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FOREIGN SERVICE DESPATCH

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TO / ~~XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX~~ WASHINGTON

September 1, 1954
 DATE

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SUBJECT: West German Press Reaction to the Personality and Activities
of ex-General Reinhard Gehlen

Ex-General Gehlen and his Intelligence organization, reportedly sponsored and financed by the United States, became subject of press discussion for the first time in October 1953 when Sovzone security chief Ernst Wollweber started a gigantic propaganda campaign denouncing Western underground activities in the East Zone. Papers then reported in detail on the past and the professional qualifications of Ex-General Gehlen, stressing the fact that Gehlen's department in the German army headquarters had been the most effective body of all competing Nazi Intelligence organizations charged with counter-espionage activities in the East. During the last months of 1953, the press also raised the question of how the Gehlen organization could be put under German authority after the Federal Republic had become sovereign. While reporting that a number of former Nazis collaborated with Gehlen, papers did not by and large object to the ex-General's affiliation with former Himmler men, opining that the ex-General had been guided by purely professional and not political considerations when building up his organization.

Press attention focussed again on ex-General Gehlen and his organization after the defection of West German security chief Otto John. Gehlen was named as a possible successor. Sensational and conservative publications alike carried lengthy features on the Intelligence expert, pointing out what a "mysterious" personality Gehlen was. After a Swiss magazine allegedly offered 500 DM for a picture of Reinhard Gehlen, photos began to appear in the West German press which showed the ex-General in his youth and as an officer. WESTDEUTSCHE RUNDschau, however, front-paged the most often published picture of Gehlen, stating in the caption that the photo did not look like Gehlen and that no one knew as yet what the former General really looked like. Most papers stressed the ex-General's extraordinary skill and qualifications. The only paper available which strongly objected to the existence of the Gehlen organization because it was "financed by the Americans," was the neutralist, fellow-travelling PULDAER VOLKSZEITUNG which wrote that Gehlen was the most representative example of foreign Intelligence activities on German soil which constituted a serious obstacle to an East-West agreement. Other papers, however, demonstrated a more objective attitude with regard to the "fact" that the Americans sponsored Gehlen. Some publications said that the organization cost about 25 million DM yearly, an amount which the Federal Republic would have been unable to spend during the first years of its existence. Gehlen's loyalty to both the Americans and the Germans was underlined by several papers.

PUR:PD:R18 / EP
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GEHLEN 201

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The Protestant weekly CHRIST UND WELT professed to know that Gehlen was "no longer" financed by the Americans but had received funds from the Federal Chancery during the past months. The weekly stated that the organization Gehlen was therefore a purely German institution now. It favored the attachment of the Gehlen organization to the future Defense Ministry immediately after the establishment of that body. The position and the functions of Gehlen and his organization should be clarified and determined as soon as possible since the Soviets would undoubtedly increase their Intelligence activities since John's defection, and Gehlen in particular would be in a position to deal effectively with their activities.

The independent WESTDEUTSCHE ALLGEMEINE, the news weekly DER SPIEGEL and the neutralist WESTDEUTSCHES TAGEBLATT wrote that Under Secretary in the Chancery, Globke and former Under Secretary in the Chancery, Otto Lenz, who became known for his attempts to establish a "Propaganda Ministry," planned to establish a State Security Ministry and were assisted in their plans by Reinhard Gehlen who thereby hoped to gain a foothold in the Federal Government. These publications maintained that Gehlen had consciously misinformed Federal Minister of the Interior Schroeder with regard to the John case. Schroeder was opposed to the establishment of a State Security Ministry, if for no other reason than that an Interior Minister could not favor the establishment of an omnipotent security authority independent of his ministry. Gehlen, Globke and Lenz were said to have attempted discrediting Schroeder by leading him to make statements with regard to John which would make him subject to widespread public criticism.

Most publications dedicating special features or articles to Gehlen and his organization were rather favorably inclined toward the ex-General and his future attachment to a Federal authority. Of this group of publications, only the illustrated weekly MUENCHNER ILLUSTRIERTE voiced doubts as to the eligibility of Gehlen to the post of Western Germany's highest security chief in view of his former "close cooperation with the Americans," his alleged "bad reputation" in most Western countries, and in particular the extreme publicity that had recently been focussed upon him.

However, a number of papers discussing the John defection, the necessity to reorganize the security system in Western Germany, and the possibility of centralizing all Intelligence activities under Gehlen after the Federal Republic had become sovereign, rejected the ex-General as a possible candidate. Most of these papers opposed on principle the concentration of too much power in the hands of one man. The Mainz ALLGEMEINE ZEITUNG (independent, generally pro-Government) contended against replacing "Britain's John" by "America's Gehlen." The nationalist AACHENER NACHRICHTEN said that Gehlen should under no circumstances be introduced to fill the void left by John's defection since "in a certain sense Gehlen's fight against John reflected the rivalry of the American and British secret services on German soil."

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for Joseph B. Phillips
Director
Office of Public Affairs

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