

SECRET

DECLASSIFIED AND RELEASED BY
CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
SOURCES METHODS EXEMPTION 3B2E
NAZI WAR CRIMES DISCLOSURE ACT
DATE 2004 2006

DEC. 5 1956

TO: Department of State
Attention: Mr. A. N. Abajian
Office of Investigations
Refugee Relief Program

FROM: Deputy Director, Plans

SUBJECT: SCODLA, Johannes

1. Reference is made to your SY memorandum IRP/2, dated 16 September 1955, subject as above, whose name you desired checked against the files of this office.

2. The files of this office contain the following information concerning the subject of your request.

3. A report dated 17 August 1945, from a usually reliable pro-Allied Estonian leader in Stockholm, Sweden, indicated the following concerning Colonel J. SCODLA who is believed to be identical with Subject.

- a. Subject was the officer of the Estonian General Staff in charge of conscription. He went to Germany in 1940. In 1941, when he returned to Estonia, Subject stated to Source that he had refused to join the Wehrmacht because he hoped to get German permission to organize an Estonian army of two divisions. The Germans had not accepted his scheme at first and appointed him Assistant Landesdirector for Internal Affairs, a post which corresponded to that of a minister in the local quisling government,
- b. In 1943, Subject's scheme was accepted by the Germans and taken over by them. The result was the formation of the "Estonian Legion" SS Brigade. The leading officer personnel in this brigade were German. Since the Estonians did not show any enthusiasm for "their own SS Brigade", the Germans organized a committee, "The Friends of the Estonian Legion", to propagandize it on national lines. Subject was put in charge of this scheme of conscripting Estonians into the Wehrmacht and was made Inspector-General. He organized conscription into the SS Brigade and into the regular Wehrmacht alike. Subject also became the chairman of "The Society of the Friends of the Estonian Legion" which issued several proclamations calling upon Estonians to join the

ENCLOSURE

SECRET RI COPY

SECRET

SS Brigade. It was also through Subject that the General mobilization of Estonians was effected in 1944. Subject had promised that the Estonians would have the best German equipment, but conscripts were sent to fight the Russians with poor equipment.

c. It was Subject who set the example for the younger Estonian officers in their relations with the Germans. He was at one time known to be pro-allied and, during the period of Estonian independence, had spent some years in a French military academy. However, once he became convinced that the Nazis would win, he threw all his ability and position on their side, causing thousands of Estonians to be sacrificed for the German army.

4. According to a report dated 17 December 1951, a source of untested reliability affirmed that the Russians in Berlin were interested in Major-General Johannes SOOMLA.

5. A fairly reliable source, with good contacts in Estonian refugee circles in Sweden, stated, in a report dated 3 April 1952, that Johannes SOOMLA, a hero of the Estonian War of Independence, eventually became head of the Operations Section of the Estonian War Office. In 1940, after the signing of the Estonian-Soviet Friendship Pact, Subject reportedly emigrated to Germany. After the German occupation of Estonia, he was appointed Director of Estonian railroads and later became Inspector-General of Estonian army units which fought under the direction of the Germans. He supposedly received the title of Brigadier-General from the Germans, but this title was never recognized by Estonian military personnel. With the retreat of the German army, he returned to Germany, where he was arrested by the British after the German capitulation. Source stated that Subject was badly treated by the British, who later seemed to regret their actions and officially invited him to visit London. According to the report, Subject and his wife, Irma SOOMLA, had been engaged in work with the displaced persons program in Germany and at the time of the report were continuing in this work in Trieste. Source stated further that Subject visited Stockholm in February 1952 under the cover of coordinator of relief work, but that he actually was attempting to form Estonian military units. According to source, Subject was a top-ranking Estonian military figure who "has engaged in considerable political activity in the past".

CS CI-3856

Encl. 1 name check

SECRET