

PARTIE 13/PART 13
ESPAGNE/SPAIN

1540.

W.L.M.K./Vol. 272

*Mémorandum du sous-secrétaire d'État aux Affaires extérieures
au Premier ministre**Memorandum from Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs
to Prime Minister*

MOST SECRET

[Ottawa,] September 11, 1943

You may remember that when the Spanish Government approached us rather more than a year ago with a view to their appointing a career consular officer in Vancouver, to carry out their work as Protecting Power in Canada for Japanese interests, we made confidential enquiries in London and Washington about the *bona fides* of the officer they proposed to appoint. We made special enquiries on this point because we had had general warning that Spanish diplomatic and consular officers, particularly in South American and Latin American countries, were believed to be acting as agents for the Axis. On receipt of information from United Kingdom sources that they believed Señor Kobbe to be a friendly and reliable person, we issued his exequatur in the usual way. Subsequently, very secret advice was received [. . .] that Kobbe would bear watching. We had, however, no grounds on which we could reasonably object to the establishment by Spain of a consular office in Vancouver and no evidence which we could adduce that Señor Kobbe was an unacceptable officer. We have, however, been taking special precautions ever since his installation in Vancouver to see if he was up to any mischief. [. . .] There was nothing in his correspondence or contacts to suggest that Kobbe was an Axis agent. However, some ten days ago, [. . .] a letter [. . .] to the Spanish Consul General in Montreal [. . .] was found to contain an enclosed letter for Kobbe in which there were two special codes, by which he could transmit special secret information to a cover in the Spanish Foreign Office in Madrid for forwarding to Japan. The codes consist of lists of Japanese proper names, each of which is given a value, which the secret agent might find it convenient to use in reporting ship and troop movements, defence installations, etc. Enclosed with the letter were \$1,000 in United States notes, covering special expenses, and formulae for manufacturing secret ink for his own use and for developing communications in secret ink in letters addressed to him.

[. . .]

This is a very important matter, raising serious questions of policy, both for us and the United States and United Kingdom Governments. The evidence of Kobbe's complicity is complete, and, what rarely happens in espionage cases, the evidence against him is of a character that could be produced in court if it were thought in the public interest to prosecute him.