

No. 1 Anti-Red Spy Is Former Nazi 'Defeatist'

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By [unclear] on [unclear]

RONN, Germany (U.S.—A former prodigy of the German general staff is America's No. 1 spy abroad.

Without Reinhold Gehlen's name ever being mentioned in an appropriations debate in Congress, he spends six million dollars a year from the United States Treasury.

Thousands of agents of diverse nationalities are on his payroll, together with the elite of the old German army's counter-intelligence corps.

Like an atomic installation, his headquarters on American requisitioned property near Munich in Bavaria is sealed off with barbed-wire and armed state police.

The Central Intelligence Agency and the Pentagon appear to trust this retired German lieutenant general more than they do any Allied statesman.

On his secret reports, which evaluate the findings of his costly anti-Soviet espionage operations as far beyond the Iron Curtain as Siberia, depends much of American defense planning.

GEHLEN HAS WORKED for the United States uninterruptedly since he surrendered to American troops in the closing days of the war in 1945.

First he was assigned to comb through the mass of secret information on Russia which he brought with him as a prisoner. Having commanded the counter-intelligence section, Fremde Heere Ost (foreign armies east), on the Russian front from 1942 on, his analysis of Soviet military strength was so consistently accurate that he nearly wound up being executed as a defeatist.

His was one of the last voices that urged the Nazi regime, early in the eastern invasion, to win over the Russian people with generosity while rooting out the Communist system. For he had become convinced quickly that the Soviet Union could not be overwhelmed by German military means alone.

Instead, two million Soviet war prisoners, who might have fought loyally by 1942 in a German-led crusade strictly against the Kremlin, were reduced to sub-human misery in Nazi extermination camps.

It was Gehlen also who proposed to Reich police chief Heinrich Himmler in 1944 the creation of strong German underground resistance behind the advancing Russian lines. He suggested it be modeled on the Polish underground that had caused the Nazi command so much grief. Himmler was afraid to mention it to Hitler at the moment.

In the last 18 months of the war, Gehlen rose from colonel to lieutenant general at the age of 47. Despite his unpleasant estimates of Soviet capability, he spent another 18 months as a private in a German-led crusade strictly against the Kremlin, were reduced to sub-human misery in Nazi extermination camps. Then he was given autonomous command over a personally chosen German staff to organize cold-war espionage in the Soviet zone for the United States.

A VEIL OF SECRECY around the Gehlen organization was ripped off by the East German government last year after the June 17 anti-Communist revolt. As hundreds of Soviet-hating Germans were rounded up in a reprisal campaign that went on for months, the East Berlin government denounced virtually all of them as "Nazi-Gehlen agents."

That was the first some 48 million citizens of the Bonn republic had heard of the slender, little former officer in his American-financed Bavarian hideout.

In Bonn, Chancellor Konrad Adenauer knew him intimately, of course. His deep confidence in Gehlen has contributed unintentionally to much more unwanted publicity this year, when the Chancellor started preparing to take over the Gehlen organization under West German sovereignty.

Then Dr. Otto John, West German security chief and jealous rival of Gehlen, openly deserted to the Communist East July 20.

John's intrigue against Gehlen was divulged in both Bonn and East Berlin. Even the secret rendezvous house across the Rhine River from Bonn, where the Chancellor and Gehlen frequently conferred, was pinpointed for the idle curious.

WEST GERMAN newspapers demanded that Gehlen drop his mystery. Noting that this "faceless general" was reputed never to have been photographed, jeering tabloids printed a splash of black ink for his "portrait."

Finally, the Neue Ruhr Zeitung at Dusseldorf proudly came out with authentic pictures of Gehlen with his counter-intelligence staff on the Russian front. A former staff officer, unable to bear press ridicule, had voluntarily gone to the Dusseldorf paper with souvenir snapshots of his wartime chief.

But Gehlen is still a shadow to millions of his countrymen, a figure of doubt with alien allegiance.

The cover name for his headquarters at Pullach is Suddeutsche Industrieverwertung (South German Industry Utilization). Scattered through the West German Republic are a half-dozen S.I. covered representatives, each with several sub-representatives and affiliates.

Outside West Germany, there are "residents," controlling individual rings of agents, and supplied with elaborate radio equipment and couriers.

THE BASIC PRINCIPLE of operation is an old one in spy history: Restrict an agent's knowledge of the espionage apparatus to one little ring. At headquarters, put together the fragmentary, disjointed field reports into an intelligent mosaic of information.

Behind the Iron Curtain, it is always touch and go for Gehlen men. Some are rumored to have been parachuted into Poland, White Russia and the Ukraine. Some are known to have died on Communist gallows or before Soviet Army firing squads. Only in East Germany are most of them Germans. In other Red territories, most are Slavs.

Gehlen's primary mission is to identify and locate at all times the forward Soviet and satellite armed forces. This is fundamental to Allied security, including 600,000 American, British and French troops out-posting West Germany.

A quiet, scholarly man with a high forehead, receding fair hair, and large eyes, Gehlen looks like anything but a master spy.

He has the clipped terse speech of the military profession, but he likes to range over many current topics in philosophical discussion with his lieutenants. He writes works as much as 14 hours a day, concentrating a mammoth amount of administrative detail in his own hands.

MILITARY SERVICE has been his life. Son of the director of a publishing house, Gehlen was born in Erfurt, Thuringia. After completing secondary school at Breslau in 1920, he joined the Reichwehr. By 1923, he won a lieutenant's commission.

In the Weimar Republic, soldiering was a dead-end street. Not until 1934, when Hitler was in power, did Gehlen receive promotion to captain. He was assigned to the Reich War Ministry—a dream spot for ambitious junior officers.

Gehlen's brilliance at desk work caught the eye of his seniors. He was appointed to the general staff in 1938 and elevated to major a year later.

His first war experience came in the 1939 conquest of Poland. In 1940, he was liaison officer for the Army high command with Guderian's panzer spearheads in their sweep across France. His reward was a lieutenant colonelcy.

In the invasion of Russia, he first served under Gen. Adolf Heusinger, now one of the official planners of West German rearmament. In April, 1942, youthful Gehlen was singled out to head the vital new counter-intelligence section, Fremde Heere Ost.

Many German front commanders gave unstinted praise to Gehlen's summaries on the Red Army. He was renowned for his "Suggerativkraft"—a prize German word for having intelligent intuition figuratively at the fingertips.

NONE OF HIS present-day admirers, including men high in the Bonn government, claim that Gehlen's organization has been free of blunders. But except for the British secret service, no other intelligence agency is more feared by Iron Curtain countries.

At least once, Communist double-agents have penetrated a Gehlen sub-command post in West Berlin. They took back enough secrets for East German security police to wipe out a provincial spy ring in Saxony.

Gehlen's worst jolt to date was from a carefully planted Communist rumor: The Americans had set him to spying on French politicians in Paris. This provoked a Gallic storm.

Whatever representatives Gehlen maintained in Paris were there presumably to act as liaison with American Gen. Alfred Gruenther, supreme commander of both United States and Allied forces in Europe.

But Gehlen hastily pulled his men out. A typical case of macabre error has come to light in West Berlin, involving not Gehlen's own setup but an American agency with which his operations are coordinated.

TWO EAST GERMAN atomic scientists and four skilled technicians were smuggled out of the Soviet zone and lodged at one of the agency's Berlin "havens," preparatory to being flown farther westward.

The haven had a German housekeeper whose boy friend acted as a tipster for the Americans. At least one American reported he was suspicious of the boy friend, but higher officials failed to do anything about it.

Result: One morning the villa's breakfast food was drugged, all six anti-Communist fugitives were stricken with polio, and the boy friend, obviously a Communist double-agent, slipped out.

With all the current furor over Gehlen stirred up by Red propaganda attacks and jealous politicians in Bonn, it seems unlikely that Chancellor Adenauer will revive his earlier plan to combine future governmental intelligence activities into one big super-spy office under the little general.

But it is also unlikely that Gehlen's talents will not be transferred officially from the Americans to the Germans in some form in the coming year.

The role for which his experience best suits him would be counter-intelligence chief in the future German high command. But a man who has been in the hire of a foreign power for nine years, even a friendly power such as the United States has become, is not without handicap in hoping for top advancement in German uniform.

Germany's last counter-intelligence chief was a baffling, complex character—Admiral Wilhelm Canaris. Before the war ended, Hitler had him tortured and hanged as a traitor.

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