

# FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

Form No. 1

THIS CASE ORIGINATED AT

San Francisco

FILE NO. 65-26

REPORT MADE AT Washington, D. C.	DATE WHEN MADE 3/6/37	PERIOD FOR WHICH MADE 3/5/37	REPORT MADE BY <span style="background-color: black; color: black;">[REDACTED]</span> EKT:JGM
TITLE HERMANN FREDERICK ERBEN, M.D.; aliases: DR. HERMAN S. ERBEN, HERMAN FREDERICK ERBEN; LLOYD USINGER (S. S. West Lahwah)			CHARACTER OF CASE ESPIONAGE LUTINY ON THE HIGH SEAS

**SYNOPSIS OF FACTS:** Prosecution declined Los Angeles.

- RUC -

**REFERENCE:** Telegram from San Francisco Division dated February 23, 1937.

**DETAILS:** AT WASHINGTON, D. C.  
Upon receipt of reference telegram, advising that prosecution had been declined in Los Angeles, all investigation pending in this district was discontinued.

REFERRED UPON COMPLETION TO THE DIVISION OF ORIGIN.

ALL INFORMATION CONTAINED  
HEREIN IS UNCLASSIFIED  
DATE 5/24/79 BY SP37EX/6

APPROVED AND FORWARDED: <i>Guy Hall</i>	SPECIAL AGENT IN CHARGE	DO NOT WRITE IN THESE SPACES	
COPIES OF THIS REPORT 3 Bureau 3 San Francisco 1 Los Angeles (information) 2 Washington Field <i>2 copies to Bureau 4-5-37</i>		65-26-7	1231
		<i>RB</i>	

MCS; EFM  
45-985  
65-682

March 16, 1937.

MEMORANDUM FOR ASSISTANT ATTORNEY GENERAL BRIAN McMAHON

Attention of Mr. Ramsey

I am furnishing you herewith a copy of the report of Special Agent [redacted] dated at San Francisco, California, March 8, 1937, with reference to the casting adrift of stowaways [redacted] this being your file number 45-297. Agent [redacted] report is entitled [redacted]

A copy of this report is being sent direct to United States Attorney Snyder at San Juan, Puerto Rico. Copies of the reports in the other case mentioned in your memorandum of February 20, 1937, with reference to Dr. Herman S. Erben, alias Herman Frederick Erben and Lloyd Usinger, have been furnished you by a routing slip as received, this latter case being entitled "Hermann Frederick Erben, M. D., aliases: Dr. Herman S. Erben, Herman Frederick Erben; Lloyd Usinger (83 West Malwah); Espionage; Mutiny on the High Seas."

Very truly yours,

John Edgar Hoover,  
Director.

Enclosure 1105466.

RECORDED

65-682-10

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

b7c  
1  
45-985-10  
Original in 45-985-10

# FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

Form No. 1  
THIS CASE ORIGINATED AT **SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA.** FILE NO. **65-51**

REPORT MADE AT <b>San Francisco, Calif.</b>	DATE WHEN MADE <b>3/18/37</b>	PERIOD FOR WHICH MADE <b>3/5/37</b>	REPORT MADE BY <b>[REDACTED]</b>
TITLE <b>HERMAN FREDERICK ERBEN, M.D., alias Dr. Herman S. Erben, alias Herman Frederick Erben. LLOYD OSINGER (S.S. West Mahwah).</b>			CHARACTER OF CASE <b>ESPIONAGE MUTINY ON THE HIGH SEAS</b>

**SYNOPSIS OF FACTS:**

Los Angeles Field Division reports U.S. Attorney, Los Angeles, declined prosecution.

REFERENCE:

Report of Special Agent [REDACTED] Los Angeles, California, dated 2/25/37.

DETAILS:

At San Francisco, California

As indicated in report of reference, the facts in this case were submitted to the United States Attorney, at Los Angeles, California, who declined prosecution because no attempt was made by either Subject to take command of the S.S. "West Mahwah".

CLOSED

**ALL INFORMATION CONTAINED  
HEREIN IS UNCLASSIFIED  
DATE 5/20/79 BY SP3 [REDACTED]**

APPROVED AND FORWARDED <i>[Signature]</i> SPECIAL AGENT IN CHARGE	DO NOT WRITE IN THESE SPACES
COPIES OF THIS REPORT 3 Bureau 2 San Francisco 2 copies to Board 1 - C.S.G. 1 - [REDACTED]	65-682-11 [Handwritten notes]

# FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

Form No. 1  
THIS CASE ORIGINATED AT

SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA

L.A. FILE NO. 62-20

REPORT MADE AT <b>LOS ANGELES, CALIF.</b>	DATE WHEN MADE <b>3/19/37</b>	PERIOD FOR WHICH MADE <b>3/10/37</b>	REPORT MADE BY <b>[REDACTED]</b> <b>b7c</b>
TITLE <b>HERMANN FREDERICK ERBEN, M.D., with aliases; ET AL. (S.S. WEST MAHWAH)</b>			CHARACTER OF CASE <b>ESPIONAGE. MUTINY ON THE HIGH SEAS</b>

**SYNOPSIS OF FACTS:**

Assistant United States Attorney, Los Angeles, desires further information concerning actions of crew of S.S. WEST MAHWAH at San Juan, Puerto Rico.

- P -

**ALL INFORMATION CONTAINED  
HEREIN IS UNCLASSIFIED  
DATE 5/24/72 BY SP333/101**

**REFERENCE:**

Report of Special Agent **[REDACTED]** Los Angeles, California, dated February 25, 1937. **b7c**

**DETAILS:**

AT LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA

Assistant United States Attorney CLAUDE MORTON informed Agent that, after conferring with United States Attorney Peirson M. Hall, he desired further information in the instant case concerning the activities of the crew of the S.S. WEST MAHWAH at San Juan, Puerto Rico. He requested specific information concerning the location of the ship, whether it was lying outside the harbor, inside the harbor, or at the dock during the period that the crew refused to work until the steward was discharged.

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 - U. S. Attorney - Los Angeles 2 - Los Angeles <i>Copy to Hall for Hall</i> <i>4-331</i>		651682 F/2	MAR 28 1937
		<i>[Handwritten notes]</i>	

He further requested information concerning statements by or activities on the part of members of the crew, other than LLOYD EUGENE USINGER, which would indicate the temper and intent of the crew members who refused to work at that port.

UNDEVELOPED LEADS

SAN FRANCISCO DIVISION

AT SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA, will review the log of the S.S. WEST MAHWAH and determine from the same the location of the ship and the activities of the members of the crew while at San Juan, with particular reference to any specific remarks or actions entered therein.

LOS ANGELES DIVISION

AT LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA, upon receipt of the above information from San Francisco, will confer again with Assistant United States Attorney CLAUDE MORTON.

- P E N D I N G -

U S DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

# Mackay Radio

THE INTERNATIONAL SYSTEM

Commercial  
Cables



all America  
Cables

Postal

Telegraph

FULL RATE MESSAGE UNLESS OTHERWISE MARKED	
DOMESTIC	FOREIGN
FULL RATE	FULL RATE
SERIAL SERVICE	CODE RATE (CDE)
DAY LETTER	URGENT
NIGHT MESSAGE	URGENT (CDE)
NIGHT LETTER	DEFERRED (LC)
	RADIO LETTER (RLY)
SHIP	RADIOGRAM

CHECK
RECEIVER'S NUMBER
THE FILED

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

DOMESTIC SERVICES } 15 WORDS FOR TI  
USUAL PRICE (

SAN FRANCISCO CALIFORNIA  
FEBRUARY 20 1937 WFN:FB 12.50 PM

DCC-85

J H HANSON  
FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION  
U S DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE  
903 PACIFIC COMMERCE BUILDING  
LOS ANGELES CALIFORNIA

DR HERMANN FREDERICK ERBEN WA ETAL ESPIONAGE MOHS ADVISE IF ANY INVESTIGATION  
CONDUCTED YOUR DIVISION THIS MATTER WHILE SS WEST MAINW IN LOSANGELES

LISTETMAN

CC: Bureau  
FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION  
U. S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE  
Room 1105, 11th Floor Bldg.

ALL INFORMATION CONTAINED  
HEREIN IS UNCLASSIFIED  
DATE 5/24/97 BY [signature]

TO SEND A MESSAGE TELEPHONE GARFIELD 1303 OR ANY POSTAL TELEGRAPH OFFICE.  
FOR MESSENGER TELEPHONE POSTAL TELEGRAPH OR RING POSTAL CALL BOX.

RADIOGRAM

# Mackay Radio

THE INTERNATIONAL SYSTEM

Commercial  
Cables



all America  
Cables

Postal

Telegraph

CLASS OF SERVICE DESIRED	
DOMESTIC	FOREIGN
RUSH MESSAGE	FULL RATE
SERIAL SERVICE	CODE RATE (CODE)
DAY LETTER	URGENT
NIGHT MESSAGE	DEFERRED (LCO)
NIGHT LETTER	RADIO LETTER (NLT)
SM-RADIOGRAM	

CHECK
RECEIVER'S NUMBER
THE FILED

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

DOMESTIC SERVICES } 15 WORDS FOR THE USUAL PRICE OF DCC-8 5F

LOS ANGELES CALIFORNIA  
FEBRUARY 20th 1937

W L LISTERMAN  
FBI  
SUITE 1105 MILLS TOWER BLDG  
SAN FRANCISCO CALIFORNIA

DR HERMAN FREDERICK ERBEN WA ETAL ESPIONAGE MOHS INVESTIGATION COMPLETED  
REPORT BEING FORWARDED USA HERE DECLINES PROSECUTION

Off Bus Govt Rate  
Chg FBI Los Angeles  
DCS:HG  
cc Bureau  
2:35 PM

ALL INFORMATION CONTAINED  
HEREIN IS UNCLASSIFIED  
DATE 5/24/97 BY SP3TEL/

HANSON 65

LA File 65-30

TO SEND A MESSAGE TELEPHONE GARFIELD 1303 OR ANY POSTAL TELEGRAPH OFFICE FOR MESSENGER TELEPHONE POSTAL TELEGRAPH OR RING POSTAL CALL BOX.

FILE

# 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>4/7/37</b>	PERIOD FOR WHICH MADE <b>3/24, 27/37</b>	REPORT MADE BY <b>[REDACTED]</b>
TITLE <b>HERMANN FREDERICK IRBEN, M.D. With Aliases; LLOYD EUGENE USINGER, With Aliases; (SS WEST MAHWAH)</b>			CHARACTER OF CASE <b>ESPIONAGE MUTINY ON THE HIGH SEAS</b>

**SYNOPSIS OF FACTS:**

**[REDACTED]** and **[REDACTED]**  
First Mate, SS "West Mahwah" re-inter-  
viewed, relate that the reported mutiny  
occurred at 8.00 A.m. October 27, 1936,  
while this vessel was tied up at the dock  
at San Juan, Puerto Rico; that there was  
no violence; no threats made; crew refused  
to work complaining against poor food and  
demanding discharge of steward. Transcript  
of ship's log obtained.

**b7c, d**

ALL INFORMATION CONTAINED  
HEREIN IS UNCLASSIFIED  
DATE 5/24/89 BY SP3751

P.

**REFERENCE:**

Report of Special Agent **[REDACTED]**  
Los Angeles, California, **4/25/37**;  
Report of Special Agent **[REDACTED]**  
Los Angeles, California, **3/19/37**.

**b7c**  
**1**

**DETAILS:**

At San Francisco, California.

It was ascertained from the McCormick Steamship Company, operators  
of the SS "West Mahwah" that this vessel was in San Francisco, California, at  
Pier 38.

**b7c, d**

**[REDACTED]** (See report of reference of Special Agent **[REDACTED]** dated 2/25/37)

APPROVED AND FORWARDED: <i>W. J. Listerman</i>	SPECIAL AGENT IN CHARGE	DO NOT WRITE IN THESE SPACES <b>65-182-113</b>	APR 1 2 1937
COPIES OF THIS REPORT 3-Bureau 3-Los Angeles (1 U.S. Atty. Los Angeles) 2-San Francisco		<i>[Handwritten signatures and initials]</i>	

*1110 Mahwah*

He stated at the time of this mutiny which was about 8.00 A.M. on October 27, 1936, the SS "West Mahwah" which is a ship of American registry, was tied up at the McCormick Steamship Company Pier at San Juan, Puerto Rico; that at 8.00 A.M. the crew went on strike, demanding the dismissal of the cook and steward. They complained that the food served was of poor quality; that they remained on strike until 8.45 A.M. October 30th when the steward was discharged. At that time the crew discontinued the strike and resumed their duties.

[redacted] stated that during the strike there was no violence, no threats, no vicious activities whatever; that the crew was quiet and orderly, remained in their quarters but refused to "turn to" or perform their duties, their grievances being that the steward and cook were serving them food of poor quality; that the CAPTAIN reported this occurrence to the United States Steamship Inspector at San Juan and to the United States Shipping Commissioner at San Juan and they advised him that no action could be taken by these agencies as long as no violence was displayed by the crew; that subject LLOYD EUGENE USINGER was the principal disturber and that DR. HERMANN FREDERICK ERBEN was apparently active in fermenting discontent among the crew of this vessel. b7c

[redacted] stated that this refusal to work was construed by him more as a strike than mutiny but there were no acts of violence whatever and the crew simply refused to work; that the steward was discharged at San Juan and that USINGER, all during the strike was the leader and spokesman of the crew; that one of the charges against the steward was that he went into the stateroom occupied by a woman passenger and that the steward had raped her.

[redacted] related that [redacted] was one of twelve passengers on the SS "West Mahwah"; that she went from San Francisco, California to Buenos Aires and returned; that while stopping at the Canal Zone she was married to a person unknown to the [redacted]

[redacted] stated that he further interviewed [redacted] and she admitted that she allowed subject ERBEN and MR. BALCOM, the wireless operator to use her name in connection with the complaint filed with the American Consul General at Rio De Janeiro.

[redacted] stated that [redacted] admitted to him that she was not raped or criminally attacked and that she submitted a signed statement to the CAPTAIN to this effect which is quoted as follows:

West Mahwah

February 21, 1937

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

I wish to state in reference to my participation in the complaint filed with the American Consul in Rio de Janeiro that this matter assumed a far more serious aspect than was my intention.

As a witness, I allowed Mr. Balcom, the Wireless operator and Doctor Erben, the Ship's Doctor, to use my name in the complaint and I admit being strongly influenced by these men inasmuch as I would have let the matter pass if it had not been for their persuasion.

It is now evident to me that these men were only seeking to make trouble by registering such a complaint. I sincerely regret the whole affair and feel it my duty to retract my part of the complaint and absolve the injured party or parties from blame.

[REDACTED]

b7c, d

[REDACTED] stated that he distinctly recalls the crew going on strike at San Juan, Puerto Rico October 27, 1936 and that he submitted a detailed signed statement to a Special Agent of the Federal Bureau of Investigation at Los Angeles, California. He states that he concurred in the statement made by [REDACTED] that there was no violence; that the crew declined to work from 8.00 A.M. October 27, 1936, to 8.45 A.M. October 30, 1936; that their refusal was due to a complaint which they filed with the CAPTAIN over the quality of the food served by the steward and that in his opinion this strike was engineered by LLOYD EUGENE USINGER and DR. ERBEN; that the steward ARTHUR W. MOSS was finally discharged at San Juan and the crew on the morning of October 30, 1936, agreed to perform their duties; that the vessel at the time was inside of the harbor and was tied up at the McCormick Steamship Company docks at San Juan, Puerto Rico.

The account of this occurrence as shown in the ship's log is as follows:

"October 27, 1936 - San Juan, Puerto Rico -  
8.00 A.M. - Crew on strike demanding dismissal  
of cook and steward.

1.55 P.M. steam turned off and no chance to  
cover hatches.

2.00 P.M. steam turned on to cover hatches.

2.15 P.M. - hatches covered and stevedores  
knocked off on account of steam being shut off  
by unlicensed personnel in engine room.

October 28, 1936 - 8.00 AM - Sailors and  
black gang still continuing the strike.

October 28, 1936 - 8.00 P.M. - Sailors and  
black gang still continuing the strike.

October 30, 1936 - 8.45 A.M. - Crew turned to"

The above is the exact transcript of the ship's log and no additional entries appear therein as to any other activities relating to the so called mutiny which occurred at San Juan, Puerto Rico.

[REDACTED] advised that this vessel is leaving San Francisco, California, March 30, 1937, is expected to arrive at Los Angeles, California, April 1st, will leave Los Angeles about April 3rd for San Juan, Puerto Rico with a cargo of rice and lumber; that this vessel is expected to return to Los Angeles, California, San Pedro Harbor in about a month and that CAPTAIN JANSEN at that time will be available should the United States Attorney desire any further information from him.

[REDACTED] the information incorporated in this report are full accounts of the purported mutiny which occurred on October 27th and lasted until October 30, 1936, while the vessel was tied up to the pier at San Juan, Puerto Rico and that there was no mutiny on the high seas.

[REDACTED]

b7c

UNDEVELOPED LEADS:

THE LOS ANGELES BUREAU FIELD DIVISION AT LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA, will present this case to the United States Attorney at Los Angeles, California, for his decision.

PENDING.

JOHN EDGAR HOOVER  
DIRECTOR

Federal Bureau of Investigation  
United States Department of Justice  
Washington, D. C.

65-682  
RJB:EAM

March 23, 1937.

MEMORANDUM FOR MR. TAMM

For your information, I wish to advise that on March 19, 1937, Mr. MacIntyre called me to inform that [redacted] of the Navy Intelligence Bureau was in his office and desired to discuss with an Agent of the Bureau the case of one Hermann Frederick Erben, M.D.; with aliases; Lloyd O. Singer (S. S. West Mahwah); Espionage; Mutiny on the High Seas. b7c

I secured authorization from Mr. Foxworth to interview [redacted] since Mr. Spear, who has been handling this matter, was conducting another interview in his office. I discussed this matter personally with [redacted] and after reviewing our file with him, he informed me that practically all the information in the file has previously been called to his attention. However, [redacted] was not aware that prosecution had been declined on this case by the United States Attorneys at New Orleans and Los Angeles. [redacted] stated that he and other members of his Staff had been extremely interested in the activities of Hermann Erben, and his associates, and while they believe him to be a very un-American individual, [redacted] stated they have no additional information relative to espionage activities that has not already been furnished the Bureau in connection with instant case. He requested that if additional information is secured by the Bureau his office be advised and the writer informed him that the Bureau would be glad to cooperate with him and advise him in the event additional information is secured which would indicate that either of the above mentioned subjects are presently engaged in espionage activities.

Respectfully,

R. J. Brandt.

RECORDED J. Brandt.

65-682-14	
FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION	
APR 21 1937 P.M.	
U. S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE	
TAMM	FILE

RJB:TD  
65-882 - 14

April 19, 1957

Captain William D. Puleston,  
Director,  
Naval Intelligence,  
Navy Department,  
Washington, D. C.

Dear Captain Puleston:

For your information, I wish to advise that the Federal Bureau of Investigation has conducted a rather extensive investigation relative to the activities of Dr. Hermann Frederick Erben, alias Herman S. Erben, and one Lloyd Usinger, who were suspected of being engaged in espionage activities and both of whom were reported by the McCormick Steamship Company of San Francisco as having engaged in inciting a mutiny, intimidating the crew and passengers and preventing longshoremen at foreign ports from unloading the cargo of the Steamship WEST MAHRAH, a vessel of American registry, which was owned by the McCormick Steamship Company.

On March 19, 1957 [redacted] of your office, called at the Bureau to discuss this case with Mr. R. J. Brandt, the Supervisor who has been handling this matter, and advised Mr. Brandt that your office was extremely interested in the activities of Hermann Erben and his associates. [redacted] advised Mr. Brandt that while your office has every reason to believe Hermann Erben is a very un-American individual, it has no additional information to furnish relative to espionage activities on the part of this subject.

A review of the Bureau file discloses that the United States Attorneys at New Orleans, Louisiana and Los Angeles, California declined prosecution in this case, but subsequent to the interview with [redacted] and under date of March 19, 1957, information was received from the Los Angeles, California Field Division that Assistant United States Attorney Claude Morton advised Special Agent [redacted] after conferring with the United States Attorney, he desired further information concerning the activities of the crew of the

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION  
U. S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

ALL INFORMATION CONTAINED  
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DATE 5/25/79 BY SP3 TEL/g

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[Handwritten signature]

Captain William D. Puleston - 2 -

4-19-37

Steamship WEST MAHNAH at San Juan, Puerto Rico. He requested specific information concerning the location of the ship, whether it was lying outside the harbor, inside the harbor, or at the dock during the period the crew refused to work until the steward was discharged. He also requested information concerning statements by or activities on the part of members of the crew other than Lloyd Usinger which would indicate the temper and intent of the crew members who refused to work at that port.

For your information, I am inclosing herewith one copy each of the following reports:

Special Agent [REDACTED], dated at San Francisco, California, January 17, 1937. ✓

Special Agent [REDACTED] dated at New Orleans, Louisiana, February 9, 1937. ✓

Report of Special Agent [REDACTED] dated at Washington, D. C., February 25, 1937. ✓

Special Agent [REDACTED] dated at New York City, February 25, 1937. ✓

Special Agent [REDACTED] dated at Los Angeles, California, February 25, 1937. ✓

Special Agent [REDACTED], dated at Washington, D.C., March 6, 1937. ✓

Special Agent [REDACTED] dated at San Francisco, California, March 18, 1937. ✓

Special Agent [REDACTED] dated at Los Angeles, California, March 19, 1937. ✓

You will note from the report of Special Agent [REDACTED] dated at Los Angeles, March 19, 1937, that further investigation relative to this matter is being conducted by the offices at Los Angeles and San Francisco, California and immediately upon receipt of reports from these offices relative to this matter I shall be glad to advise you of the results of that investigation.

Sincerely yours,

John Edgar Hoover,  
Director.

Inclosure No. 1019059

b7c

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XXXXXX  
XXXXXX

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION  
FOIPA DELETED PAGE INFORMATION SHEET

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

- 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) Navy 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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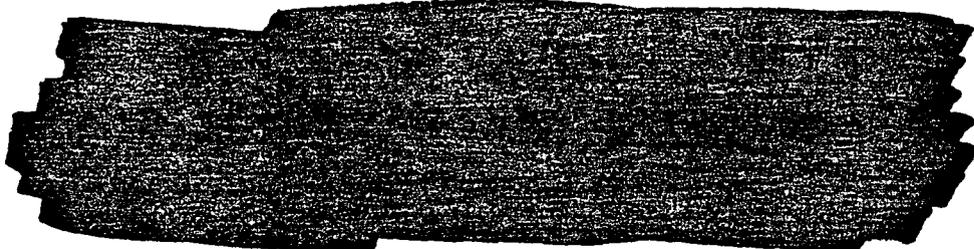
Federal Bureau of Investigation  
United States Department of Justice

1105 Mills Tower,  
San Francisco, California  
May 18, 1937

Director,  
Federal Bureau of Investigation,  
Washington, D. C.

Dear sir:

RE: HERMAN FREDERICK ERBEN, M.D.,  
with aliases; LLOYD EUGENE  
USINGER, with aliases (SS  
WEST MAHWAH) ESPIONAGE;  
MUTINY ON THE HIGH SEAS.



*b7c, d*

Very truly yours,

*W. L. Listerman*

W. L. LISTERMAN, *WLR*  
Special Agent in Charge

WLL:MLA  
65-31

*Rem Admiral G. H. Hallock  
6/1/37  
mcs.*

RECORDED  
&  
INDEXED.

65-682-16	
FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION	
MAY 20 1937	
U. S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE	
ONE	FILE

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ALL INFORMATION CONTAINED  
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DATE 5/30/79 BY SP3 TEE/8



# FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

Form No. 1

THIS CASE ORIGINATED AT **SAN FRANCISCO**

**L.A.**

FILE NO. **65-30**

REPORT MADE AT <b>Los Angeles</b>	DATE WHEN MADE <b>5-27-37</b>	PERIOD FOR WHICH MADE <b>5-7-37</b>	REPORT MADE BY <b>[REDACTED] AB</b>
TITLE <b>HERMANN FREDERICK ERBEN, M.D., with aliases; LLOYD EUGENE USINGER, with aliases; (SS West Mahwah)</b>			CHARACTER OF CASE <b>ESPIONAGE; MUTINY ON THE HIGH SEAS</b>

**SYNOPSIS OF FACTS:**

U. S. A., Los Angeles, declines prosecution.

- RUC -

**REFERENCE:**

Report of Special Agent **[REDACTED]** San Francisco, 4-7-37.

**DETAILS:**

The facts in instant case were discussed with Assistant United States Attorney Wm. Fleet Palmer, Los Angeles, who declines prosecution inasmuch as the vessel was not on the high seas at the time of the strike in San Juan, Puerto Rico, and the facts showed no actual mutiny and no violence.

No further investigation is being requested by the United States Attorney's Office, Los Angeles, and the case is being

REFERRED UPON COMPLETION TO THE OFFICE OF ORIGIN

APPROVED AND FORWARDED <b>J. A. Hanson</b>	SPECIAL AGENT IN CHARGE	DO NOT WRITE IN THESE SPACES	
COPIES OF THIS REPORT 3 Bureau 3 San Francisco 1 U.S. Atty, L.A. 2 Los Angeles  <i>1 m. Mahwah 6/1/37 B</i>		<b>65-682-17</b>	<b>JUN 1 1937</b>
		<p style="font-size: 2em; font-weight: bold;">ONE PAUN 2 DAN</p> <p style="font-size: 2em; font-weight: bold;">MIDAM</p> <p style="font-size: 2em; font-weight: bold;">SEOT.</p>	

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

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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) Navy 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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The following number is to be used for reference regarding these pages:  
65-682-18

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# FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

RECEIVED

Form No. 1

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

FILE NO. **65-82**

REPORT MADE AT <b>San Francisco, Cal.</b>	DATE WHEN MADE <b>6/16/37</b>	PERIOD FOR WHICH MADE <b>6/2/37</b>	REPORT MADE BY <b>[REDACTED] MLA</b>
TITLE <b>HERMANN FREDERICK ERBEN, M. D., with aliases: Dr. Herman S. Erben, Herman Frederick Erben LLOYD EUGENE USINGER, with aliases: Lloyd Usinger, Sam. (SS WEST MAHWAH)</b>			CHARACTER OF CASE <b>ESPIONAGE MUTINY ON THE HIGH SEAS</b>

**SYNOPSIS OF FACTS:** Los Angeles Field Office advises U. S. Attorney, Los Angeles, desires no further investigation and declines prosecution.

**REFERENCE:** Report of Special Agent **[REDACTED]** dated at Los Angeles, California, May 27, 1937.

**DETAILS:** AT **SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA**

As indicated in report of reference, the facts in this case as developed by additional investigation, were submitted to the United States Attorney at Los Angeles, California, who now declines prosecution, inasmuch as the vessel was not on the high seas at the time of the strike in San Juan, Puerto Rico, and the facts show no actual mutiny and no violence.

Therefore, the case is being considered as

*7/1/37  
Letter to telegraph  
revised  
R. G. B.*

C L O S E D

**ALL INFORMATION CONTAINED  
HEREIN IS UNCLASSIFIED  
DATE 5/30/79 BY SP3TEN/**

APPROVED AND FORWARDED: <i>[Signature]</i>	SPECIAL AGENT IN CHARGE	DO NOT WRITE IN THESE SPACES	
COPIES OF THIS REPORT Bureau San Francisco		65-682	19 JUN 21 1937
1 cc M. M. M. 6/18/37		JUN 21 P.M.	

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

HJB:VTL  
65-682-19

July 1, 1937.

RECORDED

Rear Admiral R. S. Holmes,  
Director, Naval Intelligence,  
Office of Chief of Naval Operations,  
Navy Department,  
Washington, D. C.

ALL INFORMATION CONTAINED  
HEREIN IS UNCLASSIFIED  
DATE 5-30-79 BY SP3TER/g

Dear Admiral Holmes:

With further reference to my letter to the Naval Intelligence dated April 19, 1937, concerning the activities of Dr. Hermann Frederick Erben, which is apparently your reference Op-16-B-9 AB-5/CO Ser. No. 1438, I wish to advise that following the additional investigation which was conducted by the Los Angeles, California Field Office of this Bureau, concerning the activities of the crew of the Steamship West Nahpah at San Juan, Puerto Rico, especially in connection with the location of the ship during the period the crew refused to work until the steward was discharged, this matter was again submitted to the United States Attorney at Los Angeles, California for his opinion relative to further prosecution.

On May 7, 1937, an Agent of the Los Angeles Bureau Office discussed this case with Assistant United States Attorney William Fleet Palmer at Los Angeles, California, and inasmuch as the vessel was not on the high seas at the time of the strike in San Juan, Puerto Rico, and the facts showed no actual mutiny or violence, Mr. Palmer declined prosecution. In view of the decision of Mr. Palmer, no further investigation is being conducted by this Bureau.

For your information I am transmitting herewith one copy each of the reports of Special Agents [redacted] dated at San Francisco, California, April 7, 1937, [redacted] dated at Los Angeles, California, May 27, 1937 and [redacted] dated at San Francisco, California, June 16, 1937, the latter report reflecting that this case has been closed by the San Francisco, California Bureau Office.

b7c

COMMUNICATIONS SECTION  
JUL 2 - 1937  
FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION  
U. S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

Sincerely yours,

John Edgar Hoover,  
Director.

PPB

Enclosure #A-14772

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FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION  
FOIPA DELETED PAGE INFORMATION SHEET

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65-612 -21 ✓

February 9, 1940

ALL INFORMATION CONTAINED  
HEREIN IS UNCLASSIFIED  
DATE 6/1/79 BY 893 TER/6

RECORDED

Special Agent in Charge  
Los Angeles, California

RE: DR. HIRSHAN FREDERICK ERBEN  
with aliases - ESPIONAGE

Dear Sir:

I am transmitting herewith copies of letters dated January 11, and 23, 1940, addressed by the American Consul General at Buenos Aires, Argentina, to the State Department, together with memoranda of the same dates attached thereto, relative to the activities of the above named subject.

You will note from these documents that Dr. Erben professes to be a close friend of Errol Flynn, the motion picture actor, who I understand is a British subject. In order to eliminate Dr. Erben as a possible espionage agent on behalf of the German Government, it is suggested that you have an agent call upon Mr. Flynn and tactfully interview him relative to the background and activities of Dr. Erben.

If further investigation then appears necessary, you may, of course, pursue this investigation to its logical conclusion. You should bear in mind that the Bureau contemplates furnishing information received as a result of this investigation to the State Department.

Very truly yours,

John Edgar Hoover  
Director

- 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. McIntire \_\_\_\_\_
- Mr. Nichols \_\_\_\_\_
- Mr. Rosen \_\_\_\_\_
- Mr. Quinn Tamm \_\_\_\_\_
- Mr. Tracy \_\_\_\_\_
- Miss Gandy \_\_\_\_\_

Enclosure  
 COMMUNICATIONS SECTION  
 San Francisco (Enclosing copies of above correspondence)  
 New York  
 ★ FEB 9 1940 ★  
 FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION  
 U. S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

*[Handwritten signatures and initials]*

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FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION  
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RECORDED

February 9, 1940

~~PERSONAL AND CONFIDENTIAL~~

DECLASSIFIED BY S13 TFI/g

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

ON 5/31/79

Dear Mr. Berle:

This will acknowledge receipt of your letters of January 26, and February 2, 1940, respectively, with enclosures, your references A-M 662.8591/736 and A-M 862.8591/748, relative to Dr. Hermann F. Erben.

I appreciate your kindness in making this information available to me, and as a matter of possible interest to you I am enclosing herewith one copy each of the following reports:

Report of Special Agent [redacted] dated January 17, 1937, at San Francisco, California;

b7c

Report of Special Agent [redacted] dated February 9, 1937, at New Orleans, Louisiana;

Report of Special Agent [redacted] dated February 25, 1937, at Los Angeles, California.

In the event subsequent information of value is received, I shall be glad to transmit the same to you without delay.

Sincerely yours,

- 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. Mohr \_\_\_\_\_
- Mr. Wick \_\_\_\_\_
- Mr. Rosen \_\_\_\_\_
- Mr. Quinn Tamm \_\_\_\_\_
- Mr. Tracy \_\_\_\_\_
- Miss Gandy \_\_\_\_\_

COMMUNICATIONS SECTION  
 MAILED  
 ★ FEB 9 1940 ★  
 Enclosure  
 FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION  
 U. S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

APPROPRIATE AGENCIES  
 AND FIELD OFFICES  
 ADVISED BY ROUTING  
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 DATE 6/19/79

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For your information: \_\_\_\_\_  
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65-682-22 pages 1-4

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Federal Bureau of Investigation  
United States Department of Justice  
Washington, D. C.

AF:DM

February 23, 1940

*Baum*

MEMORANDUM FOR MR. E. A. TAMM

Mr. Fletcher Warren of the State Department called with reference to Dr. Herman Frederick Erben. He said that this man had shipped on the Nightingale, which belonged to the Grace Line, as a messman; that the ship, he thought, had about time to reach the Canal Zone; however, on checking he found the ship had arrived in New York. He stated that the Bureau was interested in finding out when this person will arrive in the United States.

Respectfully,

*A. Rosen*  
A. ROSEN

1 ENCLD

ALL INFORMATION CONTAINED  
HEREIN IS UNCLASSIFIED  
DATE 5/31/79 BY SP3 TEK/IG

RECORDED

65-682-3

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION	
3	MAR 15 1940
U. S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE	
TAMM	ONE

*8*

JOHN EDGAR HOOVER  
DIRECTOR

Federal Bureau of Investigation  
United States Department of Justice  
Washington, D. C.

EAT:COH

Time: 11:50 a.m.

February 20, 1940

*Boyd*

MEMORANDUM FOR THE FILE

RE: DR. HERMAN FREDERICK  
ERBEN; ESPIONAGE

Mr. Fletcher Warren of the State Department called concerning the above-named subject.

He advised that Erben is en route to New York on the SS "Nightingale" of the Grace Line. The boat passed through the Panama Canal on February 14. Erben wanted to be discharged from the ship there but his request evidently was refused. It is understood that he wanted to go to California.

Mr. Warren furnished the addresses of the following individuals who are friends of Erben:

Rudolph Scharff, 850 Park Avenue, New York, New York

Chauncey Framutolo, Alexander Building, Montgomery Street, San Francisco, California.

Mr. Warren stated there is being forwarded to the Bureau a copy of a dispatch received from the West Coast relative to Erben.

RECORDED

E. A. TAMM

65-692-24  
FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION  
1 FEB 23 1940  
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE  
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FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION  
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LIBRARY  
MAR 16 1940

March 16, 1940

RECORDED

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

Dear Mr. Berle:

As a matter of possible interest to you, I am transmitting herewith a copy of the report of Special Agent [redacted] dated February 15, 1940 at New York City, New York, submitted in the case entitled, Dr. Hermann Frederick Erben, with aliases; Espionage, your reference A-M 862.8591/748. **b7c**

Sincerely yours,

- 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. Pennington \_\_\_\_\_
- Mr. Rosen \_\_\_\_\_
- Mr. Quinn Tamm \_\_\_\_\_
- Miss Gandy \_\_\_\_\_

Enclosure

ALL INFORMATION CONTAINED  
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DATE 5/31/29 BY SP3TEK/18

COMMUNICATIONS SECTION  
MAILED  
MAR 16 1940  
FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION  
U. S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

*[Handwritten signatures and initials]*

*[Handwritten initials]*

# FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

Form No. 1

THIS CASE ORIGINATED AT **NEW YORK CITY**

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

REPORT MADE AT <b>NEW YORK CITY</b>	DATE WHEN MADE <b>2/15/40</b>	PERIOD FOR WHICH MADE <b>1/29, 2/2 &amp; 6/40</b>	REPORT MADE BY <b>[REDACTED]</b>
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TITLE <b>DR. HERMANN FREDERICK ERBEN with aliases: Dr. Herman S. Erben, Herman Frederick Erben.</b>	CHARACTER OF CASE <b>ESPIONAGE</b>
--	---------------------------------------

**SYNOPSIS OF FACTS:**

Confidential information received indicating subject departed from Argentine for Chile 12/23/39 or 12/24/39.



Previous investigation relative to subject indicates he is a trouble maker. Present information indicates possibility of his being a foreign agent although no definite information received to that effect.

**DETAILS: AT NEW YORK:**

This investigation is predicated upon information received from confidential informant [REDACTED] of the New York division, to the effect that subject left Buenos Aires, Argentina on December 23, 1939.

[REDACTED] confidential informant [REDACTED] advised that subject might operate as a German Agent while in the United States.

APPROVED AND FORWARDED: *[Signature]* SPECIAL AGENT IN CHARGE

DO NOT WRITE IN THESE SPACES

**COPY DESTROYED DEC 10 1964**

**65-1682-25 FEB 29 1940**

197 JUL 29 1970 COPIES OF THIS REPORT  
BUREAU RECEIVED - 47680  
San Francisco  
N. York 51 25 6/11/40

**FEB 16 P.M.**

**BEST COPY AVAILABLE**

65-1725

On January 29, 1940, the New York division was advised by Confidential Informant [redacted] that information had been received relative to subject indicating that he was recently the Ship Physician on the U.S.S. USSUKUMA which departed from Argentina for Chile December 24, 1939,

b7c,d

[redacted]

A review of the indices of the New York division disclosed the fact that subject was under investigation in 1937 in the case entitled HERMANN FREDERICK ERBEN, M.D., w, as., etal, ESPIONAGE, MUTINY ON THE HIGH SEAS, New York File 65-45, in which the San Francisco division was the office of origin. In connection with the investigation therein undertaken, it appears that Dr. ERBEN was alleged to have had Communistic leanings and to have endeavored to incite the crew of the SS. WEST MAHWAH of the McCormick Steamship Company to mutiny. No charges were filed in connection with the above investigation and the case was dropped following presentation to the appropriate United States Attorney, U

b7c,d

[redacted]

[redacted]

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FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION  
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For your information: \_\_\_\_\_  
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85-1715

A Nationalistic Tendency card has already been prepared with reference to subject ERBEN in connection with the previous investigation. u

UNDEVELOPED LEADS

SAN FRANCISCO FIELD DIVISION

At SAN FRANCISCO will conduct appropriate preliminary discreet inquiry concerning [REDACTED]

b7c, d

PENDING

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For your information: \_\_\_\_\_  
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March 9, 1940

Special Agent in Charge  
New York, New York

RECORDED

Dear Sir:

ALL INFORMATION CONTAINED  
HEREIN IS UNCLASSIFIED (Rev. 10)  
DATE 5/31/79 BY SP3TEC/9

Re: DR. FERDINAND FREDERICK ERBEN, with aliases  
SUBVERSION

With further reference to my letter of February 9, 1940, I am enclosing herewith copy of a communication dated February 10, 1940 addressed by Mr. GEORGE R. ADAMS, American Vice Consul, Antofagasta, Chile, to the Secretary of State, Washington, D. C., relative to the above named individual. I have also been advised by the Office of the Naval Intelligence that Dr. ERBEN was en route to New York City aboard the S. S. NIGHTINGALE where he could be reached in care of [redacted] whose identity and background has already been ascertained by your office as evidenced by the report of Special Agent L. A. LANGILLIS, New York City, dated February 15, 1940, submitted in the above captioned matter in which New York is carried as the office of origin.

It is also noted that the Canal Zone has submitted information regarding Dr. ERBEN as reflected in the report of Special Agent in Charge ROBERT W. GLEASON, Canal Zone, dated February 19, 1940, in which the Canal Zone is carried as the office of origin.

In order to avoid further confusion in regard to this investigation, I wish to advise those offices receiving copies of this communication that the Bureau has designated San Francisco as the office of origin in this case.

From a review of the file it appears that Dr. ERBEN has been categorically alleged to be an Espionage Agent on behalf of the German Government by several sources, and it would appear that his activities should be carefully followed while in the United States.

- 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. McIntire
- Mr. Nichols
- Mr. Rosen
- Mr. Quinn Tamm
- Four Room
- Adm. Files
- Per. Files
- Mr. Tracy
- Miss Gandy

COMMUNICATIONS SECTION  
MAILED  
MAR 9 1940  
F. B. I.  
FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION,  
U. S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

*[Handwritten signatures and initials]*

[REDACTED]

b7c



McGILL UNIVERSITY  
MONTREAL

[REDACTED]

February 21, 1940.

~~PERSONAL AND CONFIDENTIAL.~~

Dear Mr. Tamm,

I have had the following inquiry re DR.  
HERMANN F. ERBEN -

Where is this person now? Is he in any  
employment, to justify his residence at any particular  
point? As this seems to be the first information  
concerning this party, as much detail as possible would  
be appreciated.

Yours sincerely,

[REDACTED SIGNATURE]

b7c

ALL INFORMATION CONTAINED  
HEREIN IS UNCLASSIFIED  
EXCEPT WHERE SHOWN  
OTHERWISE.

Edward A. Tamm, Esq.,  
F. B. I.,  
Washington, D. C.,  
U. S. A.

[REDACTED]

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CLASSIFIED AND  
EXTENDED BY *SP3 TEL/j*  
REASON FOR EXTENSION  
FCIM, II, 1-2.4.2. *(1) (3)*  
DATE OF REVIEW FOR  
DECLASSIFICATION *1/11/82*

CONFIDENTIAL

*copy*  
*1/11/82*

*How written*

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

FIB:IGB

March 16, 1940

66-682-28

RECORDED



My dear Commissioners:

I thought you might be interested in receiving information regarding Dr. Hermann Frederick Erben who recently arrived in New York City aboard the SS NIGHTINGALE from South America. He is at the present time located at Hoboken, New Jersey, but plans to sail on the United States Fruit Liner SS CASTILLE for the West Coast on March 11, 1940.

For your further information, it is reported that he served as ship surgeon aboard the German vessel USUKAMA which he left at Buenos Aires, Argentina. He has traveled quite extensively in South America and recently sailed as a passenger on the Japanese vessel MS HBIYO MARU from Valparaiso, Chile, to Callao, Peru, where he secured a berth on the SS NIGHTINGALE as a messman. It is reported that while at Valparaiso Dr. Erben was met by a large delegation of members of the crew of the German ship FRIEWALD which had taken refuge there and the impression was generally gained that Dr. Erben was a man of considerable importance from the reception which he received from this German crew.

Information has been received from several sources that Dr. Erben is possibly engaged in espionage activities on behalf of the German Government and I thought you might desire to be apprised of this information for such attention as you may deem appropriate. You may be assured that the activities of this individual are being closely followed while he is in the United States.

Sincerely yours,

ALL INFORMATION CONTAINED  
HEREIN IS UNCLASSIFIED  
EXCEPT WHERE SHOWN  
OTHERWISE.

- Mr. Tolson
- Mr. Nathan
- Mr. E. A. Tamm
- Mr. Clegg
- Mr. Glavin
- Mr. Ladd
- Mr. Nichols
- Mr. Rosen
- Mr. Tracy
- Mr. Carson
- Mr. Egan
- Mr. Gurnea
- Mr. Harbo
- Mr. Hendon
- Mr. Pennington
- Mr. Quinn
- Mr. Nease
- Mr. Gandy

COMMUNICATIONS SECTION  
 MAILED  
 MAR 14 1940  
 FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION  
 U. S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

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