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ZCZC EPE 179
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1225: GEHLEN (SCHEDULED):

BY BERND DEBUSMANN

MUNICH, WEST GERMANY, APRIL 30 (REUTERS)-GEN. REINHARD GEHLEN, KNOWN AS THE MAN WITHOUT A FACE, RETIRED TODAY AS HEAD OF THE GERMAN SECRET SERVICE HE LED FOR 22 YEARS.

HE HANDED OVER THE KEYS TO HIS FILES TO HIS SUCCESSOR, LT. GEN. GERHARD WESSEL, 54, IN A BRIEF CEREMONY AT HIS BARBED-WIRE-SURROUNDED HEADQUARTERS IN THE MUNICH SUBURB OF PULLACH BEFORE LEAVING ON VACATION.

A SPOKESMAN FOR THE 66-YEAR-OLD GERMAN MASTER SPY SAID ONLY A FEW HIGH-RANKING OFFICERS WERE PRESENT AS GEHLEN ENDED A SECRET SERVICE CAREER THAT BEGAN IN 1942.

FEW GERMANS HAVE BEEN AS SURROUNDED BY MYSTERY AS GEHLEN, WHOSE CLOAK-AND-DAGGER NETWORK IS ESTIMATED TO COMPRISE SOME 5,000 AGENTS.

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1228: 1ST ADD MUNICH GEHLEN:

X X X AGENTS.

THE EAST GERMAN SECRET SERVICE ONCE PUT A PRICE OF ONE MILLION MARKS (250,000 DOLLARS) ON GEHLEN'S HEAD.

HE BECAME KNOWN AS THE MAN WITHOUT A FACE BECAUSE ONLY THREE PHOTOGRAPHS OF HIM EXIST.

TWO, TAKEN IN 1944 AND 1945, SHOW HIM AS A BALDING, SLIGHTLY BUILT 40-YEAR-OLD IN THE UNIFORM OF A WEHRMACHT OFFICER. THE THIRD, A BADLY OUT-OF-FOCUS SNAPSHOT TAKEN 11 YEARS AGO, SHOWS A SINISTER-LOOKING MAN WEARING LARGE DARK GLASSES WITH HIS TRILEY HAT PULLED LOW OVER HIS FOREHEAD.

IN AN INTERVIEW WITH THE WEEKLY NEWSPAPER DIE ZEIT THIS WEEK GEHLEN TOLD HOW HE ONCE TRAVELLED IN A TRAIN COMPARTMENT WHERE TWO NEWSPAPERMEN DISCUSSED WAYS OF MEETING THE INTELLIGENCE CHIEF. A THIRD MAN WAS LISTENING.

"I PREFERRED TO MOVE INTO ANOTHER COMPARTMENT AT THE NEXT STATION. TWO DAYS LATER . . . A REPORT CAME ACROSS MY DESK DESCRIBING THE ENCOUNTER IN MINUTE DETAIL," HE SAID.

THE THIRD MAN HAD BEEN A MEMBER OF THE GEHLEN ORG NIZ IION WHO, LIKE ALMOST ALL HIS COLLEAGUES, DID NOT KNOW HIS BOSS.

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1233: 2ND ADD MUNICH GEHLEN :

X X X BOSS

GEHLEN SAID THERE WERE SOME SECRETS ONLY HE AND ONE OTHER PERSON IN WEST GERMANY KNEW.

BORN IN ERFURT, NOW IN EAST GERMANY, THE SON OF A PUBLISHING HOUSE DIRECTOR, GEHLEN JOINED THE ARMY IN 1920.

BY 1935 HE WAS AN OFFICER ON THE GENERAL STAFF AND SEVEN YEARS LATER HE TOOK OVER THE DEPARTMENT OF "FOREIGN ARMIES EAST" WHERE HIS DUTIES WERE TO COLLECT AND ANALYZE INFORMATION ABOUT THE ENEMY ON, AND BEHIND, THE EASTERN FRONT.

GEHLEN MANAGED TO SAVE HIS MASSIVE INTELLIGENCE FILES IN THE CHAOS OF THE FINAL WEEKS OF WAR, AND MADE AN AGREEMENT WITH THE AMERICANS WHEN HE WAS CAPTURED IN BAVARIA.

AFTER CAREFUL GRILLING IN WASHINGTON GEHLEN WAS SENT BACK TO GERMANY AND GIVEN HIS OWN DEPARTMENT TO ANALYZE INFORMATION FROM EASTERN EUROPE.

:: REUTERS DM/DMX

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