

EXEMPTIONS Section 3(b)
(2)(A) Privacy
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BIOGRAPHIC SKETCH ON GENERAL REINHARD GEHLEN

General Reinhard Gehlen is a professional military and intelligence officer. Until his retirement on 30 April 1968, he was President of the Bundesnachrichtendienst (BND), the West German Federal Intelligence Service, as well as chief of its predecessor organizations formed at the end of World War II.

General Gehlen was born 3 April 1902 in Erfurt. He currently lives in Berg on the Starnberg Lake near Munich. He finished his formal schooling in 1920 and entered the military service directly. He received his commission as second lieutenant in 1923 and served his initial tours of duty in the horse artillery. He married in 1931 and in 1935 he attended the War Academy in Berlin. At that time he held the rank of captain. By 1939 and shortly before the outbreak of World War II, he was promoted to major. He participated in the Polish campaign, but by 1940 he was transferred to a headquarters post. At that time he became an aid to General Halder, who was Chief of the General Staff. He was promoted to lieutenant colonel in 1941 and became chief of Fremde Heere Ost in 1942. (Fremde Heere Ost / Foreign Armies East was that section of the German High Command charged with responsibility for charting the enemy order of battle on the eastern front. It was essentially an evaluation unit and worked closely with the Abwehr. It did engage in line crossing operations as the war progressed, however.) Gehlen received his promotion to colonel soon after taking over Fremde Heere Ost and by 1944 was promoted to brigadier general. In the course of preparing estimates on enemy order of battle, he reached the conclusion as early as 1943 that the German cause on the eastern front was lost, and his continued pessimistic evaluations led to a reprimand from Hitler, and in the last days of the war he was relieved of command by order of Hitler. Long before that day General Gehlen had already consulted with senior members of his staff and made plans to continue their efforts against the Russians after the inevitable capitulation of the German Army, but in cooperation with the American Army. General Gehlen consequently cached his files in the Bavarian Alps and withdrew to that area in the final days of the war. He subsequently surrendered to the Americans, and after his initial POW debriefings, he presented his plan for the continued collection of order of battle information of the Soviet Armies. General Gehlen was motivated by his strong view that the position of the Soviet Army so deep in Europe constituted a

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8/31 Berg bei Starnberg
Waldstrasse 68
Obb. / BRD

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real threat to Western civilization. His views were so strong that he was able to convince his captors of these views. He was then flown back to Washington in 1946 for further debriefings, and the decision was made at the G-2 level to allow General Gehlen to reform his unit and to permit him to engage in a collection effort against the Soviet Army in Eastern Europe. Some [] were appropriated for this effort. General Gehlen succeeded in reforming his unit and retrieving most of his files. He operated under G-2 sponsorship from 1946 until 1949 when CIA assumed responsibility for the Gehlen organization as it was then known. From 1949 until 1956 General Gehlen devoted his full energies to legalizing his organization as the West German Federal Intelligence Service. He achieved this goal in March 1956 and thereby became its first president. He became directly responsible to the Chancellor's officer. After legalization he strove to develop his organization into a world-wide intelligence service having collection capabilities and liaison on a world-wide basis. He has gone a long way toward accomplishing this goal.

As a personality General Gehlen still remains essentially a professional military officer in habits and attitudes though he never entered on active duty after World War II. He is, however, a lieutenant general in the reserve. At one time he was an accomplished horseman though he no longer permits himself this luxury, primarily because of time considerations. He is a family man and has four children. It is believed General Gehlen leads a quiet life outside of his official duties. In all things he is essentially conservative. He rarely entertains, and he does not drink. His English is fluent, and he is socially poised and very much at ease among senior American officials. Since his retirement he has been engaged in writing his memoirs and compiling a history of the BND.

General Gehlen was succeeded on 1 May 1968 by General Gerhard Wessel, his adjutant in Fremde Heere Ost, who was instrumental in assisting in the formation of the Gehlen organization. Wessel has served with the BND, the West German Ministry of Defense, and the NATO Military Committee in Washington and Brussels.

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