

The Sunday Times, 21 Jan 68

Exit the man without a shadow

By Antony Terry
Bonn, Saturday

THE LEGENDARY "man without a shadow"—it is said that no photograph exists of him which is less than 20 years old—is retiring. General Reinhard Gehlen, at 65, is leaving the post of chief of BND, West Germany's equivalent of MI 6, reputedly the largest and technically the best-equipped spy organisation outside the CIA and Russia's K.G.B.

Hitler's former expert on the Red Army has been under a temporary cloud which has not been completely lifted even by his discovery of the date of the outbreak of the Israel-Egypt war five days before it happened.

The cloud descended when it was discovered that his massive £8 million-a-year service numbered top-level Russian agents among its 3,000 employees, spies, informers and officials. It has also never recovered from the slur of failing to report in advance the building of the

on the grounds that the Russians had offered £100,000 to any Communist agent who killed or captured him. A number of attempts on his life have been made and the Russians also attempted to lure him from duty through attractive girls. He has agents throughout the world: his main British bureaux, according to a map some years ago, were in London and Hull.

Gehlen was chief of Hitler's military espionage in Russia as the war ended. He and his friend and successor, 54-year-old Lieutenant-General Gerhard Wessel, were by then planning the switchover which was to put them at the head of their country's intelligence network once Hitler was gone.

Gehlen hid with his group near Lake Schlier in Bavaria until the Americans arrived, and then calmly handed them the plans of Germany's entire military and spy network in Eastern Europe.

He accepted the Americans' offer of a job, with a budget of \$3.5 million a year, on three conditions: that his espionage organisation should never be used against Germany, that it should employ only Germans, and that it should work for the Americans only until West Germany again became independent. The Americans agreed.

Later, he set up hundreds of phoney commercial firms wherever he needed an espionage bureau. But even by the 1950s the Russians were worming their informers into the network.

When the Americans handed back Gehlen and his spies to the West Germans he kept close ties with the CIA and the Pentagon. But his reputation with the present West German Chancellor suffers under Dr Kiesinger's general scepticism against anything he is told by the "spooks" until it is confirmed, and the Socialists now in the Government resent Gehlen's refusal to put them on his secret mailing list when they were in opposition.

Gehlen's recent intelligence information presents a resolutely gloomy picture of Soviet intentions.

The dapper General Wessel, who during his four-year stay in Washington, learnt how important the public image of a national intelligence organisation can be in gaining the ear of the government, may be able to handle Bonn officials more easily than his rather self-righteous predecessor.

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