

IB:VGG  
6-682-57

May 15, 1940

RECORDED

Dr. H. F. Erben  
Seemann's Mission  
64 Hudson Street  
Hoboken, New Jersey

Dear Doctor Erben:

This will acknowledge receipt of your letter of May 5, 1940.

From an examination of the contents of your communication it appears that you have assumed that this Bureau is conducting an investigation regarding your activities. I wish to remind you of your recent visit to the New York Office of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, at which time you voluntarily furnished information regarding your background and travels. The information which you furnished has been made a matter of record in the official files of this Bureau. Other than this I am unable to make any further comment.

You appreciate, I am sure, that information contained in the official files of this Bureau is not available to private citizens.

Very truly yours,

John Edgar Hoover  
Director

ALL INFORMATION CONTAINED  
HEREIN IS UNCLASSIFIED  
DATE 6/1/79 BY SP37EHL/G

- Mr. Tolson
- Mr. Nathan
- Mr. E. A. Tamm
- Mr. Clegg
- Mr. Ladd
- Mr. Coffey
- Mr. Egan
- Mr. Glavin
- Mr. Harbo
- Mr. Lester
- Mr. Hendon
- Mr. Malone
- Mr. Nichols
- Mr. Rosen
- Mr. Tracy
- Mr. Egan
- Mr. Gurnea
- Mr. Harbo
- Mr. Hendon
- Mr. Lester
- Mr. Quinn
- Mr. Nease
- Miss Gandy

Newark  
New York  
Los Angeles  
San Francisco

Copies of incoming  
to all of above

COMMUNICATIONS SECTION  
MAY 15 1940  
F. B. I.  
U. S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

*[Handwritten signature]*

J. HOFFMANN  
HAUBVATER



NICHT AMTLICH

J. H. F. Erben.

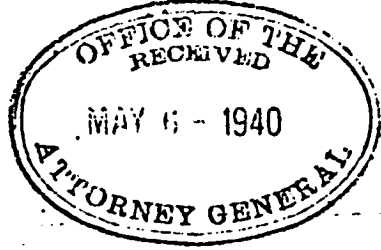
SCHREIBZIMMER  
DER

SEEMANN'S MISSION

64 HUDSON STREET

HOBOKEN, N. J.

5-5-1940.



Robert H. Jackson  
Attorney General Wash. D.

Sir:

Since my voluntary return to the U.S. on February 20<sup>th</sup> 1940 after serving as ship-surgeon on the Gunnar - Apicon under J.S. Henn-Kennel, I have been made the subject of an investigation by the F. B. I. and so have been several of my friends, prominent among them Dr. Rudolf Jakob 250. Park St. New York City and Ernst Flynn Warner Bros. Star, 601. North Linden Drive, Beverly Hills calif. N.Y. 65-682-59

I succeeded in getting a position as ship-surgeon on the S.S. Panama on March 28<sup>th</sup> 1940 of the Panama R. R. Co. I was fired on April 15<sup>th</sup> on account of the fact, that I am german born and under investigation.

Being a ship-surgeon I must go to

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION  
MAY 8 1940  
U. S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

H. HOFFMANN  
HAUSVATER



NICHT ANTLICH

SCHREIBZIMMER  
DER  
SEEMANN'S MISSION  
64 HUDSON STREET  
HOBOKEN, N. J.

unreasonable. But I must know where I stand and if the government, that so far has taken my livelihood away from me, sees fit to allow me to continue to work in my profession as a ship museum, or not.

Thanking you for an answer to this vital question for my entire future,  
at your very earliest convenience

I beg to remain  
most respectfully Yours

*H. P. J. Blum M.D.*

SCHRÖTZINGER  
DER  
SEEMANN'S MISSION  
64 HUDSON STREET  
HOBOKEN, N.J.

5-5-1940.

Robert H. Jackson  
Attorney General Wash. D.

Sir:

Since my voluntary return to the U.S. on February 20th 1940 after serving as ship surgeon on the German-African liner S.S. , I have been made the subject of an investigation by the F.B.I. and so have been several of my friends, prominent among them Dr. Rudolf Scharf 850 Park Av. New York City and Errol Flynn Warner Bros. Star, 601 North Linden Drive, Beverly Hills Calif.

I succeeded in getting a position as ship surgeon on the S.S. Panama on March 28th 1940 of the Panama R.R. Co. I was fired on April 15th on account of the fact, that I am German born and under investigation.

Being a ship surgeon I must go to sea for a living. My repeated applications to Steamship officials, some of them known to me for 15 years, brought finally the following parts out: "By order of the U.S. Government I am not to be given a job". Upon my inquiry at the F.B.I. in New York I was directed to apply to your office.

I herewith most respectfully inquire as follows:

- I. Is the investigation of the U. S. Government against me completed?
- II. If yes, are the findings such, that I am to be permanently barred from going to sea?
- III. If not, how long approximately will I be barred from making a living?
- IV. If my investigation has cleared me and the government wishes to restore my honest name and my constitutional right as an American citizen, to make a living, what steps can I take, to get the still insisting ban lifted, from getting any job whatsoever.

I believe that I am not asking something unreasonable. But I must know where I stand and if the government, that so far has taken my livelihood away from me, sees fit to allow me to continue to work in my profession as a ship surgeon, or not.

Thanking you for an answer to this vital question for my entire future, at your very earliest convenience.

I beg to remain most respectfully yours,

H. F. Erben M.D. /s/

Federal Bureau of Investigation  
United States Department of Justice

New York, N.Y.

65-1715  
LAL:HD

May 10, 1940

Director  
Federal Bureau of Investigation  
Washington, D. C.

Re: DR. HERMANN FREDERICK ERBEN  
with aliases: - ESPIONAGE

Dear Sir:

9  
b7c  
Reference is made to Bureau letter dated April 29, 1940, (Bureau file #65-682) which enclosed a photograph of DR. ERBEN appearing on the notice placed in the Identification Division of the Bureau by the Narcotic Bureau. This photograph was exhibited to Special Agent [redacted] of this office, who interviewed DR. ERBEN recently and who states that the photograph is identical with that of DR. ERBEN, subject in this case.

For the guidance of the office of origin, (San Francisco), there are being transmitted herewith, copies of DR. ERBEN'S latest photographs with and without glasses and a stand-up photograph, all of which were obtained in the New York Field Division, March 5, 1940.

Very truly yours,

*P. E. Foxworth*  
P. E. FOXWORTH,  
Special Agent in Charge.

cc: San Francisco (Encs.3)

RECORDED

ALL INFORMATION CONTAINED  
HEREIN IS UNCLASSIFIED  
DATE 6/11/79 BY SP3TEK/9

a 65-682-58

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION
1 MAY 11 1940
U. S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE
ONE 10

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FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION  
FOIPA DELETED PAGE INFORMATION SHEET

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- Deleted under exemption(s) \_\_\_\_\_ with no segregable material available for release to you.
- Information pertained only to a third party with no reference to you or the subject of your request.
- Information pertained only to a third party. Your name is listed in the title only.
- Document(s) originating with the following government agency(ies) State Dept was/were forwarded to them for direct response to you.

\_\_\_\_\_ Page(s) referred for consultation to the following government agency(ies): \_\_\_\_\_ as the information originated with them. You will be advised of availability upon return of the material to the FBI.

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For your information: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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65-682-59 pgs 1-3

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Suite 1729 - 111 Sutter Street  
San Francisco, California

May 9, 1940

Major J. H. Wilson,  
Assistant Chief of Staff  
G-2, Presidio  
San Francisco, California

RE: DR. HERMANN FREDERICK ERBEN,  
with aliases;  
ESPIONAGE.

Dear Sir:

There are transmitted herewith two photostatic copies  
of the correspondence between Dr. Hermann Erben and  
Special Agent [redacted] of this office. [redacted] b7c,d

Yours very truly,

M. J. L. Pieper,  
Special Agent in Charge

NJA:MC  
65-31  
cc Bureau

Enc.

ALL INFORMATION CONTAINED  
HEREIN IS UNCLASSIFIED  
DATE 6/1/79 BY SP5/ELG

INDEXED

65-172-519X

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION
MAY 15 1940
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

ONE [initials]



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### FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION FOIPA DELETED PAGE INFORMATION SHEET

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- Deleted under exemption(s) b7c, b7d with no segregable material available for release to you.
- Information pertained only to a third party with no reference to you or the subject of your request.
- Information pertained only to a third party. Your name is listed in the title only.
- Document(s) originating with the following government agency(ies) \_\_\_\_\_, was/were forwarded to them for direct response to you.

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For your information: \_\_\_\_\_  
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FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION  
FOIPA DELETED PAGE INFORMATION SHEET

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LIB:AI  
65-682-60

June 3, 1940

RECORDED

Special Agent in Charge  
San Francisco, California

Re: DR. HERMANN FREDERICK ERBEN  
with aliases; ESPIONAGE

Dear Sir:

I am transmitting herewith copies of dispatches dated April 17 and 20, 1940, received by the State Department from the American Consuls at Antofagasta, Chile, and Valparaiso, Chile, respectively, pertaining to the above entitled matter, for the completion of your files.

Very truly yours,

John Edgar Hoover  
Director

Enclosure

CC NEW YORK (with enclosure)

Mr. Tolson	
Mr. E. A. Tamm	
Mr. Clegg	
Mr. Glavin	
Mr. Ladd	
Mr. Nichols	
Mr. Rosen	
Mr. Tracy	
Miss Gandy	

**COMMUNICATIONS SECTION**

FILED

JUN 3 1940 ★

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION  
U. S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

*[Handwritten signatures and initials]*

# FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

Form No. 1

THIS CASE ORIGINATED AT **SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA**

NY - FILE NO. **65-1715**

REPORT MADE AT <b>NEW YORK CITY</b>	DATE WHEN MADE <b>5/10/40</b>	PERIOD FOR WHICH MADE <b>3/21/40 4/14, 16, 17, 19/40</b>	REPORT MADE BY <b>[REDACTED]</b>
TITLE <b>DR. HERMANN FREDERICK ERBEN with aliases.</b>		CHARACTER OF CASE <b>ESPIONAGE</b>	
SYNOPSIS OF FACTS: Baggage of DR. ERBEN examined at NYC. Photostats obtained of papers of interest in this matter. DR. ERBEN discharged as ship's surgeon SS. "PANAMA" 4/15/40 by reason of general complaints although no evidence of espionage activity on recent trip of SS. "PANAMA". Complaints appeared to have to do with DR. ERBEN'S personality rather than his activities.			
REFERENCE: Report of Special Agent [REDACTED] dated 3/18/40 at New York City. Teletype to the Bureau dated March 27, 1940. Letter from San Francisco dated April 11, 1940.			
DETAILS: On March 2, 1940, DR. HERMANN FREDERICK ERBEN called at the New York Division office and advised that he had obtained employment as ship's surgeon aboard the SS. "PANAMA" sailing from New York City March 28, 1940 to Cristobal, Canal Zone, arriving			
APPROVED AND FORWARDED <b>[Signature]</b>	SPECIAL AGENT IN CHARGE DO NOT WRITE IN THESE SPACES		
COPIES OF THIS REPORT 3 - Bureau 2 - San Francisco (2 Encs.) 5 - New York (1 - Comm. D.E. Downer, ONI, NYC) 1 - Col. P.K. Ross, G-2, Coy. (S. NYC.)		65-1682-61 MAY 15 A.M. ONE - HARBO	

**COPY DESTROYED**  
197 JUL 29 1970

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

65-1715

there April 3, and returning to New York on April 13. He stated that he would contact the New York Division upon his return to New York City and information concerning his employment above, was furnished the Bureau by reference teletype. On April 15, 1940, DR. ERBEN again called at the New York Office and advised that he had made the trip on the SS "PANAMA" without incident so far as the trip itself was concerned. He claimed, however, that influences were again at work to deprive him of employment explaining that the day the ship departed from New York City he was called into conference with MR. PFIZER, Vice-President of the line and a MR. ROSBOTTOM, another Vice-President of the line, and vigorously interrogated concerning his references. He explained that he produced for the benefit of Mr. Pfizer and Mr. Rosbottom, letters which had been furnished him by various steamship companies for whom he had been employed and that they appeared mollified to a certain extent and he was permitted to sail. However, on his return to New York City on April 13, after having been permitted to pass the Customs officers, his presence evidently was realized and he was called back and given a vigorous interrogation concerning his activities after which his baggage was searched, there being no items found of interest to the Customs officers he was released with an apology.

Thereafter, on April 15, he was called in to Mr. Pfizer's office at 24 State St., New York City, and informed that there had been complaints received against him and that the line was accordingly compelled to dispense with his services. DR. ERBEN stated that he had, throughout the trip, maintained the utmost effort not to express any opinions or to take sides and even had endured the indignity of taking his meals with a Jewish couple during the trip.

It should be noted that Dr. Erben is extremely anti-Semitic in his views and he considered this a crowning achievement, that he was able to spend several days in the company of this couple without indicating his actual views.

DR. ERBEN, at the same time, also produced a letter dated March 25, 1940 from ERROL FLYNN, 601 North Linden Boulevard, Beverly Hills, California, which refers to the interview of FLYNN by Special Agent in Charge Hood of the Los Angeles Division. In this letter ERROL FLYNN expressed sympathy

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toward DR. ERBEN as well as a desire to assist him in any way he could. The letter indicated that Mr. FLYNN had interceded with MRS. ROOSEVELT on her recent trip to the West Coast in an effort to have the Department of Labor drop its pending case involving Dr. Erben's citizenship. u

[REDACTED] was interviewed by the writer at which time he advised that DR. ERBEN had originally been selected as the ship's surgeon by [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] who interviews and passes upon candidates whose names are then recommended to [REDACTED] for an appointment. [REDACTED] explained that prior to the ship's sailing he received information from one of the ship's employees that DR. ERBEN had requested him to mail a communication to San Francisco relative to some baggage which Dr. Erben was requesting be forwarded to New York City. This employee advised that he understood that Dr. Erben had been on the SS. "ALTMARK", supply ship for the GRAF SPEE, and accordingly was not the proper person to be ship's surgeon on the Panama Line. u

[REDACTED] stated that he had communicated with [REDACTED] office and with one [REDACTED] who has been associated with [REDACTED] and who stated that [REDACTED] had no previous acquaintanceship with Dr. Erben but had recommended him after an interview. [REDACTED] stated that he thereupon went to the SS. "PANAMA" and interviewed Dr. Erben, saying himself that the sailor's story relative to the ALTMARK had no foundation and he therefore decided to give Dr. Erben a trial as ship's surgeon. However, as a precaution he informed the captain of the SS. "PANAMA" that Dr. Erben had been the object of some preliminary suspicions and that should Dr. Erben's conduct appear in any way suspicious, the Captain should take steps to confine Dr. Erben and see that the interests of line were protected. [REDACTED] stated that upon the return of the "PANAMA", the Captain reported to him that Dr. Erben's conduct had been entirely satisfactory; that the captain had observed no espionage activity or any suspicious action whatsoever. However, [REDACTED] following the docking of the ship, u

65-1715

received a number of complaints from various individuals whose names he stated he could not furnish agent, indicating that DR. ERBEN was the type of individual who raised serious question as to his qualifications as a ship's surgeon inasmuch as he was of marked German appearance and spoke with a strong German accent. u

[redacted] stated that inasmuch as the major portion of the ship's patronage is derived from government sources he did not feel that he should be called upon to explain Dr. Erben's presence on the ship and accordingly, whether or not the complaints were justified, he felt that DR. ERBEN had best be discharged. [redacted] stated that he in fact held no animosity toward Dr. Erben and would not hesitate to give him a satisfactory reference for the work which he had performed. [redacted] stated that Dr. Erben, however, was the type of individual who made him feel very much ill at ease inasmuch as he would come into [redacted] office, stand rigidly at attention after first having clicked his heels and bowed from the waist, and would then speak with a strong German accent using the word "Sir" until [redacted] said that he felt embarrassed. He expressed the opinion that Dr. Erben had undoubtedly received military training at some time during his career and that the only real fault that he discovered about Dr. Erben was his appearance and manner of speech. u

b7c, d

Subsequently DR. ERBEN again called at the New York Division office where he was questioned concerning the statement that he had been a sailor on the "ALTMARK". DR. ERBEN denied ever having made any such statement to anyone, ridiculing the idea that he had ever so served. Dr. Erben indicated that he had never undertaken any political views at any time. u

By reference letter from San Francisco, the New York Office was requested to arrange with the Customs officials at New York to be present at the opening of DR. ERBEN'S baggage which had been shipped in bond from San Francisco to New York City. Special Agent [redacted] was present on April 16, 1940 at the Railway Express office, 33rd St. & 10th Avenue, New York City, together with U. S. Customs Agents [redacted] and [redacted] at the opening of the baggage. u

b7c

65-1715

There were two large suitcases which contained the personal effects of subject, consisting mostly of clothing and medicine. The only items which appeared to have any significance were as follows:

One envelope containing letters in German and Spanish.

One envelope containing photostats of German diplomas.

One photostat of promotion to Lieutenant of Field Artillery Reserves in Germany.

One Certificate of Identification used by the German Government dated 12/16/38.

One Camera exposure meter and reel of 16 M.M. film.

The second suitcase contained the following items:

One reel for a motion picture film

One camera filter.

One package of photo supplies.

One bundle, 5 Pkgs. motion picture films.

Three pieces of camera parts.

Two pkgs. holders for motion picture films.

Special Agent [REDACTED] <sup>b7c</sup> was also present when Dr. Erben's third bag which was located on board the SS. "PANAMA" was examined. This bag contained some photographic supplies of no particular significance and no further note was made of the contents. In connection with certain articles of medicine, the Customs Agents confiscated 5 bindles of morphine hydro-chloride, as well as 5 boxes of immoral articles listed in the San Francisco reference letter. It should be noted in connection with



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this confiscation that the Customs Agents confiscated the same not on the ground that the possession thereof was illegal in a physician but because the drugs were of a foreign manufacture and their possession accordingly, failed to constitute any narcotic charge against Dr. ERBEN. In further explanation of this, the writer contacted Special Agent D. T. Guilfoyle who advised that the narcotic file relating to Dr. Erben indicated that Dr. Erben had been placed on the confidential list of suspects who were deemed possibilities in connection with the smuggling of narcotics; that accordingly, whenever Dr. Erben would come into any port he would be subjected to a thorough and complete search by any Customs Agent in an effort to detect any smuggled narcotics; that over a period of many years these searches had been continued, always with negative results and no narcotics were ever found in Dr. Erben's effects other than those he was entitled to possess as a practicing physician. Accordingly the Narcotic Bureau had removed DR. ERBEN from its confidential list and Agent Guilfoyle stated that the previous narcotic charges or suspicions relative to Dr. Erben were no longer deemed justified.

Agent [redacted] explained that the items which were confiscated were confiscated not on the narcotic charge but because they were of foreign manufacture and the confiscation occurred in connection with a customs regulation which prohibited the importation of drugs of foreign manufacture. Had the drugs been of American manufacture, DR. ERBEN would have been allowed to retain them at the present time.

Subsequently DR. ERBEN again called at the New York Division office and indicated his embarrassment at having been subjected to additional search by Customs Agents. He was not aware of the fact that Agent [redacted] of the Bureau, was present at the time his baggage was opened. DR. ERBEN produced for the benefit of the New York Division, the documentary items which appeared to have some significance, those appearing to be of importance being photostated, the photostats of which are being forwarded to the office of origin. A description of these photostats is being set out hereinafter;

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that he also has in his possession a much larger document by which he traces back his Aryan ancestry for 400 years. u

7. Statement of ship's doctor, Dr. Heermann Marques on August 28, 1939, relative to the events in Lourenco by DR. ERBEN as an explanation of his conduct in going to the British Consulate at Lourenco Marques. He stated that he had been very much censured for going to the British Consulate and had been required to explain his action to the satisfaction of the Ship's officers. An original document which is written in German has been translated and a copy thereof is being forwarded to the San Francisco Division together with translation. u

8. Statement relative to the trip of the SS. "USSUKUMA". This document has to do with the trip of the ship from July 15, until after the Declaration of War, as a result of which it was forced to flee from Lourenco Marques. The document is chiefly concerned with the brutal treatment of one of the seamen by the First Officer of the ship and a copy of the document, together with a translation thereof is being forwarded to the office of origin for its general information. u

Relative to Dr. Erben's conduct as has been previously set forth, he has repeatedly stated that he is endeavoring to keep in the good graces of the German authorities at the present time, although some of the impetus for remaining in their good graces has been lost since one of his sons was recently killed in the Baltic Sea. As a result of his efforts he maintains close contact with the German Consulate at New York City and he makes a point of attending all Nazi functions for which there is no admission charge. He has visited the New York Division wearing a business suit and a white shirt and black tie which he has stated is the official Party uniform for civilian functions. On one occasion he attended a "one pot dinner" given on March 21, 1940 at the DEUTSCHER TURNHALLE in the Yorkville section of New York City, after which he received a complimentary photograph taken at the meeting of the notables present. This photograph which shows as guest of honor the Duke of Saxe-Coburg also known as the Duke of Saxony, the German Consul General and Consul Draeger of the German Consulate, is being retained in the New York files of this case for possible use in connection with other espionage cases in this district. u

65-1715

1. A diploma issued by the University of Vienna Medical School. Dr. Erben explained that this is a small copy which is furnished graduates in order that the large formal type diploma need not be produced in the event it is necessary to prove graduation from the university. It is noted that the reverse side of the photostat contains a number of certificates attesting the genuineness of the document. DR. ERBEN explained that at the time he entered the United States following his graduation from the university, it was necessary that he have the various certificates added to the document as proof of his education and standing as a graduate of the medical school. u

2. Photostats of licenses to practice in the States of California, Washington, Louisiana and New York, together with a reduced size photograph of his large diploma from the University of Vienna. u

3. Letter dated April 7, 1933 indicating his license to practice in the International Settlement, Shanghai, China. u

4. Letter dated April 25, 1938 signed by John W. Bulkeley, on the letterhead of the Bureau of Customs, indicating that Dr. Erben's name had been removed from the confidential list of suspected narcotic agents.

5. Lieutenant's Commission in the Field Artillery Reserve. In connection with this document, it is noted that it is dated at Vienna, December 19, 1918, and was issued by the Austrian Government, not the German Government, as heretofore indicated in various reports. Dr. Erben stated that this commission was given him at the end of his war service received for his satisfactory services. u

6. A German certificate dated December 16, 1938. Dr. Erben explained that this is a certificate attesting that he is a pure Aryan, issued by the Nazi Party and is a document of which he is very proud. The reverse side thereof, contains family information for several generations back. Dr. Erben stated

65-1715

At the time of DR. ERBEN'S most recent visit to the New York Division office he implied that he has become convinced of the fact that it is futile for him to attempt to obtain employment in the vicinity of New York and that it was his belief that he would have better success on the West Coast. He indicated that he would visit the New York Office prior to his departure in the event he decided to leave New York.

ENCLOSURES TO THE SAN FRANCISCO OFFICE: 2 items as described in the body of this report.

UNDEVELOPED LEAD:

THE NEW YORK FIELD DIVISION

At New York City, will retain contact with DR. HERMANN ERBEN for information concerning his plans for his departure to the West Coast.

PENDING

LIB:AI

65-682-60

June 9, 1940

RECORDED

PERSONAL AND  
CONFIDENTIAL

Honorable Adolf A. Berle, Jr.  
Assistant Secretary of State  
Department of State  
Washington, D. C.

My dear Mr. Berle:

As a matter of possible further  
interest to you, I am transmitting herewith  
copies of the reports of Special Agent [redacted] b7c  
[redacted] New York City, dated May 13 and  
May 20, 1940, submitted in the case entitled  
DR. HERMANN FREDERICK ERBEH, with aliases,  
ESPIONAGE, your reference A-B.

I wish to take this opportunity  
to acknowledge receipt of your letters of  
May 7, and 13, 1940, with enclosures, for  
which I am appreciative.

Sincerely yours,

Enclosure

ALL INFORMATION CONTAINED  
HEREIN IS UNCLASSIFIED  
DATE 6/1/79 BY SP3TEK/16

- Mr. Tolson \_\_\_\_\_
- Mr. Nathan \_\_\_\_\_
- Mr. E. A. Tamm \_\_\_\_\_
- Mr. Clegg \_\_\_\_\_
- Mr. Ladd \_\_\_\_\_
- Mr. Egan \_\_\_\_\_
- Mr. Glavin \_\_\_\_\_
- Mr. Hendon \_\_\_\_\_
- Mr. Nichols \_\_\_\_\_
- Mr. Rosen \_\_\_\_\_
- Mr. Tracy \_\_\_\_\_
- Miss Gandy \_\_\_\_\_

COMMUNICATIONS SECTION  
MAILED  
JUN 8 1940  
P. M.  
FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION,  
U. S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

*[Handwritten signatures and initials]*

# FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

Form No. 1

THIS CASE ORIGINATED AT **SAN FRANCISCO, CALIF.**

65-1715

JSMG

REPORT MADE AT <b>NEW YORK, N.Y.</b>	DATE WHEN MADE <b>5-20-40</b>	PERIOD FOR WHICH MADE <b>5-4, 8, 11-40</b>	REPORT MADE BY <b>[REDACTED]</b>
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TITLE <b>Dr. HERMANN FREDERICK ERBEN, with aliases.</b>	CHARACTER OF CASE <b>ESPIONAGE</b>
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SYNOPSIS OF FACTS:

**[REDACTED]**

Subject has been offered appointment as contract physician with CCC, Fort Moultrie, S. C. Trial on cancellation of naturalization continued to August 8, 1940.

ALL INFORMATION CONTAINED  
HEREIN IS UNCLASSIFIED  
DATE 6/1/79 BY SP3TEK/18

REFERENCE: Report of Special Agent **[REDACTED]** New York, N. Y., May 13, 1940.

DETAILS: At NEW YORK, N. Y.

On May 4, 1940, Dr. HERMANN FREDERICK ERBEN again called at the New York office, where he advised that he had been unable to locate a job with any of the ship lines, and that he has recently been contacted by the Civilian Conservation Corps with an offer of a position as contract physician. He stated that a friend of his in connection with one ship line, which he declined to name, had informed him that a stop had been placed against his name, and that the line would not hire him under any circumstances. He indicated his belief that the only way to get around the situation would be to obtain a letter from the Bureau, indicating that he had been investigated and found not to be mixed up in espionage activity.

He was given information that such letters could not be issued. He indicated that he intended to communicate with the Attorney General and with the Secretary of the Navy in an effort to obtain some sort of clearance letter which

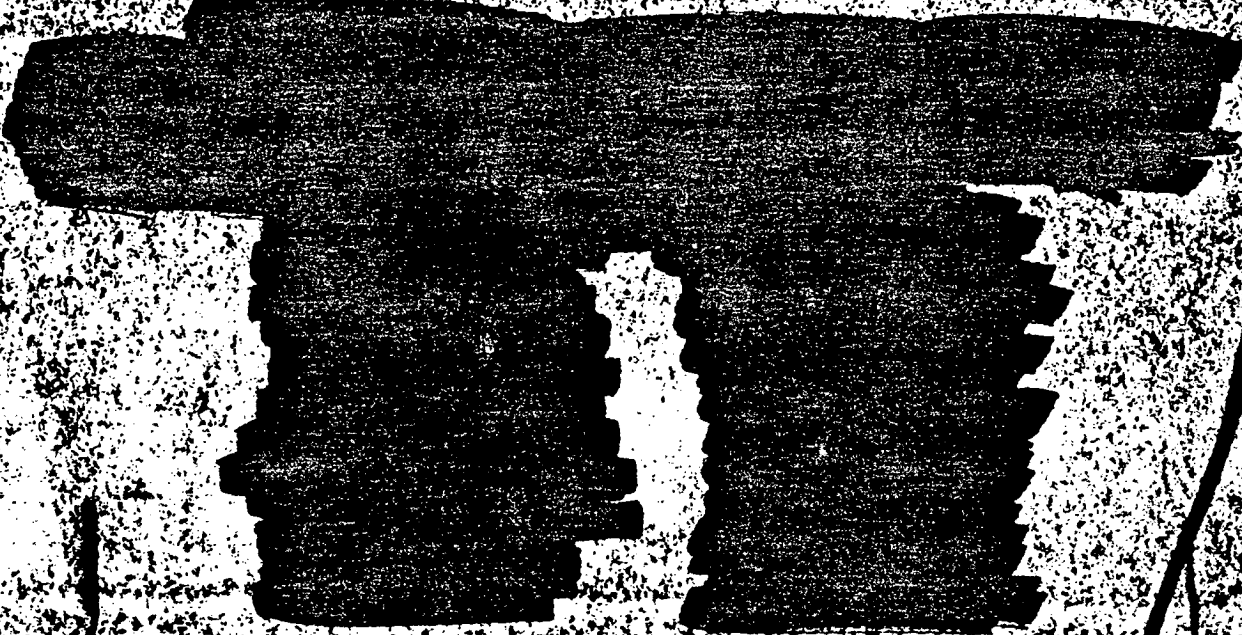
APPROVED AND FORWARDED <b>[Signature]</b> SPECIAL AGENT IN CHARGE	DO NOT WRITE IN THESE SPACES
COPIES OF THIS REPORT 1 - Bureau 1 - San Francisco 1 - New York (1 - Comm. D. B. Downey ONI, NYC) 1 - Col. F. K. Ross, G-2, Gov. IS., NYC	65-1682-621 MAY 21 1940 ONE COPY BARBO

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would enable him to secure employment. On this occasion Dr. ERBEN also stated that he was desirous of bringing his fiancée, JOAN SCOTT SMITH, from England to the United States and in connection therewith had prepared an affidavit which was executed by the Emigrant Industrial Savings Bank, of New York, indicating that as of May 4, 1940, he had a balance in the bank of \$3,000. He stated that he proposed to send this affidavit to the appropriate consulate in order that Miss SMITH might receive a visa to come to the United States.

It may be noted in connection with Dr. ERBEN's financial affairs that he is extremely economical; that he customarily lives in a sailors' rooming house of the cheaper type and that in general he is very "stingy". It was ascertained from Dr. ERBEN that in connection with his recent trip to Washington, D. C., he received from the German Consulate at New York City the sum of twenty dollars to defray his expenses in connection with the trip; that he used an inexpensive means of transportation and lived in a "flophouse" while in Washington, as a result of which he was able to save a portion of the twenty dollars. He was very much pleased over this accomplishment.

It should also be noted that Dr. ERBEN at this time is receiving subsistence from the German Consulate, which provides him with sufficient money to live on.



65-1715

[REDACTED]

On May 11, 1940, Dr. ERBEN again called at the New York office, at which time he exhibited a telegram offering him an appointment as a contract physician for the Civilian Conservation Corps, effective May 18, 1940. In the event he accepted the appointment he was directed to report to CCC, Division 1, Fort Moultrie, South Carolina. Dr. ERBEN indicated that unless some other position appeared meanwhile, he would accept the CCC appointment. He said that the salary of \$266 per month was fairly attractive; that he would much prefer a job on a ship, even as dishwasher, and that he now had pending an application for a physician's job in the Virgin Islands in connection with a small hospital maintained by the Government on one of the islands. This latter job would pay \$250 a month, but Dr. ERBEN indicated that he would much prefer it to any of his other prospects, inasmuch as it offered a real opportunity to do actual medical work in a field in which he was much interested, namely that of tropical medicine.

On this occasion Dr. ERBEN also stated that he had recently heard from his lawyer, Mr. CHAUNCEY TRAMUTOLO, to the effect that the hearing on proceedings for cancellation of his naturalization had been postponed to August 8, 1940. Dr. ERBEN, it was observed, is becoming more and more anti-British and pro-German in his utterances and has repeatedly indicated his belief that the Nazi armed forces will prevail in the present European conflict, unless the United States becomes a party. Dr. ERBEN has also repeatedly stated in recent interviews that if the United States enters the war he will immediately endeavor to enlist in the United States Army, indicating that although he still feels that his German blood is something of which he should be proud, he considers his first allegiance to the United States.

Dr. ERBEN stated that he would communicate further with the New York field office as to his future activity in connection with acceptance or rejection of the CCC job.

UNDEVELOPED LEAD:

NEW YORK FIELD DIVISION WILL maintain contact with Dr. ERBEN relative to his plans for the future.

PENDING



XXXXXX  
XXXXXX  
XXXXXX

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION  
FOIPA DELETED PAGE INFORMATION SHEET

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Page(s) withheld entirely at this location in the file. One or more of the following statements, where indicated, explain this deletion.

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607 U. S. Court House  
Foley Square  
New York, N.Y.

CONFIDENTIAL

JEM:MM  
65-1715

May 28, 1940



CBI

Re: DR. HERMANN FREDERICK ERBEN  
alias Herman F. O'Durben.

Dear Sirs:

I wish to acknowledge receipt of your letter dated April 30, 1940, and to thank you for the additional information contained therein relating to the activities of Dr. Erben.

Very truly yours,

ALL INFORMATION CONTAINED  
HEREIN IS UNCLASSIFIED  
EXCEPT WHERE SHOWN  
OTHERWISE

P. E. FOXWORTH  
Special Agent in Charge.

cc-Bureau (with copy of incoming letter)  
cc-Miami (with copy of incoming letter)

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EXTENDED BY... SP3 J.E.K. [initials]  
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DATE OF REVIEW FOR  
DECLASSIFICATION... 6/11/89

INDEXED

6/11/79

APPROPRIATE AGENCIES  
AND FIELD OFFICES  
ADVISED BY ROUTING  
SLIP(S) OF [handwritten]  
DATE [handwritten]

65-682-624
FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION
MAY 29 1940
U. S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

CONFIDENTIAL

# 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>5/15/40</b>	PERIOD FOR WHICH MADE <b>3/28, 31; 4/11, 17, 29; 5/8/40</b>	REPORT MADE BY <b>[REDACTED]</b>
TITLE <b>DR. HERMANN FREDERICK ERKEN, with aliases.</b>			CHARACTER OF CASE <b>ESPIONAGE.</b>

**SYNOPSIS OF FACTS:**

State Department reports subject and ERROL FLYNN visited Valencia, Spain in 1937, FLYNN stating that they were bringing \$1,500,000.00 for Republican Spain collected in Hollywood. Subject's luggage forwarded Pier 65, North River, New York City, contents including motion picture film, two N. S. D. A. P. pins, German Reserve Officer certificate photostat, German Government certificate of Identity. Trial of proceedings to revoke naturalization continued to 8/8/40.

**REFERENCE:**

Report of Special Agent [REDACTED] San Francisco, California dated 3/28/40; u  
Bureau letter to San Francisco dated 4/29/40 (Bureau file 65-682).

**DETAILS:**

**AT SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA:**

On 3/28/40, 3/31/40 and 4/11/40 Special Agent [REDACTED]

**COPY DESTROYED** through [REDACTED]

ascertained that subject's luggage, which arrived in San Francisco on 2/7/40, had been forwarded to Pier 65, North River, New York City for subject at the request of W. R. GRACE AND COMPANY, San Francisco, Attorney in Fact. Subject's luggage was checked by the Customs Officers, the contents having been listed in San Francisco letter to New York.

APPROVED AND FORWARDED <i>[Signature]</i> SPECIAL AGENT IN CHARGE	DO NOT WRITE IN THESE SPACES	
COPIES OF THIS REPORT 5 - Bureau 2 - New York 2 - Los Angeles 2 - San Francisco DEPT. OF JUSTICE DIVISION OF INVESTIGATION	<b>65-1682-63</b>	MAY 25 1940
	<b>MAY 21 A.M.</b>	<i>[Signature]</i>

dated 4/11/40. The contents included five bindles of morphine hydrochloride, motion picture film, two National Socialist D. A. P. pins, a certificate of identity issued by the German Government on December 16, 1938, and verified November 1, 1939 by stamp.

On 3/31/40 [redacted] turned over the Special Agent [redacted] a letter from subject to GEORGE WILLIAMS, care of W. R. GRACE AND COMPANY, San Francisco, upon which the shipping of subject's luggage to New York is based. Photostatic copies of the letter have been made, two each of which are being furnished to Confidential Informants Y and G, and four of which are being retained in the files of the San Francisco Field Division. The letter and enclosure read as follows:

"Panama Line  
Panama Railroad Co.

" On board  
S. S. PANAMA  
3/28/40

Mr. GEORGE WILLIAMS  
1 Pine Str.  
c/o W. R. GRACE  
San Francisco, Calif.

"My dear George:

"I am coming to you today to ask you for a great favor, but I know you to be the man to help me. I have sent my 2 suitcases from Buenos Aires via the S. S. GRENANGER of THE WESTPHAL LARSON LINE to Frisco through the kindness of the skipper. These 2 suitcases were landed at the pier on February 7th, 1940 and sent by the U. S. Customs to the unclaimed Warehouse Sea Wall in Frisco.

"I got a job here and am now surgeon on the S. S. PANAMA of the PANAMA LINE sailing today. These two suitcases contain all my personal uniforms and no dutiable articles. I have executed here at the Customs house all necessary papers and sent them together with the key to the Sea Wall Unclaimed Warehouse to clear them through the customs. What I want you to do for me now is as follows:

"1. Please call them upon Monday at the Warehouse and make sure

that the registered letter with clearance papers and 1 key (for both suitcases) has arrived. (2) Take up the key and send it to me so that nobody can get at my stuff and please make sure that both suitcases are properly locked! !

"3. Please despatch those 2 cases immediately to New York for me.

"I am arriving in New York on April 13th and leaving April 18th. Now it will be perfectly all right to send them by sea for I am sure in 18 days they can be here. If you can get them to be brought over just the same as the GRENANGER skipper took them, helping out a seaman, I shall be very happy. If not I shall just have to pay. ~~the~~

"If it is not certain to have them in New York by April 18th please send them by freight. I hope the railroad will take them without crating for that would make it again more expensive.

"Only if freight also is impossible send them AMERICAN RAILWAY EXPRESS, which will cost about 12\$. But I am sailing this time in civilian clothes by special permission and must have my uniforms for April 18th, to keep my job.

"Please, GEORGE, do all in your power to send me my 2 suitcases.

"Please send all collect, so that I may pay for any expenses you might have and can repay you. It won't be necessary to insure them. If you should run into any difficulty, please communicate with Mr. S. A. PAGE of GENERAL S. S. CO., who has very kindly helped me so far.

"Should any legal difficulty as to my signature arise (you know Customs are difficult) you can call up CHAUNCEY TRAMUTOLO, Alexander Bldg., my lawyer. He can identify my signature.

"Now, as to my address:

DR. HERMANN F. ERBEN  
c/o PANAMA LINE, Pier 65 N. R.  
New York City.

"I have made arrangements with the dock here that they will hold t. baggage for me. I am hoping you wont run into too much trouble, George, but I must have my uniforms.

"Whilst my financial situation warrants the greatest possible economy I certainly can't risk losing my job if my uniforms don't arrive. So please do all in your power, if possible as said before by sea through some boat's courtesy just as they came from B. Aires.

"Please under all circumstances inform me as to what you have been able to do. I am with some mail writing to the Customs in Frisco informing them that you will forward my mail. Please dont forgett to take up the key and send it, since I had that once happen. I dont think they will make customs difficulties if they should have them send it in Bond.

"GEORGE, I am only hoping that some day I will be able to do something for you in return.

"By the way got a 8 page letter from my pal ERROL FLYNN today, so am very happy.

"Lots and lots of thanks in advance and pray help me out.

"With very best wishes

"Yours friend

"H. F. ERBEN, M. D.

(printed) H. F. ERBEN M. D.

(Enclosure)

"PANAMA LINE  
Panama Railroad Co.

3/28/40  
On Board  
S. S. PANAMA

"U. S. Customs San Francisco:

"This is to certify that Mr. GEORGE WILLIAMS of W. R. GRACE