

JOURNALIST BACKS CLAIM

Bormann Was Russ Spy

Sept. 13, 1971

BONN (AP) — A claim that Hitler's top aide, Martin Bormann, was a wartime Soviet spy was supported Monday by a former Czechoslovak journalist.

Dr. Rudolf Stroebinger, a radio journalist who fled to West Germany after the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968, said Soviet leader Josef Stalin himself confirmed Bormann's spying activities in a private discussion a quarter of a century ago with former Czech President Edward Benes.

Stroebinger said the discussion was reported to him in 1968 by Gen. Josef Bartik, a close confidant of Benes who headed Czechoslovakia's wartime military counterespionage in London.

Bartik, who died in Prague in 1968, led Czechoslovakia's political intelligence service from 1944 until the fall of the Benes government in 1948.

"According to him, Benes's words to him in 1946 were, 'If Bormann is living today, he will never be hanged because he was an agent of the Soviet Union,'" Stroebinger said.

Stroebinger's statement followed a similar claim in memoirs written by former West German intelligence chief

Reinhard Gehlen. Serialization of the memoirs started in the newspaper "Die Welt" last weekend.

Gehlen said Bormann managed to escape to the Soviet Union after the collapse of Hitler's Third Reich and lived there a few years ago.

However, Stroebinger said his informant could not confirm this.

According to Bartik, he said, Stalin told Benes that Bormann was captured by Soviet authorities some time during the 1920's as a German Free Corps insurgent in the Baltic area. Bormann won his release by promising to spy for Moscow.

Blackmail

"The signed statement was completely forgotten until the Soviets rediscovered it in 1941," Stroebinger said. "Then they blackmailed him into spying for them."

Stroebinger, a deputy editor of Prague's "Lidova Demokracie" until the Soviet invasion, said Bartik gave him the information during an interview he did as part of a study into the history of the Czech intelligence service.

Bartik asked him not to publish the Bormann story because he intended including it in his own memoirs.

"Bartik died in June or July 1968," Stroebinger said. "No one would have believed me until Gehlen came with the same kind of information."

Gehlen Book

Controversy Affects Publishing Negotiations

Bonn Says Legal Status Not Clarified

By HENRY RAYMONT
NEW YORK (NYT) — A sharp controversy in West Germany over the forthcoming memoirs of Gen. Reinhard Gehlen, Bonn's former chief of intelligence, is having a significant effect on negotiations here for the publication of the book outside Germany.

The possibility of prosecution of the author and his publishers was raised this week by Conrad Ahlers, the West German government's spokesman in Bonn, when he said that any disclosure in the memoirs of confidential information would be a violation of the law.

Earlier, Gehlen's claim that Martin Bormann, Hitler's deputy, had been a Soviet agent, was challenged by such widely differing figures as Adm. Karl Doenitz, the last wartime leader of Nazi Germany, and Dr. Simon Wiesenthal, head of the Jewish Documentation Center in Vienna, which specializes in tracking down Nazi war criminals.

As the debate unfolded, Christopher Shaw, publisher of the World Publishing Co., announced that an international publishing group headed by his company had obtained all book and serial rights to the Gehlen memoirs outside Germany.

The group, known to include the Book-of-the-Month Club and William Collins Sons and Co., Ltd., of London, was said by a publishing official to have offered "substantially over \$500,000."

But Shaw said that a number of French, Italian and Scandinavian publishers as well as U.S. paperback houses have been asked to suspend their bidding until the legal status of the manuscript has been clarified.

"We first want to await developments in Germany," Shaw said. "We also have decided that other publishers interested in the book should first see the English translation, which will contain material that cannot be published in the German edition."

Shaw hinted that an English-language translation, which could be used as the "master manuscript" for translation into other languages, might well provide a way to circumvent the West German laws.

In his statement, Ahlers said that under a law dating from the 1880s, any former civil servant writing about information he obtained while working for the government had to submit his manuscript for clearance before it was published

in Germany. Ahlers did not indicate how the law affected publication abroad.

The conservative newspaper Die Welt (The World) of Hamburg was scheduled to begin publishing excerpts from the Gehlen memoirs Friday and, as far as could be determined, had not shown them to the Bonn authorities.

Shaw said that Peter Ritner, World's chief editor, would work directly with Gehlen on the translation into English of the 150,000-word manuscript at Gehlen's home in Bavaria. Shaw said he expected the book would be ready for publication in the United States next spring.

"General Gehlen has advised us that he would be available, and indeed welcome, close questioning about the claims he makes in the book," Shaw said.

Gehlen's allegation that Bormann, a convicted Nazi war criminal, had found refuge in the Soviet Union and died there in 1969, drew sharp criticism from a variety of places. Only Albert Speer, former Nazi minister of armaments, has so far said publicly he shared Gehlen's assumption.

Doenitz, now 81, lived in retirement in Spandau in Berlin since his release from Allied war crimes custody in 1956. He said, "The g Bormann is com sense."

Wiesenthal, who is searching for es war criminals on Jewish victims of secution, said in V he still holds to the Bormann is in Sout

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