

SECRET

Office Memorandum • UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

TO : S/P

FROM : BI *J*

SUBJECT: Background Information Concerning Gustav Hilger

DATE: September 14, 1948

In reply to your request of September 13, we submit the following background information concerning Dr. Gustav Hilger:

Gustav Hilger was born in Russia of German parents and spent most of his life in Russia. He went to Moscow in 1920 in connection with the repatriation of prisoners of war and remained there as Delegate-General of the Red Cross and Nansen representative. He joined the first German Embassy in Moscow in 1923 as head of the Economic Department, remaining there until the war broke out in 1941. During this time he is reported to have moved in very high Russian circles, occasionally acting as Charge d'Affaires in the absence of the Ambassador and Senior Counselor. He negotiated the Soviet-German pact of friendship in 1939, and accompanied Molotov to Berlin in November 1940, serving as interpreter in his conversations with Hitler. After the outbreak of war, he was assigned to the staff of the Minister of Foreign Affairs (Ribbentrop) whom he accompanied to the Ukraine in 1942. Hilger was not a member of the NSDAP. During the war he joined Hitler's headquarters on the eastern front. His son was killed in the battle of Moscow. Before his arrest by the US Army on May 30, 1945, he had attained the rank of Botschafrat (Counselor of Embassy).

Little known abroad but a huge figure behind the scenes of Soviet-German relations, Hilger was undoubtedly the best of the experts. There was nothing about him, pale and quiet, with dull brown hair and thick-rimmed glasses, of average size and middle age, and lacking in any color, to attract public attention.1/ A number of sources have maintained that he had connections with the Russian secret police and gave them information concerning political events and submarine activity. In this connection two explanations of the reason why the Foreign Office did nothing to halt this top-level espionage present themselves: first, that Hilger's reports to the Russian secret police were considered by the German Foreign Office to be of less significance than his work on behalf of his own government; and second, that Hilger was a German secret intelligence operative who was duping the Russian secret police.2/ He is reported to know Russia thoroughly and is supposed to have been one of the officials who strongly advised against a war with Russia.3/

Further information will be submitted as soon as it becomes available.

OLI:BI: *EW*
WJM

- 1/ Moscow Dateline, by Henry C. Cassidy, 1943, Houghton Mifflin Co., Boston
- 2/ September 17, 1947, p.2 SECRET
- 3/ OSS-XL 7956 C-2; (FW, Dr. of Law, Jena, 1939; worked in German Foreign Office for two years.) SECRET

NAZI WAR CRIMES DISCLOSURE ACT

EXEMPTIONS Section 3(b)
 (2)(F) Privacy
 (3)(D) Methods/Sources
 (4) Foreign Relations

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 Date: 2004, 2005.

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DATE 14 Sep 48		