

CONFIDENTIALADDRESS COMMANDANT, U. S. COAST GUARD  
AND REFER TO NO. IOF-64

## TREASURY DEPARTMENT

UNITED STATES COAST GUARD

29 August, 1941.

HEADQUARTERS

WASHINGTON 29 August, 1941.

Subject: Otto W. Ehlers.

Reference:

Summary of Information:

Subject who is the chief engineer on the SS CHARLES R. McCORMICK is suspected of being a courier in the German service.

The SS CHARLES R. McCORMICK arrived at New York on 19 August, 1941, from Buenos Aires. The personal effects and quarters of subject were carefully searched by Customs officers and nothing of an irregular nature was found.

Questioning of subject revealed that he was born in 1893 at Brunswick, Germany, and emigrated to the United States, 27 October, 1915. Ehlers stated that in 1916 he was employed as a salesman and was also known under the name of Johannes Gasser. In 1917 he was detained by the Department of Justice at Ellis Island, New York, and also at Boston, Massachusetts, for a period of one year under suspicion of being a German agent. On 22 June, 1922, Otto W. Ehlers was naturalized in the Brooklyn Supreme Court, Petition No. 1677269, Certificate No. 64770, Volume 260.

In 1935 Ehlers obtained employment as an engineer on various vessels of the International Freighting Corporation, owners and operators of the SS CHARLES R. McCORMICK.

In 1938, while serving as chief engineer on the SS WEST NILUS, he and the captain of the vessel, J. Strong, formed a company in San Francisco, known as the Inter America Commercial Company, with offices at 625 Market Street, San Francisco. This firm has the agency in the United States for the Cia. Superball of Buenos Aires, manufacturers of leather sport goods. While the Inter America Company places orders for various leather articles with the Cia. Superball, the necessary papers in connection with the shipments from Buenos Aires are taken care of by his friend, Hans Ringelsen, a clerk employed by the Bank of Germanica in Buenos Aires. This bank is located in the same building as the German Embassy. Mr. Ehlers stated that he visits the Bank of Germanica at least ten times during the stay of his vessel in Buenos Aires for the purpose of social visits with Hans Ringelsen and Ludwig Mensperger, an accountant in the same bank. Mr. Ehlers denies ever visiting the German Embassy or engaging in any work in behalf of a foreign government.

*see file Subversive Persons  
Suspicious  
for general correspondence.*

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It was further learned that Otto W. Ehlers has a commission as a Lieutenant (j.g.) in the U. S. Naval Reserve and has been ordered to report on 21 August, 1941, for a physical examination. He exhibited an official letter from the Bureau of Navigation ordering him to report for such examination.

Distribution:

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Evaluation:

Source: **Reliable**  
Information: **Reliable**