objection to shipping LLOYD USINGER met with refusal to furnish any other man in substitution. U

Upon arrival of this vessel at San Juan, Puerto Rico, October 27, 1936, the unlicensed members of the crew went on strike, and according to [redacted] an investigation there disclosed that LLOYD USINGER and Subject ERSEN cooperated in agitating the crew to strike action, with attempts to strengthen their position by agitating among the Puerto Rican stevedores requesting that the latter join the seamen in their strike. They refused to do so when the McCormick company threatened to take action. After a period of three days the strike was called off. U

[redacted] of the "WEST MAHWAH" is said to have reported to his employer, the McCormick Company, continual events from the balance of the voyage to date, where the activities of Subject LLOYD USINGER have caused stoppages in work, delayed departures from several ports, and other difficulties. [redacted] stated that while at the Port of Santos, LLOYD USINGER threatened to take [redacted] life at the first opportunity and furthermore threatened the lives of [redacted]

[redacted] further stated that Mr. McDOWELL may decide to file charges against Subject for these threats when this vessel arrives in Los Angeles. He stated that the habitual insurgent activities of USINGER and threats against the life of other parties should be brought to the attention of this Bureau. U

[redacted] State Board of Medical Examiners, 450 McAllister Street, San Francisco, produced the records of that office from which the following information was obtained:

Dr. HERMAN FREDERICK ERBEN was born in Austria on November 15, 1897. He was graduated from the University of Vienna on July 23, 1926, filed his credentials with the New York Board of Medical Examiners in 1926, passed October, 1930, making a grade of 81 1/9 per cent. Physicians certificate for the State of California was issued to him on November 26, 1930, No. A-05450. U



Dr. ERBEN was medical officer on the "SS PRESIDENT GARFIELD" on her world cruise from October 1, 1931 to August, 1932. GREGORY CULLEN, a Naval Reserve Officer, in command of this vessel on this cruise, is said to have complained to the command officials that Dr. ERBEN was very active in the spreading of Communistic propoganda during the entire cruise. The President Garfield is reported to be tied up at Pier 9, New York City, where [REDACTED] may be located and interviewed. No detailed descriptions of Subjects are available at this time. U

UNDEVELOPED LEADS:

THE WASHINGTON FIELD DIVISION: at Washington, D. C., will contact the State Department for the purpose of obtaining additional information as to the activities of Subjects. Also check the records of the Military and Naval Intelligence for information as to Subject ERBEN. U

THE NEW YORK CITY FIELD DIVISION: at New York City, Pier 9, will locate and interview [REDACTED] of the "S. S. PRESIDENT GARFIELD" as to his knowledge of Subject ERBEN who was formerly surgeon on that vessel; will check New York Medical Board's records and Immigration Service, Ellis Island, as to Subject ERBEN'S record and admission to the United States. U

THE NEW ORLEANS FIELD DIVISION: at New Orleans, will contact Immigration, Customs and Military Intelligence officers of that city as to their knowledge of Subject ERBEN who is expected to arrive at that port on the "S. S. DEL NORTE", Delta Line, February 3, 1937; will ascertain whether Customs Service upon examination of his baggage can find any documentary evidence indicating that Subject is engaged in espionage or communistic activities, and of what country he is a citizen. If advisable, interview Subject ERBEN without revealing to him the source of any information contained in the body of this report. Obtain his complete description and submit the matter to the United States Attorney, New Orleans, for his decision, forwarding report to Los Angeles in time for investigation there on February 13, 1937, when the "S. S. WEST MAHWAH" arrives there. U

THE LOS ANGELES FIELD DIVISION: at Los Angeles Harbor, on February 13, 1937, interview the Master, officers, and others on the "S. S. WEST MAHWAH" which arrives there on that date. Obtain complete signed statements from persons having knowledge of this reported mutiny and full details thereof; interview Subject USINGER

and obtain a detailed statement from him if possible showing the extent of his activities on this ship and whether he is the delegate on this vessel from the Seaman's Union, etc. Obtain complete description of Subjects. Submit the facts to the United States Attorney at Los Angeles for his decision. U

THE SAN FRANCISCO FIELD DIVISION: at Sacramento, California, will secure record of Subject ERBEN from the California State Board of Medical Examiners, together with his photograph, description, date and place of naturalization etc. U

At San Francisco, [REDACTED] of the McCormick Steamship Co. will be again contacted for additional information as to the activities of Subjects. U

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PENDING

# FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

Form No. 1  
THIS CASE ORIGINATED AT

San Francisco, Cal.

FILE NO. 65-1

REPORT MADE AT <b>New Orleans, La.</b>	DATE WHEN MADE <b>2-9-37</b>	PERIOD FOR WHICH MADE <b>2-1,3,4,9-37</b>	REPORT MADE BY <b>[REDACTED] b7c</b>
TITLE (CHANGED) <b>HERMANN FREDERICK ERBEN, M.D., aliases, Dr. Herman S. Erben, Herman Frederick Erben; LLOYD USINGER (S. S. West Mahwah)</b>			CHARACTER OF CASE <b>ESPIONAGE MUTINY ON THE HIGH SEAS</b>

**SYNOPSIS OF FACTS:** Subject arrived at port of New Orleans on S/S Del Norte 2-4-37. Subject has proof of citizenship of the United States of America, issued U. S. District Court, San Francisco, Nov. 10, 1930. Personal effects and baggage of Dr. Erben carefully examined by custom agents, New Orleans, and same did not contain any documents or writing of any kind indicating espionage or communistic activities. Dr. Erben emphatically denies engaged in inciting mutiny on any vessel or engaged in propagating communism at any time as he is a loyal and patriotic citizen of the United States. U. S. Attorney, New Orleans states no prosecution against Dr. Erben account insufficient evidence.

R. U. C. **b7c**

**REFERENCE:** Report of Special Agent **[REDACTED]** San Francisco, Cal., Jan. 17, 1937.

**DETAILS:**

Title of this case is changed to show the correct and full name of subject Dr. Hermann Frederick Erben.

At New Orleans, La.

On February 1, 1937, Agent discussed this case with Assistant U. S. Attorney Leon D. Hubert, Jr., New Orleans, La., and he stated that if evidence is secured to prove that subject Dr. Erben violated the provisions of Section 423, Title 18, U. S. Code, prosecution will be instituted. However, Mr. Hubert stated that from the facts contained in the reference report

**ALL INFORMATION CONTAINED  
HEREIN IS UNCLASSIFIED  
DATE 5/24/77 BY SP3/...**

<p>APPROVED AND FORWARDED: <i>[Signature]</i> SPECIAL AGENT IN CHARGE</p> <p><b>1-10-37</b> <b>12</b> <b>3 Bureau</b> <b>2 New York</b> <b>1 Washington Field</b> <b>2 Los Angeles</b> <b>3 San Francisco</b> <b>1 USA New Orleans</b> <b>2 New Orleans</b></p> <p><i>2/11/37</i> <i>Arson</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">DO NOT WRITE IN THESE SPACES</p> <p style="font-size: 2em; text-align: center;">657 682 + 3</p> <p style="text-align: center;">FEB 10 1937</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>[Handwritten notes]</i></p>
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there is insufficient evidence to institute prosecution against subject Dr. Erben.

The S/S Del Norte, Mississippi Shipping Company, Inc., New Orleans, La., Agents, arrived at New Orleans, La., the early morning of February 4, 1937.

For information, Custom Agents [redacted] under the supervision of [redacted] Custom Agent in Charge, 322 Custom House New Orleans, La., and [redacted] Lt. Intelligence Section, Naval Reserves, Custom House, New Orleans, as well as several inspectors under the supervision of [redacted] Deputy Collector of Customs, Port of New Orleans, Custom House, New Orleans, La., were at the Poydras Street Dock to meet the S/S Del Norte upon its arrival at New Orleans, for the purpose of interrogating the subject Dr. Erben, as well as examine his baggage.

Immediately after the arrival of the S/S Del Norte at New Orleans, the various officials named above boarded the steamship and Custom Inspector [redacted] immediately took possession of all of the personal effects and baggage of Dr. Erben, and the said property was brought to the office of the Custom Agent in Charge [redacted] 322 Custom House, New Orleans, for examination. The examination of Dr. Erben's property and personal effects was made in the presence of agent and nothing was found by the inspecting officials to indicate that Dr. Erben possessed contraband or documents of a nature to indicate that he, Dr. Erben, was a representative of any foreign nation or otherwise, nor did the personal effects of Dr. Erben contain any literature or writings of any kind to reflect that the doctor was engaged in any communistic or other radical activities. It may be mentioned, however, that among the effects of subject Dr. Erben was found several hundred photographs, mostly made up of photographed postal cards, and these photographs were not of such a nature to reflect that the doctor was engaged in any espionage or unlawful activities against the United States Government.

On interviewing subject Dr. Erben he exhibited to agent an affidavit of Walter B. Maling, Clerk of the U. S. District Court, San Francisco, Cal., which is to the effect that Hermann Frederick Erben held certificate of citizenship #3446093 then residing at St. Joseph Hospital, San Francisco, was admitted to citizenship of the United States of America at a term of the District Court of the United States pursuant to law, at San Francisco on Nov. 10, 1930. Dr. Erben also submitted to agent certification that he was born in Vienna Austria, November 15, 1897; that he emigrated to the United States in March of 1924, and he was naturalized as a citizen of the United States before the District Court of the United States, San Francisco, on November 10, 1930. Dr. Erben also exhibited to Agent Seaman's Protection certificate #5290, issued by the Collector of Customs in the District of San Francisco, dated July 5, 1934.

Subject Dr. Erben stated that his original certificate of naturalization is in his private safe at the home of his sister Mrs. Hilda Schnirch Vienna Austria.

Dr. Erben is also in possession of Certificate #1729 issued by the Louisiana State Board of Medical Examiners dated New Orleans November 10, 1930, giving him the authority to practice as a physician and surgeon in the State of Louisiana. Also Dr. Erben has in his possession certificate of the Board of Medical Examiners of the State of California dated Nov. 26, 1930, to practice as a physician and surgeon. Said certificate is numbered A-05450.

In response to questioning Dr. Erben stated that he boarded the S/S Del Norte at Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, on January 16, 1937; that on January 6, 1937, he was discharged from the S/S West Mahwah of the McCormick Steamship Company at Rio de Janeiro, on which vessel he was ship surgeon, and that he had signed articles as ship surgeon at San Francisco September 26, 1936. Dr. Erben stated that he is positively not a communist, that if anything he is opposed to communism as a whole and that, therefore, he neither on the S/S West Mahwah or the S/S Del Norte, approach anyone either a member of the crew or a passenger with respect to propagating communism. Dr. Erben stated that when the S/S West Mahwah arrived at Rio de Janeiro Captain Jansen of the said vessel appeared before the American Vice Consul and requested his, Dr. Erben, removal or discharge from said vessel; that the Vice Consul inquired of Capt. Jansen of the reasons or charges to support the request for his removal; that Capt. Jansen was unable to furnish any specific charges against him and that in addition Captain Jansen could not exhibit to the American Vice Consul any entries in the log of the S/S West Mahwah to reflect or show that he, Dr. Erben, had violated any of the maritime laws of the United States. Dr. Erben stated that finally Captain Jansen entered in the official log of the S/S West Mahwah that he, Dr. Erben, was interfering with the ship's discipline and with the safety of the vessel. Dr. Erben stated, however, that he hasn't the slightest idea as to why he was actually relieved of his duties as ship surgeon on the S/S West Mahwah.

Subject Dr. Erben informed agent that he was proud of being an American citizen; that he sincerely and loyally supported the constitution of the United States and would positively not do anything contrary thereto.

Subject Dr. Erben emphatically denied ever having been engaged in inciting a mutiny on either the S/S West Mahwah or any other vessel on which he was employed or as a passenger.

Subject Dr. Erben stated that Captain Jansen of the S/S West Mahwah dislikes him. He remarked that he has seen Captain Jansen under the influence of liquor on the S/S West Mahwah while on the high seas.

Dr. Erben stated that in the past two years he made one trip to Europe, departing on the S/S Sarcoxie of the American-France Line December 9, 1935 from New York for La Havre and that he spent Christmas of 1935 with his mother in Austria; that he made a visit to Germany on that trip and that he returned to the United States on the S/S City of Hamburg, Baltimore May Line, May 9, 1936, from Bremen, arriving at Baltimore, Md.

Dr. Erben stated that his address in San Francisco is 351 Carey Street, which is the Stewart Hotel, and that as soon as he is able to he will return to San Francisco and immediately contact the proper officials of the McCormick Steamship Company for adjustment of this entire matter.

On February 4, 1937, subject Dr. Erben was taken into custody by inspectors of the Immigration Service, U. S. Department of Labor, Custom House, New Orleans, La., and on this date Dr. Erben was accorded a hearing in connection with his naturalization, based on the fact that the subject, Dr. Erben, did not have in his possession his original certificate of naturalization. Immigration Inspector J. E. Trout informed agent that his office contended that the naturalization of subject Dr. Erben was secured by fraud, but

that they are making investigations in connection therewith to definitely determine whether or not the naturalization was secured by fraud, and that as a result the subject Dr. Erben will be kept in custody pending the investigation. However, on February 6, 1937, Dr. Erben was released by the Immigration authorities at New Orleans and the case against him dismissed.

On February 9, 1937, Dr. Erben called at the New Orleans Division and informed that he would proceed on or about February 10, 1937, for San Francisco, and that if a further interview was desired by this bureau with him he could be located at 351 Gary Street, Stewart Hotel, San Francisco, Cal.

The Immigration Service, U. S. Department of Labor, New Orleans, the Custom Service, New Orleans, and the Intelligence Service, U. S. Naval Reserves, New Orleans, had no record of Dr. Erben other than the complaint as contained in reference report.

Following is the description of subject Dr. Erben from agent's observation and information furnished by Dr. Erben:

Age: 39 years, claims born Nov. 15, 1897, Vienna, Austria.

Height: 6 ft.

Weight: 240 lbs.

Hair: Dark Blonde

Eyes: Blue

Complexion: Ruddy

Very good teeth

On Feb. 4, 1937, wore a sort of Hitler moustache. February 9, 1937, smooth face, no moustache or beard.

Race: White

Has evidence of naturalization of the United States of America issued by U. S. District Court, San Francisco, Nov. 10, 1930.

Divorced, claims has two children, boys, residing in Europe.

Criminal record: Claims none in the United States. States that he was arrested in Vienna, Aus., in November 1934 for investigation; that he was detained for about 3 days in jail and that the purpose of the investigation was to determine his citizenship and not for any communistic or radical propaganda.

No fingerprints of Dr. Erben are available.

On February 4, 1937, agent conferred with Assistant U. S. Attorney Leon D. Hubert, Jr., in connection with this case in its entirety and he advised that in view of insufficient evidence against Dr. Erben in this case no prosecution will be instituted.

REFERRED UPON COMPLETION TO DIVISION OF ORIGIN.

ADDRESS REPLY TO  
"THE ATTORNEY GENERAL"  
AND REFER TO  
INITIALS AND NUMBER

EM:

45-297-

DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

WASHINGTON, D. C.

February 20, 1937.

MEMORANDUM FOR MR. HOOVER,  
DIRECTOR, BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION.

Re: Casting adrift of stowaways  
discovered on Steamship  
"WEST MAHWAH"

---  
Dr. Herman S. Erben, alias  
Herman Frederick Erben  
and Lloyd Usinger, alleged  
espionage and attempt to  
incite mutiny on the high  
seas, Steamship WEST MAHWAH.

I have copies of the reports of Special Agent [REDACTED] b7c  
dated January 17, 1937, and [REDACTED] dated February 9, 1937.

I desire to have both of these matters followed up closely  
until the investigations are completed. It can then be determined  
whether criminal prosecutions should ensue, and, if so, in what  
district or districts.

Respectfully,

*Brian McMahon*  
BRIEN MCMAHON,  
Assistant Attorney General.

65-682-4

FEB 23 1937

RB

12

Special Agent in Charge  
New York, New York

March 9, 1940

The Washington Field Office has ascertained that Dr. ERBEN is presently stopping at the German Seamen's Mission at 64 Hudson Street, Hoboken, New Jersey and has already requested the appropriate investigation through the New York Office inasmuch as Dr. ERBEN is to contact the United States Shipping Commissioner at New York City relative to the necessary seaman papers. It is understood that Dr. ERBEN contemplates sailing on the United States Fruit Liner, the S. S. CASTILE, on March 11, 1940 for the West Coast.

Very truly yours,

John Edgar Hoover  
Director

Enclosure

cc-Los Angeles  
cc-San Francisco  
cc-Washington Field  
cc-Miami

Mr. Tolson	_____
Mr. Nathan	_____
Mr. E. A. Tamm	_____
Mr. Clegg	_____
Mr. Ladd	_____
Mr. Coffey	_____
Mr. Egan	_____
Mr. Glavin	_____
Mr. Harbo	_____
Mr. Lester	_____
Mr. MacCoy	_____
Mr. Malone	_____
Mr. Nichols	_____
Mr. Rosen	_____
Mr. Quinn Tamm	_____
Tele. Room	_____
Adm. Files	_____
Per. Files	_____
Mr. Tracy	_____
Miss Gandy	_____



# FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

Form No. 1  
THIS CASE ORIGINATED AT **SAN FRANCISCO, CAL.**

N.Y. FILE NO. **65-45 r**

REPORT MADE AT <b>NEW YORK CITY</b>	DATE WHEN MADE <b>2/25/37</b>	PERIOD FOR WHICH MADE <b>2/17, 18/37</b>	REPORT MADE BY <b>[REDACTED] b7c</b>
TITLE <b>HERMANN FREDERICK ERBEN, M.D., with aliases; LLOYD USINGER (S.S. West Mahwah)</b>			CHARACTER OF CASE <b>ESPIONAGE MUTINY ON THE HIGH SEAS</b>

**SYNOPSIS OF FACTS:**

Records of Immigration Service, Ellis Island, reflect ERBEN entered the United States March 6, 1924 from Havana, Cuba on S.S. Esperanza, possessing physician's diploma of Vienna University with final destination listed as Psychiatric Institute, Morristown, New Jersey, not known to be existent. Records of New York Medical Board at Albany, N. Y. also not available for examination as to ERBEN'S qualifications. [REDACTED] S.S. "President Garfield" not available for interview but letter directed to him requesting confidential information about ERBEN. New York American for February 24, 1937 contains information to effect ERBEN will accompany ERROL FLYNN, movie actor, to Spain and the South American jungles in the near future. Wire received from office of origin requesting investigation to be discontinued.

**ALL INFORMATION CONTAINED  
HEREIN IS UNCLASSIFIED  
DATE 5/20/77 BY SP3 JCL**

*b7c, d*

-R.U.C.-

**REFERENCE:**

Reports of Special Agent [REDACTED] San Francisco Cal., dated 1/17/37 and of Special Agent [REDACTED] New Orleans, La., dated 2/9/37

**DETAILS:**

The records of Immigration Service at Ellis Island were checked and reflected that HERMANN ERBEN originally entered the United States

APPROVED AND FORWARDED <i>[Signature]</i>	SPECIAL AGENT IN CHARGE	DO NOT WRITE IN THESE SPACES	
COPIES OF THIS REPORT (3) Bureau 3-San Francisco 1-New Orleans 2-New York <i>Copy to Bureau for P. [unclear]</i> <i>3-15-37</i>		<b>65-652-5</b>  <i>[Handwritten initials]</i>	<b>MAR 1 1937</b>  <i>[Handwritten initials]</i>

from Havana, Cuba, on the S. S. "Esperanza" on March 6, 1924. His age on that date was listed as 27 years, and his marital status, married. His occupation was listed as physician and notation on the record was to the effect that he had exhibited a diploma of the Vienna University to substantiate his claim. His nearest friend, in the country from which he entered the United States, was listed as ERNESTO LEGET, #9 Sol Street, Havana, Cuba and his final destination was indicated as the Psychiatric Institute at Morristown, New Jersey. He indicated his intention to remain in the United States permanently. He declared \$80.00 as the extent of his finances on entering the country. His description listed him as 6'2" tall; fair complexion; blonde hair; blue eyes; with scar on his face (exact location not known.)

It will be noted on page 6 of the reference report of Special Agent [REDACTED] that the records of the State Board of Medical Examiners for the State of California, #450 McAllister Street, San Francisco, California, as produced by [REDACTED] reflected that ERBEN also graduated from the University of Vienna on July 23, 1926. This, of course, is out of harmony with the entry on the immigration record at Ellis Island that on March 6, 1924, more than two years earlier, he exhibited a diploma indicating his graduation from the University of Vienna as a physician. b2c

The telephone directory covering Morristown, New Jersey, in the New York Division, was examined by the writer, but failed to indicate the existence of any Psychiatric Institute listed on subject's immigration record as his intended destination.

The office of the State Board of Medical Examiners, State Building, #80 Center Street, New York City, advised that all the records pertaining to physicians' licenses to practice were in Albany, N. Y. and could be obtained by directing a letter to the State Board of Medical Examiners, Education Building, Albany, New York.

Numerous efforts were made to interview, personally, but without success, [REDACTED] S. S. "President Garfield" of the Dollar Lines. It was ascertained from officials of the Dollar Lines in New York City, that [REDACTED] was presently stationed on the "President Garfield" which is anchored in the Hudson River off Weehawken and that it was very difficult to reach [REDACTED] even by telephone b2c

65-45

without first directing a letter to him, in care of the Dollar Steamship Lines, Pier #9, Jersey City, New Jersey, or by taking a boat to the ship. Accordingly, a letter was directed to [REDACTED] at that address, requesting that he furnish confidential information pertaining to Dr. ERBEN, who was a medical officer on the S. S. "President Garfield" [REDACTED] on a world cruise from October 1, 1931 to August, 1932, when ERBEN was reportedly active as an agitator among the crew during the cruise and so reported by [REDACTED] to his superiors at that time.

The New York American newspaper on February 24, 1937, contained the following article pertaining to ERBEN'S present and contemplated activities:

**"NEW ROLE FOR STAR  
Errol Flynn to be War Reporter**

CHICAGO, Feb. 23 (AP).--Errol Flynn, portrayer of swash-buckling movie roles, left Chicago today en route to Spain, where he said he would act as 'a sort of war correspondent' before proceeding to search for Paul Redfern, American aviator missing in South American jungles since 1927.

Flynn said he expected to be joined at New York by Dr. Herman Erben, former Viennese surgeon and a world traveler, who, the actor said, would continue with him to Spain and the South American jungles.

After a brief stay in London, Flynn said, he expected to visit relatives in Ireland, then said for Spain to take up news reporting for 'a British newspaper syndicate'.

On February 24, 1937, a radiogram was received from the office of origin requesting that the New York Division discontinue investigation as the United States Attorney at Los Angeles declined prosecution.

REFERRED UPON COMPLETION TO DIVISION OF ORIGIN

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DAY LETTER	URGENT
NIGHT MESSAGE	URGENT (CDE)
NIGHT LETTER	DEFERRED (LC)
	RADIO LETTER (NLT)
	RADIOGRAM

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TIME FILED

Send the following radiogram "VIA MACKAY RADIO" subject to the terms on back hereof, which are hereby agreed to:

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DCC-8:

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HEREIN IS UNCLASSIFIED  
DATE 5/22/79 BY SP4...

SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA

65-31

FEBRUARY 23, 1937

1 PM

IDW:MLA

R WHITLEY  
FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION  
U S DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE  
607 U S COURT HOUSE FOLEY SQUARE  
NEW YORK CITY

65-682

SEARCHED INDEXED SERIALIZED FILED

FEB 23 1937

FBI - LOS ANGELES

ONE R12

DR HERMAN FREDERICK ERBEN WA ETAL ESPIONAGE MOHS DISCONTINUE INVESTIGATION YOUR  
DISTRICT USA LOSANGELES DECLINES PROSECUTION

LISTERMAN

CC BUREAU

TO SEND A MESSAGE TELEPHONE GARFIELD 1303 OR ANY POSTAL TELEGRAPH OFFICE.  
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NIGHT LETTER	DEFERRED (LC)
	RADIO LETTER (MLT)
	BY RADIOGRAM

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Send the following radiogram "VIA MACKAY RADIO" subject to the terms on back hereof, which are hereby agreed to:

DOMESTIC SERVICES } 15 WORDS FOR USUAL PRICE

SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA

G HOTEL  
FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION  
4244 U S DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE  
WASHINGTON D C

FEBRUARY 23, 1937 1 PM

65-31

LDW:MLA

DR HERMAN FREDERICK ERBEN WA ETAL ESPIONAGE MONS DISCONTINUE INVESTIGATION

YOUR DISTRICT USA LOSANGELES DECLINES PROSECUTION

ALL INFORMATION CONTAINED  
HEREIN IS UNCLASSIFIED  
DATE \_\_\_\_\_ BY \_\_\_\_\_

LISTERMAN

65-682

CC BUREAU

U.S.

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# FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

Form No. 1  
THIS CASE ORIGINATED AT

SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA

L.A. FILE NO. 65-30

REPORT MADE AT <b>LOS ANGELES, CALIF.</b>	DATE WHEN MADE <b>2/25/37</b>	PERIOD FOR WHICH MADE <b>2/12,13,14/37</b>	REPORT MADE BY <b>[REDACTED]</b>
TITLE CHANGED: <b>HERMANN FREDERICK ERBEN, MD, with aliases: Doctor Herman S. Erben, Herman Frederick Erben; LLOYD EUGENE USINGER, with aliases: Lloyd Usinger, "Sam" (S.S. WEST MAHWAH)</b>			CHARACTER OF CASE  <b>ESPIONAGE MUTINY ON THE HIGH SEAS</b>

**SYNOPSIS OF FACTS:**

Officers of SS WEST MAHWAH advise DR. ERBEN committed various un-American acts aboard ship, such as insulting flag and stating loyalty to HITLER and Germany. Allege Subjects caused strike at San Juan. Subject USINGER executed signed statement to effect that San Juan strike of three days due to unhealthy and unclean food served. At no time was any threat or attempt of either Subjects or crew to take command of ship. Assistant United States Attorney, Los Angeles, declines prosecution because no attempt made to take over command of ship.

- RUC - ALL INFORMATION CONTAINED  
HEREIN IS UNCLASSIFIED  
DATE 5/24/79 BY SP3 TEK/

**REFERENCE:**

Report of Special Agent [REDACTED] San Francisco, California, dated January 17, 1937.

**COPIES DESTROYED**

**107 AUG 12 1970**

APPROVED AND FORWARDED: <i>[Signature]</i> SPECIAL AGENT IN CHARGE	DO NOT WRITE IN THESE SPACES	
COPIES OF THIS REPORT: <b>3 - Bureau 3 - San Francisco 1 - U. S. Attorney - Los Angeles 2 - Los Angeles</b> <i>Copy to Brandt file</i>	<b>65-682-6</b>	<b>MAR 2 1937</b>
	<b>MAR</b>	

DETAILS:

AT LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA

The title of this case is changed to reflect the full name of Subject LLOYD EUGENE USINGER and his alias "Sam".

AT WILMINGTON, CALIFORNIA

The SS WEST MAHWAH, docked at Los Angeles Harbor, Wilmington, on February 11, 1937. Several signed statements were executed by the Master and several of his officers.

[REDACTED] furnished Agent with a copy of a statement which the officers of the ship had signed regarding the activities of DR. ERBEN, which is being placed in the Los Angeles division file, and which reads as follows:

b7c, d

Rio de Janero, Brazil  
Jan. 6, 1937.

The following charges are made against Dr. H. Erben, Ship's Surgeon of the S.S. West Mahwah, by the Officers whose signatures are at the end of these papers.

(1) The Officers' dining room was decorated with the American Flag for the Christmas Holidays, and on January 1, 1937. Dr. Erben was seen by [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] to have wiped his hands on the American Flag after taking food from the ice box.

(2) Upon passing a German ship close enough to be recognized he was seen at various times to give the Nazi salute, by [REDACTED]

(3) He stated, "We Germans look up to Hitler as a Supreme Being and Saviour and anyone talking against Hitler I would crush and sink my teeth into his throat." -- as told to [REDACTED]

Statement of Ship's Officers (Cont.)

- (4) He told [redacted] a passenger on this vessel, that should anything happen to him (Dr. Erben) to please notify the German Consul.
- (5) He quoted the following statement to [redacted]  
[redacted] 'I am only an American citizen because of the material advantages. I am still a German and should war break out with Germany I would jump ship and head for Germany.'
- (6) He boasted of the fact that he was implicated in the Dolphus murder to the [redacted]
- (7) He remarked that he and the crew were out to 'get' the Third Assistant Engineer and the Second Officer because of the fact that they worked during the strike. -- As told to [redacted]
- (8) On the voyage from Buenos Aires to Rio de Janeiro he was continually annoying a lady passenger with remarks such as -- 'Your life is in danger -- stay away from the railings of the ship as you will very likely be thrown overboard.'
- (9) He told [redacted] that in spite of the fact that a Shore Doctor told him to remain on the ship and continue voyage, the Ship's Doctor told him that if he did not get off the ship he would receive neither treatment nor medicine.
- (10) He told the [redacted] and [redacted] that as an M.D. he could and would pronounce any officer that he did not like drunk, and get away with it.
- (11) When asked by [redacted] when Sailor Rice could turn to, he replied: 'I have to think about that and I think I had better go aft and see what the boys think about it.'

b7c, d



Statement of Ship's Officers (Cont.)

(12) He stated to [redacted] and [redacted] [redacted] 'We always have someone nearby listening should anything be said against us.'

(13) He was repeatedly ordered by [redacted] to leave access to the medicine chest supplies. These orders were ignored.

(14) Upon leaving San Francisco at the beginning of this voyage there were numerous surgical instruments aboard entrusted to the doctor's care. After the doctor left the vessel in Rio de Janeiro [redacted] checked the medical supplies but no instruments were found.

(15) In his answers to charges made against him at the American Consulate at Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, on January 6, 1937, he made a statement to the effect that he knew nothing about a letter written to the Captain by the crew until this letter was shown to him by the Captain. This is a false statement because the Captain did not show any such letter to the Doctor.

(16) While at the dinner table in the presence of a lady passenger the Doctor was heard to ask a very obscene question of Messboy Moastro as to his activities the night before by [redacted] and [redacted]

(17) He made the remark to [redacted] and [redacted] that no life but his own was of any importance to him. This statement was also heard by [redacted]

(18) During an argument between the Chief Cook and Crews' Messboy, the Doctor was seen by [redacted] to go to his room and return on deck with a pistol.

(19) He has produced photostatic copies of letters written by the crew which had no bearing on his duties

b7c/d

Statement of Ship's Officers (Cont.)

as Ship's Surgeon whatsoever. These photostatic copies were seen by [REDACTED]

and [REDACTED]

b7c,d

(20) On January 5, 1937, about 7 P.M. the Doctor came to the Captain's office and made a false accusation that the Third Assistant Engineer had attacked him because he had reproved the Third Assistant Engineer for threatening to cut off the head of a child passenger. Nothing of the kind took place as was verified by [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]

(S I G N E D)

[REDACTED SIGNATURE]

\*\*\*\*\*

The following signed statements were obtained by Agent from officers of the ship, the originals of which are being placed in the Los Angeles division file on this case:

Los Angeles Harbor.  
February 12, 1937.

I

[REDACTED] do voluntarily make the following state-

Statement of [REDACTED] (Cont.)

b7c,d

ment to [REDACTED] Special Agent in the Federal Bureau of Investigation, United States Department of Justice.

[REDACTED]

We left San Francisco on September 27, 1936 on a voyage to Buenos Aires, Argentine via Wayport at Panama Canal, Cuba, Puerto Rico, Trinidad and Brazil, returning through Panama Canal to Los Angeles Harbor, arriving February 11, 1937.

Everything went along all right until October 27, 1936, at San Juan, Puerto Rico at which time the unlicensed crew of the deck and engineering department refused duty, this including eighteen men.

[REDACTED]

Although I have no definite proof, I am reasonably sure that this trouble was started by Lloyd Usinger and Dr. Herman F. Erben. I base this belief on their behavior during the four and a half months trip just now completed, during which time they intimidated the rest of the crew at various times.

[REDACTED]

During these three days they had refused to do any work, with the exception of the three firemen who kept steam on the boilers for lights and for sanitary reasons.

[REDACTED]

Statement of [REDACTED] (Cont.)

b7c id

[REDACTED]

During the rest of the voyage it was noticeable that Usinger and several of the others were not putting forth their best efforts. To my knowledge, Usinger created discontent among other members of the crew.

The San Juan incident was the only place where they actually went on strike, but at Sante Fe, Argentine, Usinger threatened that they would go on strike unless they were given fresh milk. This situation was averted by obtaining milk for them.

On November 29, 1936 at Buenos Aires Usinger told [REDACTED] he would not dress ship because it was a holiday, on occasion of President Roosevelt's visit there. The crew did not dress the ship until eleven in the morning and then, only at the insistence of the firemen, below. Ours was the only ship not dressed early that morning in the harbor, even though several foreign ships were dressed for the occasion.

The facts set out in the statement signed myself and [REDACTED] on the vessel show the trouble caused aboard ship by Dr. Herman F. Erben.

[REDACTED]

Statement of [redacted] (Cont.)

b7c,d

This statement, which consists of five pages,  
is the truth to the best of my knowledge.

/s/ [redacted]

Witness:

b7c

[redacted] Special Agent  
Federal Bureau of Investigation  
U. S. Department of Justice  
903 Pacific Commerce Bldg.  
437 S. Hill St.  
Los Angeles, Calif.

\*\*\*\*\*

Los Angeles Harbor  
February 12, 1937.

I, [redacted]  
do voluntarily make the following state-  
ment to [redacted] Special Agent in the Federal  
Bureau of Investigation, United States Department of  
Justice.

b7c,d

[redacted]

Shortly after we left Los Angeles a meeting  
was called by the Seamen's Union [redacted]  
The purpose of this meeting was dissatisfaction  
with the food. Nothing was done further until we ar-  
rived at San Juan, where a strike was called for three  
days, demanding the removal of the steward, the reason

Statement of [REDACTED] (Cont.)

b7c,d

being given as the fact that the steward had raped one of the vessel's passengers. The steward, Arthur W. Moss, was paid off on the third day and the crew went back to work and the ship sailed. During these three days steam was refused on the winches and no cargo was worked.

At three ports, Pernambuco, Rio de Janera and Santos, all in Brazil, members of the crew delayed the sailing of the ship intentionally. I learned, indirectly, that this was due to the fact that the Captain did not arrive back on board at the specified time they were supposed to draw money.

In Santos, after we were in position to get ready to sail, the crew refused to get the vessel ready to sail until draw (or pay) had been given. When the draw was given, they immediately stood by the lines and we sailed.

I feel that Dr. Erben was behind these things and that Usinger was influenced similarly by Dr. Erben.

[REDACTED]

b7c,d

The trouble caused by Dr. Erben is set out in the statement signed by myself and [REDACTED]

Dr. Erben was friendly with the radio operator, S. K. Balcom.

Statement of [redacted] (Cont.)

b7c, d

This statement consists of four pages and I know it to be the truth.

/s/ [redacted]

b7c, d

Witness:  
[redacted] Special Agent  
Federal Bureau of Investigation  
U. S. Department of Justice  
903 Pacific Commerbe Bldg.  
437 S. Hill St.  
Los Angeles, Calif.

b7c

\*\*\*\*\*

Los Angeles Harbor  
February 12, 1937.

[redacted]  
[redacted] do hereby make the following voluntary statement to [redacted] Special Agent in the Federal Bureau of Investigation, United States Department of Justice.

[redacted]

On our recent voyage (number 26) the crew refused to work for several days while in port at San Juan, Puerto Rico, with the exception of the firemen and messboys.

It is my observation that this and the other trouble during the voyage was the result of the influence of Dr. Herman F. Erben. After he was discharged there was no noticeable trouble as had been the case before.

Statement [redacted] (Cont.)

b2id

[redacted]

This statement, consisting of two pages, is the truth to the best of my knowledge.

/s/ [redacted]

Witness:  
[redacted] Special Agent,  
Federal Bureau of Investigation,  
U. S. Department of Justice,  
903 Pacific Commerce Bldg.  
Los Angeles, Calif.

\*\*\*\*\*

Los Angeles Harbor  
February 12, 1937.

I, [redacted] do voluntarily make the following statement to [redacted] Special Agent in the Federal Bureau of Investigation, United States Department of Justice.  
[redacted]

Entering Puerto Rico I heard rumors that the crew was going to strike to get rid of the cooks; they did not like the cooking.



Statement [REDACTED] (Cont.)

b7c, d

The steward, Arthur Moss and Dr. Herman F. Erben had quarreled [REDACTED]

The original strike was for removal of the cooks, but after a day or so they demanded only that the steward be removed. Reasons given were that he did not get along with the cooks and also he is supposed to have molested a lady passenger while drunk. To my knowledge he did not commit a serious assault on this passenger.

Upon his removal, the crew, which refused to work before, went back to work.

Also at Santos, I remember two crew members holding up the ship for a short time.

It is my observation that the main trouble maker was Dr. Erben who seemed to delight in causing dissension.

The radio operator, Sydnor Balcom, acted on his own, as a go-between between the officers and crew, to ferment trouble.

I cannot give any information as to Usinger that is not hearsay.

The things contained in the statement as to Dr. Erben, signed by [REDACTED] and myself are true, as are those contained in this three page statement.

/s/ [REDACTED]

Witness:

[REDACTED] Special Agent  
Federal Bureau of Investigation  
U. S. Department of Justice  
903 Pacific Commerce Bldg.  
437 S. Hill St.  
Los Angeles, Calif.

In addition to the above, [REDACTED] furnished the following list of the crew who participated in the strike at San Juan [REDACTED]

"Oct. 27, 1936  
San Juan - Puerto Rico.

The following members of the crew refused duty this day:

Wallace Strock, Boatswain  
Lloyd Usinger, A.B.  
Merle Rice, A.B.  
James White, A.B.  
William Conolly, A.B.  
Harvey Anderson, A.B.  
Leonard Basil, O.S.  
George Richardson, O.S.  
David Martin, O.S.  
Colin Darrak, Oiler  
Lloyd Hange, Oiler  
James McIntyre, Oiler  
William Bannan, Fireman  
Lawrence Avery, Fireman  
Segundo Lopez, Fireman  
David Swartz, Wiper  
B. Gilfillan, Wiper  
(Fined 2 days pay)

[REDACTED]

LLOYD EUGENE USINGER, Subject, was interviewed and the substance of his story is contained in the following signed statement which was written by Subject USINGER, the original of which is being retained in the Los Angeles division file:

S.S. West Mahwah.  
Los Angeles Harbor  
February 13, 1937

I, Lloyd E. Usinger do voluntarily make the following statement to [REDACTED] whom I know to be a Special Agent in the Federal Bureau of Investigation, U. S. Dept. of Justice. b7c

I have been employd on the above named vessel, since Sept. 22, 1936 as an Able Seaman. I am also a member of the Sailors Union Emergency Plan, and at one time was an official patrolman of the organization at San Francisco.

On the present voyage I at no time was connected in an official capacity with the above mentioned organization, known as the Sailors Union of the Pacific.

During the southbound voyage from Los Angeles to Balboa, C.Z. the food served aboard the vessel was of a poor quality both unsanitary and unwholesome, thus involving disputes by other Dept's with the department concerned known as the Stewards De'pt. The face lies that the grievence was taken up with the Master by the respective delegates, meetings were held for way and means to clarify the department involved.

A general vote was taken including about 50% of the officers aboard the ship to put the Steward and cooks ashore at San Juan P.R.

Steward and cooks refuse to leave vessel. Steward makes statement he is G-man placed here to spy on Reds vessel is shut down for three days Steward is removed by compromise from company that crew will permit cooks to remain, and continue voyage.

Never at any time was it the intentions of the crew to provoke, incite or restore to mutinous practices, or others accompanied by violence, as we had agreed that all men must remain aboard the ship in a sober condition during working hours.

Statement of LLOYD E. USINGER (Cont.)

Regarding the dressing of the ship for President Roosevelt in Buenos Aires I must say that the Chief Officer came aft and asked for two men to dress ship. I informed the Mate, that I did not care to work on that day as it was a holiday. Wallace Strock Bohn done the same. W. Connolly was in bed in fo'sc'le at that time three Officers and a cadet were also aboard the ship. 10.00 AM other men come on board, after talking situation over we agree vessel should be dressed by noon as some ships were declaring a half holiday, three vessel's in the locks were decorated at 10.00 AM. Two men decorate ship shortly after 10.30 vessel is fully decorated at 11.30 A.M. The most of the crew were ashore at 8.00 A.M. and everyone during the afternoon.

I asked Dr. Erbone if he was a Nazi or connected, or in sympathy with that form of a government, to this he replied he was not, but people thought he was because he wore the Nazi Swastika on his belt, he offered no other good reasons for me to assert he was, as in my opinion he performed the duties of a Surgeon in an efficient and proper manner where the welfare of working men were concerned.

I hereby make a statement to the effect that I did not threaten the life of the Chief Engineer aboard this vessel, but I wish to say that at Santos on the south bound voyage, I had an argument with the Chief Engineer back in our quarters and ask him if he would come out on the dock to this he replied he would, and waited aft, but the men in the Fos'cle discouraged this due to the fact that I had been drinking and the vessel was ready to sail. I also did not, and have no recollection or reasons to threatening his wife or baby, with bodily harm, or to take their lives upon arrival at San Francisco.

To my recollection I have never made any threats of violence, or personal injury to any of the passengers, officers or crew aboard the ship.

Statement of LLOYD E. USINGER (Cont.)

'Special Paragraph'

I would also like to state, what is actually in my opinion, and has been the reason, for the prolonged dissension and agrivation that has taken place during the voyage - 'First, frequently liquor parties sponsored openly by the Master and other officer's aboard ship at sea. (2) Such disorders have resulted into neglience and decreased the saftey and welfare of others aboard. (3) Masters unwillingness to advance money to the crew, properly, at times he and Chief Engineer & 2nd Officer were ashore in a saloon drinking as the crew waited six hours for their money. (4) That shore leave was denied passengers and crew, charging them with being Communists and that the Master had made such statement this occured at Pernambuco, also at Puerto Colombia, where the crew refused to work until they had been given permission to see the U.S. Consul. (5) Continual agrivation on the part of both side's, that we were referred to in slanderous and un-sean names by the Master, that came to us through others, not connected with the vessel. (6) That all officers were in favor of the action taken at San Juan in the stewards controversy, that the crew was logged for such action, that also Police guards were placed aboard the ship when requested to be removed. (7) That the use of liquor has been free and easy to all those who desired it, and that errors from the same were seldom corrected, or an attempt of discipline change has never been offered by those of the proper authority.

I have read over the 6 page statement, and in all parts, it was given freely under my own hand also it contents are true to the best of my knowledge.

Witness:  
[REDACTED] b7c  
Special Agent,  
Federal Bureau of  
Investigation,  
U. S. Dept. of Justice

/s/ LLOYD E. USINGER  
59 Clay St. San Francisco  
Or William Warren  
1644 Jackson St.  
San Francisco  
Phone.

Description of Subject USINGER as obtained by Agent's observation is as follows:

NAME	LLOYD EUGENE USINGER
Nationality	American (German descent)
Born	Cloverdale, California
Age	31 (6-24-05)
Height	5' 10"
Weight	160 lbs.
Build	Medium
Hair	Brown
Eyes	Brown
Complexion	Fair
Tatoo	Tiger head on left arm
Education	2½ yrs. high school
Occupation	A.B. Seaman; member of the Sailors Union of the Pacific, 59 Clay Street, San Francisco, California; was patrolman for four months (never has been delegate).
Address	Arcata, California
Remarks	Nervous twitches of face and hands while writing.

Subject stated he was fingerprinted in Baltimore, Maryland, for the purpose of obtaining Seaman's Protection Certificate, and also in San Francisco when he was arrested and charged with assault, having served six months at San Bruno, California.


On February 15, 1937, the above facts were presented to Assistant United States Attorney William Fleet Palmer, who advised that since there was no attempt on the part of Subjects or others of the crew to obtain command of the ship, or to overthrow the officers, and since it was apparent that the incident at San Juan was in the nature of a strike, no prosecution would be instituted.

- REFERRED UPON COMPLETION TO THE DIVISION OF ORIGIN -

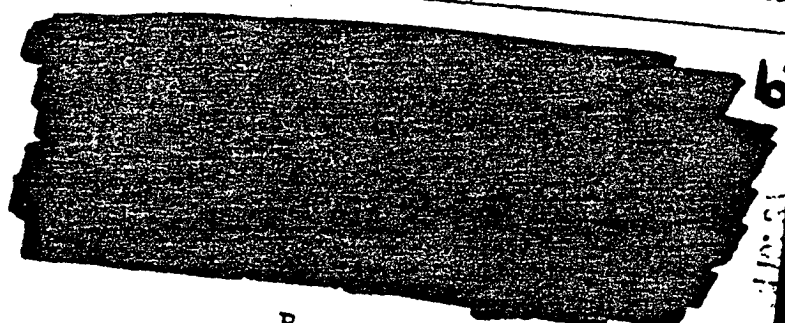
# FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

Form No. 1  
THIS CASE ORIGINATED AT **SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA.**

FILE NO. **65-28**


REPORT MADE AT <b>Washington, D. C.</b>	DATE WHEN MADE <b>2/23/37</b>	PERIOD FOR WHICH MADE <b>2/9/37</b>	REPORT MADE BY 
TITLE <b>HERMANN FREDERICK ERBEN, M.D., aliases: Dr. Herman S. Erben; Herman Frederick Erben; LLOYD USINGER (S. S. West Mahwah)</b>			RWF: <b>b7c</b>
CHARACTER OF CASE <b>ESPIONAGE MUTINY ON THE HIGH SEAS</b>			

SYNOPSIS OF FACTS:



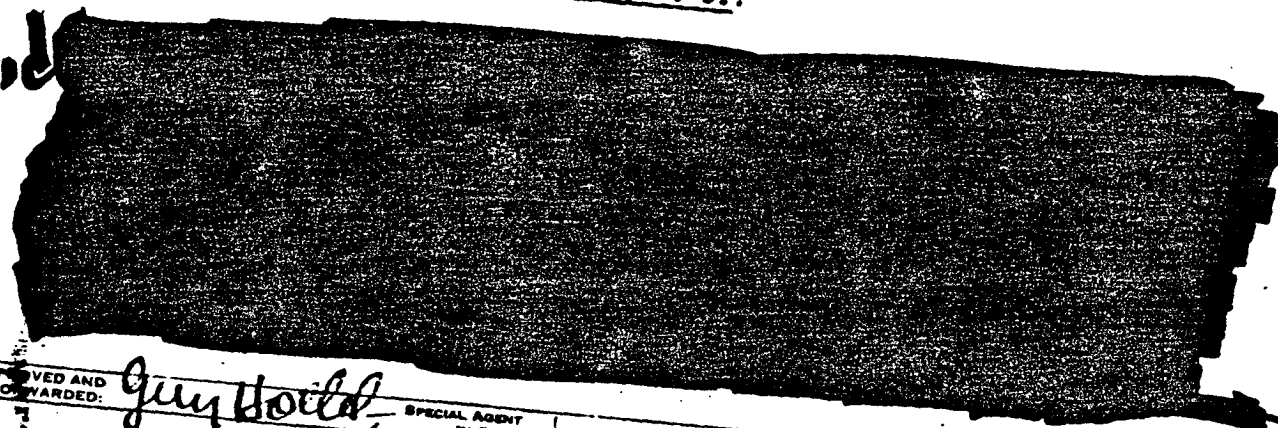
P.

REFERENCE:

Report of Special Agent   
California, dated January 17, 1937. **u**

DETAILS:

At Washington, D. C.:

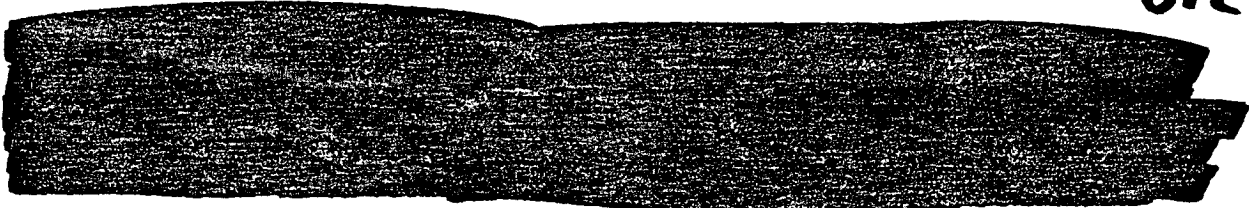


APPROVED AND FORWARDED: Guy Hoild SPECIAL AGENT IN CHARGE

- COPIES OF THIS REPORT
- 3 - Bureau
  - 3 - San Francisco
  - 3 - Washington Field

DO NOT WRITE IN THESE SPACES

**65-682-17**



b7c, d

b7c

Information in the files of the Military Intelligence Division, as produced by [redacted] corroborated the details relative to Dr. Erben, as set out in reference report but revealed nothing concerning subject Usinger.

Information in the files of the Far Eastern Division of the State Department, as produced by MR. STUART J. FULLER, Assistant Chief, likewise corroborated the details of reference report and added information that subject Erben is reputed to be a drug peddler and is listed in the black list issued by the Narcotic Bureau; further, that Dr. Erben was at one time arrested in Vienna, Austria, carrying concealed weapons, the date of the arrest not being known; that he is very eccentric, and it is believed that all his expeditions and explorations are of his own imagination and have never been backed up by any facts. No information was available relative to subject Lloyd Usinger.

UNDEVELOPED LEAD

THE WASHINGTON FIELD DIVISION

At Washington, D. C., will contact the Narcotic Bureau for any information relative to subject Hermann Frederick Erben, M. D. U

- PENDING -



Federal Bureau of Investigation  
United States Department of Justice

1105 Mills Tower,  
San Francisco, California

February 26, 1937.

ALL INFORMATION CONTAINED  
HEREIN IS UNCLASSIFIED  
DATE 5/24/79 BY SP3 TEIC/6

Director  
Federal Bureau of Investigation  
Washington, D.C.

Dear Sir:

RE: HERMANN FREDERICK ERBEN, M.D.  
With Aliases;  
LLOYD USINGER (SS WEST MAHWAH);  
Espionage; Mutiny on the High  
Seas.

On February 20, 1937, the San Francisco Bureau Field Division received a telegram from the Los Angeles Bureau Field Division advising that investigation of this case was completed and the United States Attorney at Los Angeles, California, has declined prosecution.

The San Francisco Field Division had previously obtained three photographs of DR. HERMANN FREDERICK ERBEN and on February 23, 1937, while an agent of this division was on the SS "West Mahwah" on other official matters, the three photographs were displayed to [REDACTED] [REDACTED] positively identified these three photographs as those of subject ERBEN. blend

This doctor appears to be a colorful personality and while apparently an American citizen, is said to be a very pro-German individual and critical of the United States Government.

[REDACTED] relates that this doctor was formerly ship's doctor on the SS "West Mahwah" and that he was a great admirer of CHANCELLOR ADOLPH HITLER and when the SS "West Mahwah" passed other vessels on the high seas, DR. ERBEN would mount the bridge, give the Nazi Salute and shout "HEIL, HITLER."

[REDACTED]

R/2

COPY DESTROYED  
JUL 29 1970

[REDACTED] b7c, d  
[REDACTED] stated that on one occasion, DR. ERBEN  
wiped his hands on a large American Flag which was displayed in  
the Mess Hall of the SS "West Mahwah"; that [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED] and [REDACTED] reported  
that they had observed the doctor making this unpatriotic gesture.

It is reported that DR. ERBEN was formerly connected  
with the National Geographic Society field party in Tibet. He is  
said to have recently been in Hollywood, California, and to have  
flown by plane to New York City.

This supplemental data is being furnished to the Bureau  
for its information. It is believed that the Bureau will be  
particularly interested in the three photographs of DR. ERBEN, all  
of which bear his signature since these photographs appear to be  
entirely dissimilar and one photograph shows DR. ERBEN wearing a  
HITLER mustache and what purports to be a German emblem on his  
blouse.

The Naval and Military Intelligence have been apparently  
interested in the activities of DR. ERBEN.

Very truly yours,

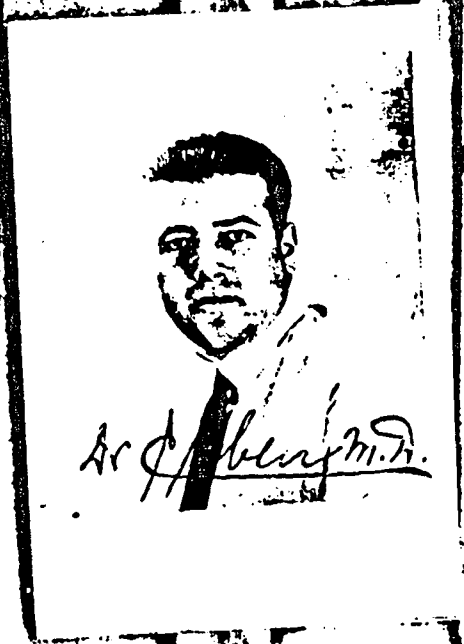
*W. L. Listerman*  
wfl

W. L. LISTERMAN,  
Special Agent in Charge

LDW:FB  
65-31

Enclosures-3

cc: Los Angeles



Name - Hermann F. Erben  
Age - 39 years  
Height - 6' tall  
Weight - 240 lbs.  
Hair - Dark blond  
Eyes - Blue  
Complexion - Ruddy  
Teeth - very good  
Race - White  
Fingerprints - None avail-  
able

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available

63-31

63-31

607 E. 2, Court House  
Fidelity Square  
New York, N. Y.

65-48  
REAB:MA

March 8, 1937.

Special Agent in Charge,  
San Francisco, California.

Dear Sir:

Re: **BERNARD FREDERICK ERBEN**, M. D., with aliases;  
**LYONS (S. S. # [redacted])**  
ESPIONAGE; MUTINY ON THE HIGH SEAS.

Reference is made to the report of Special Agent [redacted] of this Division dated February 25, 1937 referring to the completion of this case to your Division as the Division of [redacted], in which report it is stated that a letter had been directed to [redacted] of the S. S. "President Garfield" of the [redacted] anchored in the Hudson River, requesting information pertinent to Dr. Bernard Frederick Erben who was the Medical Officer on the S. S. "President Garfield" [redacted] on a world cruise from October 1, 1931 to August, 1932, when Erben was reportedly active as an agitator among the crew during the cruise and as reported by [redacted] to his superiors at that time.

At the time the above-mentioned report was submitted, no reply had been received from [redacted]. On February 25, 1937 a letter was received from [redacted] via the New York Division which was enclosed a full report on Erben as far as was known by [redacted].

This report is being forwarded to your Division herewith to be included in your files for possible future use.

Very truly yours,

65-682

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION  
MAR 8 1937  
U. S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

ONE

Enclosure  
65 - Bureau

ALL INFORMATION CONTAINED  
HEREIN IS UNCLASSIFIED  
DATE 5/24/79 BY SP3 TEK/ly

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

b7c  
b7d  
DISCLOSURE