

LIFE BOOK REVIEW

6/9/72
**The spy who came
in from the Reich**

THE SERVICE

Memoirs of General Reinhard Gehlen

Translated by DAVID IRVING

(World Publishing Co.) \$10.00

Reinhard Gehlen was the head of Hitler's military intelligence in eastern Europe during the war against Russia. In 1945, in preparation for the Cold War, he adroitly transferred the relics of his organization to American control. In 1956 it became the BND, the new West German Secret Service, oriented still against Russia. Under Dr. Adenauer it prospered hugely. More recently, the lull in the Cold War has exposed the ex-Nazi cold warrior to growing criticism. Now, in retirement, he has tried to answer that criticism by publishing his memoirs.

The German edition had a bad reception. It was judged inadequate, inaccurate and evasive. The English version seeks to meet this criticism. By addition, omission and radical rearrangement (none of it specified in the totally irrelevant introduction by George Bailey, a former U.S. intelligence officer) it has become a different and much more readable book. But is it any more reliable? Does it shed a more favorable light on "the Gehlen organization"?

The main charges against Gehlen are that he is an unrepentant Nazi; that his organization was a sinister force in German politics; and that it was inefficient as an intelligence service. We need not dwell on the last charge. Surely the BND had what its director calls its "mishaps," as all such services do, and we can't take his undocumented claims at face value. His "revelations" about Bormann—here repeated—have anyway totally discredited him as an evaluator of evidence. But what of the other charges?

Gehlen never disowns Nazi views or aims. He explicitly states that Hitler was right to make war on Rus-



Cold Warrior Gehlen

sia and only wrong to lose it. He disapproves of the opposition to Hitler: "High treason is high treason"—at least so long as things are going well. He complains of the nasty wartime propaganda "against Hitler's Germany," to which he is careful to show his continuing loyalty. When he transferred his organization to American control, he secured the formal approval of Admiral Doenitz, then in prison as Hitler's legitimate heir. Having thus established a sound Nazi pedigree, he goes on to boast that his organization was one of the few institutions that had been fighting, from the beginning, "for the Free World."

To use the expertise of an ex-Nazi

organization is not in itself culpable. It may be politically necessary, provided the organization is under responsible control. But Gehlen makes it clear that his secret service was no mere advisory body. He "secured the removal" of his American superior who "failed to see eye to eye with us." He had privileged access to Dr. Adenauer, who consulted him rather than his responsible ministries. If the foreign ministry did not accept Gehlen's advice, it is castigated—"Bonn has no sense of sovereignty"—and he deals directly with foreign countries "through secret service channels." When the Minister of Justice proposes to exchange a prisoner of state, "I would not hear of it and refused to see him." Gehlen is impatient of "ill-informed criticism" by responsible officials: "ignorant of the ways of an intelligence service," and will not have his "hands tied by our quaint West German laws." To cut through these obstacles he developed direct relations with the mass media. He commissioned a film to publicize his secret service, had his own press officer and gave the press military information which, "strictly speaking," was the property of the Defense Ministry. And now he publishes his memoirs.

Thanks to his secret, unaccountable power, Gehlen—a professional staff officer without higher education—gives us his confident opinions on political philosophy, world statesmen and world affairs. These are of no importance. Even when they are sound they do not depend on secret intelligence: they could be reached by any intelligent newspaper reader. For all his boasts, nothing in this book shows that Gehlen's secret service actually achieved anything except an indecent power in Adenauer's Germany. No wonder he singles out Dr. Adenauer as "one of the greatest statesmen of this century."

by Hugh Trevor-Roper

Sir Hugh, Oxford don and former intelligence officer, is a leading historian and military authority.