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4 Communists released

Extent of German spy swap is uncertain

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Bonn—Two days after the return of master spy Guenter Guillaume to East Germany, there is still much uncertainty about the extent of the spy swap, thought to be one of the largest ever.

A West German government spokesman said that the deal did not measure up to government expectations and blamed premature leaks that have been circulating all week.

Bonn has handed over four Communist agents, according to informed sources. They include Renate Lutze, a former secretary at the Defense Ministry, and Guillaume, whose unmasking led to the resignation of Chancellor Willy Brandt in 1974.

East Germany is said to have released 20 to 30 prisoners to West Germany as part of the exchange deal.

In addition, the Ministry for Inter-German Relations said that as many as 3,000 East Germans would be reunited with their families in the West as a result of the deal.

Contrary to reports in the West German press, informed sources said yesterday that the exchange did not include East German spies Heinz-Bernhard Zorn, Jorg Meyer and Alexei Koslov, who are serving sentences in France, Denmark and South Africa, respectively.

The most valuable bargaining chip, Guillaume, was pardoned by President Karl Carstens Monday after serving 7½ years of a 13-year sentence. He returned to East Germany Thursday.

The exchange comes several weeks before Chancellor Helmut Schmidt is to meet Soviet President Leonid I. Brezhnev and East German leader Erich Honecker.

The spy swap is seen as a further step towards improving ties between the two German states. Relations suffered a terrific setback last October, when East Germany drastically increased currency exchange requirements for Western visitors, reducing by half the number of West Germans traveling to the Communist state.

The West German government had previously refused to pardon Guillaume in an attempt to make an example of him. The fact that he would have been eligible for parole at the end of next year, after serving two-thirds of his sentence, seems to have produced a change of heart.

Another reason for his release is said to be his serious kidney illness. "You don't get anything in exchange for a corpse,"

one chancellor official was quoted as saying.

Christel Guillaume, his wife, was released in March before the end of her eight-year sentence.

An East German army officer, Guillaume arrived in West Germany as a "refugee" in 1956 with his wife. After becoming an Social Democratic Party member in 1957, he rose rapidly, joining the chancellor in 1970 and becoming Willy Brandt's aide in 1972.

Although he was under close surveillance during the eleven months before his arrest in April, 1974, Guillaume was allowed to keep his position as Mr. Brandt's closest assistant.

The news of his treachery was a political bombshell. No one could believe that the small fat-man, who was considered "embarrassingly-limited intellectually" by his boss, was one of the best-placed agents ever uncovered in West Germany.

Chancellor Brandt was seriously compromised by his blind trust in his aide. Guillaume had betrayed top North Atlantic Treaty Organization secrets, including a letter from President Nixon to Mr. Brandt criticizing rifts in the NATO alliance.

The chancellor took responsibility for negligence in the Guillaume affair and resigned two weeks after his assistant's arrest. Ministers wept as Mr. Brandt announced his decision to the cabinet.

Ironically, this political disaster followed the successes of Mr. Brandt's "Ostpolitik," which led to the Soviet guarantee of allied access to West Berlin and the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two German states.

However, Mr. Brandt has not only lived down the old scandal, but has recently staged a vigorous comeback as party leader. He has been tipped as the next chancellor if Helmut Schmidt is forced to resign over his support for the NATO decision to station medium-range nuclear missiles in West Germany.

As a Nobel Peace Prize winner and initiator of the North-South dialogue, Willy Brandt has a large following among left-wing opponents to Chancellor Schmidt's defense policies.

His commitment to Third World strategies, involving material concessions and reduction of armaments by the major powers, is close to the wishes and demands of young pacifists disenchanted with Mr. Schmidt's pragmatism.