

C O P Y

SECRET

7.19

Report of Interrogation No. 5742 of

4 September 1945
I/O : Capt. HALLE

P/W : 3WG-1293
Rank : Ambassador at Large
Unit : Foreign Office, Berlin
Capt'd : 7 May 1945, Garmisch-Partenkirchen

Veracity ; Believed reliable.

Report : The role of the Auslandsorganisation (Foreign Section) of the NSDAP and the Reichsfuehrung SS, and their influence on foreign politics.

1. The work of the German embassies, legations, and consulates was from the beginning of the National Socialist regime in 1933 characterized by continual difficulty, the origin of which lay with two organizations, the Auslandsorganisation (AO -- Foreign Section) of the NSDAP, and the offices of the Reichsfuehrer SS Himmler, especially the Sicherheitsdienst (SD).
2. In the years of peace prior to 1939 it was primarily the national groups of the Auslandsorganisation founded in many countries by Gauleiter Bohle which disturbed the internal work of the German agencies as well as official relations with foreign governments. The Auslandsorganisation assumed a supervisory authority over all German citizens and a sort of command authority over Party members in foreign countries and attempted to employ German Party methods as practiced in Germany in foreign countries. It was difficult to make the heads of the Foreign Section understand that in foreign countries the German offices only had the right to protect German citizens, not the power of authority and that the possessors of this power in foreign countries were the sovereign governments of those countries. They continually violated this principle and could not be deterred from appointing party representatives (Hoheitstraeger) in foreign countries. The political conflicts with foreign governments to which this procedure led are well known. In a very few months serious difficulties resulted, first in neighboring countries, like Holland and Switzerland, then also overseas as in Central and South America. Another factor was that the propaganda work of the Party effected Germans who were not German citizens, but naturalized citizens of the countries in which they lived. Officially the Auslandsorganisation attempted to enroll only German citizens in foreign countries.
3. Not as well known is the strong pressure that the Auslandsorganisation exerted internally on the representatives of German interests in foreign countries. The local group leaders thought of their assignment to place under surveillance not only all the foreign Germans, but also the members of the Reich's agencies, that is, the embassies, legations, and consulates. In addition the Auslandsorganisation instituted detailed reports concerning all the foreign office officials in which reports the writing up

SECRET

C O P Y

SECRET

7.19

of incriminating evidence was welcomed. A foreign office official who was on good footing with the local group leaders was permitted to enter the Party or was urged to do so; the official who was in opposition to the Auslandsorganisation was not allowed to join the Party and lost thereby all chances for promotion. Every transfer of foreign office officials was possible only by agreement with the Auslandsorganisation. In only a few cases was it possible to override the Auslandsorganisation. It was especially disturbing for the Department heads that the Auslandsorganisation gave secret assignments to the personnel in the administration, who provided them with material about the most intimate occurrences. Thus, it was possible, for example, for a confidential letter from POENSGEN, the director of the Personnel Section of the Foreign Office, to Ambassador von Reisslitz in Santiago de Chile, which stated that von Neurath was making sure that Party influence in the Foreign Service would remain in narrow limits, to be handed by Hitler to von Neurath, the consequence being that Poensgen was immediately suspended from duty, and von Neurath's position in the Party was thenceforth weakened.

4. In order to eliminate these difficulties with the Auslandsorganisation von Neurath decided early in 1937 to take Gauleiter Bohle into the Foreign Office as an additional Staatssekretaer (permanent Under-Secretary of State), charging him with overcoming the political difficulties abroad caused by the activities of his local groups. This experiment worked fairly well as long as von Neurath was the Foreign Minister. After von Ribbentrop became Foreign Minister at the beginning of 1938 continual personal clashes occurred between Ribbentrop and Bohle, which led to Bohle's gradual retirement from the Foreign Office. In 1942 Bohle was formally relieved of his functions with the Foreign Office through a secret decree by Hitler, even though he continued to be listed as Staatssekretaer, in order to keep the conflict between Ribbentrop and Bohle from becoming public. From then on Bohle limited himself to his activities as Gauleiter of the Auslandsorganisation.

5. In 1940 Ribbentrop summoned a conference of all German mission heads in Central and South America to Berlin in order to effect the subordination of national Party groups in foreign countries under the mission heads, as recommended in their personal reports. He was also successful in persuading Hitler to issue a decree to this effect which, however, was limited to the war's duration. In practice, however, things remained more or less as they had been, even though in the course of the war a gradual decline in the activity of the Auslandsorganisation, due mainly to its strict surveillance in almost all countries, could be observed.

6. The special Party reporting activity which went on concurrently with the official reports of the German officials in foreign coun-

SECRET

C O P Y

SECRET

tries did not by any means cease with this slackening of activity by the Auslandsorganisation. It only shifted extensively from the Auslandsorganisation to the Sicherheitsdienst, that is, to the Geheime Nachrichtendienst (Secret Service) of Reichsfuehrer SS Himmler. The activity was carried on in many cases by the same people who had worked in the Auslandsorganisation, in many cases by the same people who had worked in the Auslandsorganisation, augmented by new agents and assistants from foreign circles. One could not obtain an exact picture of these relationships in the Foreign Office because the SD always submitted unsigned reports and, in addition, direct communication between the various divisions of the Foreign Office and the Auslandsorganisation and the offices of the Reichsfuehrer SS Himmler was eliminated by Ribbentrop. For this traffic he created special liaison offices which he filled with Party personnel, through whose hands all official communications with the named offices had to be conducted. (Until 1943 this liaison was in the hands of Unterstaatssekretaer Luther, who was from the Ribbentrop Office; later he was put in a concentration camp; Senior Legationsrat (Counsellor of Legation) Wagner, a member of the SS, took charge of liaison with the SS, while liaison with the Auslandsorganisation was in the hands of SA Brigadefuehrer Frenzel. Only the personnel questions of the Foreign Office could be handled directly between the Personnel Section of the Foreign Office and the Auslandsorganisation.

7. The activity of the SD in foreign countries not only increased in scope during the war but had the effect that the Reichsfuehrung SS had a direct influence on foreign policy. This of course led to clashes between Ribbentrop and Himmler, since Ribbentrop wanted to dominate foreign policy by himself. Ribbentrop, however, could not succeed, because all occupied countries of Europe were ruled by Adolf Hitler's Reichsministers, Reichskommissars or military governors, who were independent of the Foreign Office, while events in countries obviously had a strong effect on German foreign policy. Ribbentrop always tried in neutral and allied countries to keep a firm hold on the reins of foreign policy. In this respect a clash between Ribbentrop and Himmler occurred early in 1941, because Ribbentrop accused the Reichsfuehrung SS of having, through its agents in Romania, supported the putsch of the Iron Guard against the regime of General Antonescu, although Hitler had spoken against the Iron Guard and sided with Antonescu. It took several months to overcome the hostility between Ribbentrop and Himmler on this question.

8. The situation was straightened out at the end of 1941 in the form of a regular written contract between Ribbentrop and Himmler on the reporting activity of the SD in neutral and allied countries. This agreement provided that special police attaches be established in the German embassies and legations in foreign countries, who should be mainly responsible for SD reports. The regulation provided for was in general analogous to the one which applied to the reports of the military attaches stationed with German ambassadors and ministers; that is, the police attaches were supposed to send their reports to Berlin through the German heads of mission. They were further to limit themselves in their reports to police and security service affairs and were to report political occurrences

C O P Y

SECRET

which came to their knowledge, not directly, but to the head of the mission, who alone was responsible for political reports. Ribbentrop thought that through this agreement he had secured the interests of foreign policy, while Himmler believed that this agreement had given greater security to the work of his agents by the extension of diplomatic immunity to the police attaches. With the signing of this agreement the friendly personal relations between Himmler and Ribbentrop which had been interrupted for several months, were resumed.

9. At the time of the agreement on police attaches another agreement between the Foreign Minister and the Reichsfuehrer SS was concluded on German minorities in foreign countries. With Hitler's appointment of the Reichsfuehrer SS as Reichskommissar for the Strengthening of Germanism, the latter gained important means for influencing German minorities abroad, as, for example, in Romania, Hungary, Croatia, Italy, Denmark, which affected foreign policy. The so-called Volksgruppenleiter (Leaders of the National Minorities) in individual foreign countries were in constant and direct contact with the Reichsfuehrung SS and received directives from this office. The agreement between Ribbentrop and Himmler guaranteed that questions of foreign political significance were not to be decided without the participation of the Foreign Office or the German missions in foreign countries with their Volkstum Referate. The Volksdeutsche Mittelstelle (Central Office for German Nationals) created at the beginning of the war in Berlin was supposed to function as a liaison organization between the Foreign Office and the Reichsfuehrung SS in regard to questions affecting the German people; this office was headed by SS Obergruppenfuehrer Lorenz.

10. Additional important influence in foreign politics was won by the Reichsfuehrung SS (SS Executive Office) by proceeding to recruit volunteers for the Armed SS not only among the German national groups abroad, but also from the non-German populations of occupied and allied countries. In the so-called Germanic countries like Norway, Denmark, Holland, and the Flemish part of Belgium the SS Attempted to promote the recruiting work ideologically, through a special Germanische Leitstelle (Bureau of Germanic Affairs), which, in spreading the idea of a greater Germanic Reich, extended itself considerably into the sphere of foreign policy. Ribbentrop was naturally ready to promote the recruiting of foreign volunteers with all his ability; however, in practice this recruiting led to much friction between the SS in charge of recruiting and the German mission chiefs in the countries in question, or with the governments of these countries.

11. The Ribbentrop-Himmler agreement only temporarily relieved the tension between these two men. It was not long before a new cause for argument arose, and Ribbentrop again felt it his

SECRET

C O P Y

SECRET

12. The results of the Ribbentrop-Himmler agreement were in no way advantageous for the German foreign embassies. The actions of the police attaches, following directions from the Reichsfuehrung SS, placed the embassies in a bad position with the foreign governments. The head of the embassy never had any real knowledge of what the SD was doing; the representatives of the SD had too many irons in the fire. The Reichsfuehrer SS, with Hitler's approval, placed special Oberste SS- und Polizeifuehrer (Highest SS and Police Officers) in a whole series of countries, such as Hungary, Denmark, and Italy. These were independent authorities apart from the embassy and opposed the embassy chiefs sharply, especially in Denmark and Hungary, even though the German ambassadors in Copenhagen and Budapest at that time were men who had been taken over from the SS (Best and Veesenmayer). In the last phase of the war the whole of military intelligence was subordinate to Himmler. A political control of the activities of Himmler's agents in foreign countries through organs of the Foreign Office such as Ribbentrop had sought in 1941 was now out of the question.

13. The continuing friction between the Foreign Minister and the Reichsfuehrer SS over the information gathering activity of the SD and other foreign activity of the Reichsfuehrung SS was of course not in any way based on Ribbentrop's being opposed to the activity of agents abroad on principle. On the contrary, Ribbentrop believed this activity to be of the highest value and exerted himself on occasion to institute political action on the basis of information which had been furnished even by the SD, as for instance about the British information service in Holland or defeatist tendencies in Hungary. And he was not above burdening the German missions with the responsibility of conducting the activity of agents if he thought that he could establish control over them. The parting of the ways for Ribbentrop was always the independent activity abroad of state or Party offices not under his control. He reacted most sensitively when announcements and reports on foreign policy questions based on such independent activity were brought in to Adolf Hitler about which he himself had had no previous knowledge. This happened particularly often with SD reports. Ribbentrop regarded it as intolerable for a man in his position when Hitler, acting on such reports, made political judgments or even decisions which he as Foreign Minister could not influence at all. The preservation, advancement, and continual consolidation of his position with Hitler was one of the most important if not the most important factor determining the behavior of Ribbentrop. In general, the key to the continuing rivalries and differences among the rulers of the Third Reich is to be found in the effort of each of them to undermine the relations of the others to Hitler so as to strengthen his own position accordingly.

SECRET