

NAZI WAR CRIMES DISCLOSURE ACT

Declassified and Approved for Release  
by the Central Intelligence Agency  
Date: 2001, 2005

EXEMPTIONS Section 3(b)

- (2)(A) Privacy
- (2)(B) Methods/Sources
- (2)(G) Foreign Relations

2 November 1949

TO : 20

FROM : 30 (35)

SUBJECT: German military experts in Syria  
(Questions from 20)

1.) Establishment of communication between Syrian exponents and German military experts.

In July 1948 the Syrian government sent Mr. Akram TAPRA - alias Dr. Jean HOMSI - to ROME with orders to recruit European specialists for Syria, especially German ones. HOMSI began by picking out in the course of abt. 3 months approx. 10 officers and medical doctors from the Germans who had illegally emigrated to ROME. He was assisted by a few Germans who had been living in ROME for some time. The officers and doctors were recruited for the Syrian army.

The terms were quite favorable:

Monthly salary of 50 English pounds with free board and lodging, air passage paid from ROME via CAIRO to DAMASCUS; pass formalities were done through the Egyptian embassy at ROME (after preliminary contracts had been signed). Departure by air was effected in almost all cases within a week; the men were to be used as instructors only and not for actual fighting.

The Germans who first came to Syria have reported to ROME in regular intervals. They confirmed that the terms of the contracts were adhered to and that they had a friendly and generous reception. In the late summer of 1948 HOMSI appointed the former SS Standartenfuehrer Walter RAUFF who was commander of the security police and of the SD MILANO, as his agent in ROME, HOMSI himself going to Germany in the fall of 1948 for further recruiting purposes.

In Germany HOMSI was looking for instructors and specialists for the armored command, gas warfare and the air force. He picked out mostly younger men of not too high a rank in the former service. On the civilian sector he selected technicians and engineers for the construction of tanks, aircraft and ammunition, also doctors with experiences in the tropics. In addition he took up negotiations with German motor car firms in order to purchase trucks for the Syrian army. HOMSI's connections spread over the whole of Germany and many interested parties tried to contact HOMSI. A so-called "military mission" which was assembled did not reach Syria but failed already when trying to cross the border to Austria illegally. This blow-up was the end of HOMSI's activities in Germany. Then he undertook a journey to find out the whereabouts of the "military mission" which was arrested when trying to cross the border, he too was arrested and put in jail at IMMERDORF. He was successful in escaping and returned to Syria via Italy.

In the summer of 1949 a new Syrian by the name of Dr. IMAN appeared on the scene, who is a doctor by profession and who took up his residence in BERN. He stated that he was entrusted with special political missions by the state president of Syria who had been shot some time ago. Dr. IMAN travelled around in a few European countries e.g. in Sweden and Holland with the intention to buy army equipment, at the same time recruiting personnel in his capacity as the successor of HOMSI.

BEST AVAILABLE COPY

Encl - MG-FA-104/3

Encl

14-7-16-24

In Germany he contacted certain circles and persons of the former "Waffen SS" and through those also former members of the German army. Apparently one is interested only in recruiting just a few real experts among whom one hopes to find a personality which later-on might be appointed chief of staff.

2.) Border-channeling of the recruited Germans.

This question can only be answered as far as HOFER's activities were concerned. The men were channeled illegally into Austria and from there to ROEME sometimes legally, sometimes illegally. From ROEME by air via CHIRO to DAMASCUS.

The channeling was done illegally over the German/Austrian and then over the Swiss border. In Switzerland documents were made out by the Syrian embassy enabling the holders to travel officially to the country of destination. This system has been used successfully twice up to now, the expenses amounted to Mt. 3frcs. 1.500.-

A contacting point was established in Austria, where the recruits received usually Syrian passports made out by the Syrian embassy in BERN. The entry into Italy was effected legally by co-operation between the Syrian embassy in BERN and the Italian consul at SALZBURG, illegally with the aid of a prefect (local Italian official) in Upper Italy.

3.) Reaction of the Germans after they had been in Syria for some time.

The reaction varied greatly. As mentioned before, at first the excellent reception was always pointed out, as well as the fact that the terms of the contract were strictly adhered to. But later-on there was much disappointment when the terms of the contracts were not kept any longer. By repeated revocations of the contracts in order to draw up new contracts under less favorable terms the position of the Germans became quite insecure.

HOFER's activities began under most unfortunate auspices inasmuch as he started his selections without real knowledge and experience and without reasonable planning. He got the majority of the officers he selected or recruited from the camp FRACELE in Italy. The inmates of this camp were mostly people who tried to get out at any price and who for this reason frequently exaggerated largely their experiences and their rank.

It is obvious that with such a lack of systematic planning the results achieved in Syria were accordingly. They were on a moderate scale only, but internal difficulties and intrigues rose quickly. The good elements had no chance to prove their ability, the bad ones soon attracted attention through their conduct. A rather important factor contributing to the failure of the HOFER-action was the lack of understanding on the part of the Germans as far as the oriental mentality was concerned.

Furthermore most of them had to wait for a long time before they were paid their salaries and, in contrast to their expectations, they were given unimportant positions only within the Syrian army. Only a few were successful in securing better positions for themselves. Many were soon discharged again and emigrated to neighboring countries as well as to South America or back to Germany. At the present time there are still about 20 Germans in the Syrian army.

BEST AVAILABLE COPY

28

4.) The role of "Col." RAUFF, formerly SS in Italy.

Since summer 1948 Standartenfuhrer RAUFF had been working in ROBE as the representative of HUSNI and after the latter's escape and return to Syria was brought over by him to DAMASCUS, where RAUFF was acting as advisor for the security police of the minister president HUSNI el SAHI who was shot in the meantime.

RAUFF is said to have had decisive influence in the Syrian revolt which brought HUSNI el SAHI into power. For this reason he was decorated with the highest Syrian order.

RAUFF has the reputation of being a highly intelligent and most enterprising man. On the day following the latest revolt, RAUFF was ordered to the Syrian High Command and interrogated whereupon he offered to quit the service. He then was kept for a few days in the military jail from which 2 Germans had just been released who had been quite innocent but were kept there for 9 months. RAUFF himself was released from jail after a few days, he was told that nothing detrimental against him was known, but that he was to leave the country as soon as possible. He received all the money due to him from his contract, a "laissez-passer" and the fare for the air journey DAMASCUS-MUNICH for himself and his wife. On the 1. 9. he went to BEIRUTH, where he intends to stay for the time being. His opinions with regard to the future of Syria are not favorable and he hopes that the Germans who stayed behind would be able to leave Syria under equally favorable conditions as himself.

5.) Use of RAUFF for IS activities.

In spite of RAUFF having lost his position in Syria it can be presumed that he could be used for IS activities in Syria. Any communication with him pertaining to IS activities should be done with the utmost precaution. This could be done through a source of the organization.

6.) Stating of names of other German experts who could go to Syria with the knowledge and eventual support of the US.

Up to now this organization has used its influence, as far as this was possible, to prevent serious and reliable former German army officers from taking part in the adventurous scheme of going to Syria.

If the American side were interested though and would give support to such a scheme, the matter would gain quite a different aspect. This project would appreciate information pertaining to these new conditions and possibilities, as this organization believes to be in a position to name suitable experts.

BEST AVAILABLE COPY

20/1/1948

288