

SECRET

21 October 1947

TO : COPS
FROM : [] EW
SUBJECT: Johannes BERNHARDT

1. S. S. Oberfuehrer Johannes Eberhard Franz BERNHARDT is a German national, born in Osterode, East Prussia, in 1897. When the Spanish Civil War broke out in 1936, BERNHARDT was living in Tetuan, Spanish Morocco, as local manager of the import-export firm H. & O. WILMER and secretary of the Tetuan Nazi Party. He was a friend of General FRANCO, and immediately offered to arrange the procurement of war materials for the Nationalists in exchange for Spanish products. For this purpose, BERNHARDT set up two companies, ROWAK in Berlin and HISMA in Tetuan, later adding numerous mining companies and other subsidiary firms, all under the control of HISMA. HISMA thus became the largest single factor in the economy of Nationalist Spain. In November 1938, HISMA was replaced by SOFINDUS (Sociedad Financiera Industrial S.A.) with headquarters in Salamanca, a company virtually controlled by the German Government under BERNHARDT's direction. After FRANCO's victory in 1939, SOFINDUS established its main office in Madrid; by this time it was a very complicated system of holding-companies, subsidiaries, dummy organizations and interlocking directorates.

2. With Germany's engagement in World War II, SOFINDUS assumed new importance as the official German purchasing company in Spain, where (by 1941) it controlled assets of 500 million pesetas. The firm acted under orders from the Reichsministerium in Berlin and was given access through the German Embassy to German credits and other German resources in Spain. The large-scale smuggling of wolfram out of Spain by SOFINDUS was a major issue in U. S. and British relations with Spain during the war.

3. As managing director of SOFINDUS, Johannes BERNHARDT collaborated closely with the Sipo & SD and with the Abwehr. SOFINDUS provided cover employment for SD agents, sometimes paying a part of their salaries; it facilitated the granting of Spanish visas to Abwehr agents by promising employment, set up bank deposits (probably in Spanish names) to provide Abwehr expenses in case of a diplomatic break between Spain and Germany, and assisted the German I.S. in other ways. A specific instance was the transfer by BERNHARDT in November 1944 of 16 million pesetas from SOFINDUS to the German Embassy for the use of the RSHA (KdM Spain). In the first part of 1945, BERNHARDT collaborated

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with the German Embassy in attempts to ship supplies to the German pockets of resistance on the French coast. BERNHARDT was also a special agent of Amt VI, responsible directly to Walter SCHELLENBERG, who exploited his high-level contacts and considered him the best Amt VI agent in Spain.

4. BERNHARDT was originally (in 1944) listed by the Allies for expulsion, but the Safehaven Committee requested that his name not be included on the later repatriation lists, since he was in a position to render valuable assistance. It was also felt by the British and American Embassies that any attempt to bring about BERNHARDT's repatriation would fail because of his intimate friendships with high Spanish authorities and their remembrance of his help during the Civil War.

5. BERNHARDT has several times been reported as the head of a post-war Nazi resistance group in Spain, and was reported in January 1947 to have held a meeting of prominent Nazis in the SOFINDUS offices.

6. All of the foregoing information is from the most reliable sources, most of it repeatedly confirmed. Unconfirmed reports indicate that BERNHARDT administered a "secret fund" of several million pesetas that he handled sizeable investments for Hermann GOERING (a personal friend), and that he has in Spain a private fortune amounting to 80 million pesetas.

7. Johannes BERNHARDT was last reported as living at Av. del Valle 3, Madrid. He is married (wife nee WILMER) and has at least three children. He held German passport no. 10158 issued at Madrid in 1940. He entered the Nazi Party in April 1933 and his Party no. was 1572619.

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