

17 April 1950

Chief, Foreign Division M

Chief of Station, Karlsruhe

Operational
Ernst Wilhelm Bohle

MGFA-3663

1. Ernst Wilhelm Bohle is 46 years of age and was the head of the Auslandsorganisation of the NSDAP. Having joined the Nazi Party in 1934, he made an amazing progress in it and became Secretary of State on his appointment as head of the Auslandsorganisation of the NSDAP. This position made him the titular and organizational head of all members of the Nazi Party outside of Germany, as well as the head of the Nazi organization within the German Foreign Office. In other words, he played the role of the political commissar of the German Foreign Office as well as Germans living abroad, not only assuring their membership in the Nazi Party, but also watching against deviationist tendencies.

2. Ernst Wilhelm Bohle was arrested as an automatic arrest shortly after the war, was interrogated by [] as well as by Mr. Emil Lang (with absolutely no success), and due to his excellent knowledge of English, worked until 1948 (?) as an interrogator at Oberursel.

3. He was on the list of defendants in the Wilhelmstrasse trial (also known as the Ministries case) in Nurnberg, and was sentenced, after being found guilty, to 5 years in Landsberg. His trial caused some sensation since he was one of the few accused to fully admit the charges made against him, and since he made a strong appeal to the other defendants in the same trial to admit their guilt and take the responsibility for what they had done. Furthermore, during his entire interrogation, and during the preparation of his case, he always admitted having joined the Nazi Party willingly, admitting that he was responsible for the turns

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taken in his department, and that he had been a confirmed Nazi. He was said to have developed a guilt complex on the treatment of Jews by the Nazis, a charge later refuted in his becoming a good friend of Professor Kempner, the prosecutor in the Ministries case.

4. The other sensation in the trial of Bohle was that he was the only defendant whose defense counsel was not a former member of the Nazi Party and also the only female defense counsel. Bohle was released from Landsberg Christmas 1949, serving all but eight months of his sentence, which was mitigated for good behavior. In Landsberg he came into close touch with all the other notables, sharing a cell next to Ernst Weizäcker, the other State Secretary in the Foreign Office, who incidentally was junior to Bohle, a fact not widely known. He acted for the camp commandant as interpreter and was fully informed about the many political trends and connections which arose between the inmates of Landsberg and those people outside of Landsberg who really should be in.

5. On his release, Bohle went to Hamburg, moved in with his defense counsel, Elisabeth Gombel, who lives at 79A Bernadotte Str. in Hamburg/Othmarshau (24A). Dr. Gombel's business address is 19 Willi Strasse and her telephone number is 320458. In the meanwhile Bohle has become the common-law husband of Frau Gombel and intends to marry her after her divorce becomes final.

6. Bohle is a British subject by birth, his father having been a professor of engineering in Capetown, South Africa, and having emigrated to Great Britain in his youth and by various stages attained a business of renown in South Africa. Bohle himself was educated in Germany, having visited the University of Berlin, and was a very good businessman, before he went into politics, in the in- and export trade, his two most successful ventures having been selling Kraft cheeses to the Germans (general sales manager of Kraft cheeses in Germany) and working for a car accessories firm as a German representative. I am afraid the details of this latter employment have slipped my mind. He also worked for a time for the Chrysler Corporation as their German representative. Bohle is bilingual in English and German, is married and divorced, and has a son who is 2½ years old and an aspiring journalist in Cologne. He is a polished product of the upper middle class and in spite of a powerful position in the Nazi hierarchy (entitling him to all the honors accorded a State visit and enabling him in 1938 to have a private interview with Churchill for 1½ hours, etc., etc.) I would not call him politically astute. Nevertheless, he seems to be at present politically repentant.

7. Bohle has hopes of obtaining employment in one of the old established in- and export firms in Hamburg and seems to have found getting used to life outside of prison extremely easy. One of the reasons, no doubt, is the general appeal a convicted criminal has for the German public.

8. Frau Elisabeth Gombel, whose career was successfully started by her comparatively successful defense of Bohle, has in the meanwhile been entrusted with the appeal of several cases still at present in Landsberg. She traveled to the United States recently in connection with these cases and in connection with some restitution claims and she claims to have seen General Collins, Chief of Staff of the Army. She reportedly turned over to General Collins a war research plan worked out by the former head of the research department of Krupp, who is at present an inmate in Landsberg and whose case she has taken on for appeal. To the best of my knowledge, this man rejoices in the rare name of Dr. Mueller. Request that Washington check with the Chief of Staff's office to see if such plan was in fact turned over to him by Frau Dr. Gombel.

*Letter
to
Army
through
Hirsch
2.6.54*

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