

Bonn Experts Say Defector Was One of Soviet's Ablest Agents

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LONDON, Oct. 25 — Lieut. Col. Yevgeny V. Runge of the Soviet State Security Committee (K.G.B.), who defected the United States, was described today in the Bonn intelligence community as the most successful Communist agent known to have penetrated secrets of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

Colonel Runge, 39 years old, defected Oct. 10 in West Berlin with his East German wife, Valentina, and their 8-year-old son. They are in the Washington vicinity undergoing interrogation by American and West German intelligence officers.

According to intelligence sources here, Colonel Runge's biggest coup was to obtain a virtually complete set of Western allied plans for dealing with all crisis situations in isolated West Berlin.

Photocopies of more than a dozen of Colonel Runge's passes, identity cards and documents were shown today. He had brought the documents with him.

The information was made available to newsmen to counter Soviet and East German allegations that the defection was a hoax.

'A Stupid Joke'

Last Sunday Tass, the official Soviet press agency, said in a dispatch from Moscow that the Runge story was "invented," "a lie from beginning to end," and "a stupid joke." Yesterday the East German Interior Ministry called a news conference to declare that "Eugen Runge" was an East German citizen with a "criminal record" who disappeared with his family Oct. 10. The colonel was reported to have received copies of the

crisis plans through Heinz Sütterlin, 43, whose wife, Leonore, was a secretary to a senior Foreign Ministry official in Bonn.

Mrs. Sütterlin, whose Soviet Code name was given as Lola, was said to have taken the documents home from the office safe. Her husband, who nominally worked as a photographer, allegedly made copies of the documents and conveyed them to Colonel Runge.

Mr. and Mrs. Sütterlin were arrested within five hours after Colonel Runge's defection. She changed herself four days later in her cell when she learned that her husband married her in 1962 on instructions from Moscow.

Intelligence officers said Colonel Runge was trained for six years in the Soviet Union before being sent in 1955 to West Germany as an "illegal" agent—that is, without any connection with the Soviet Embassy in Bonn or with other open Soviet organizations.

He was said to have been assigned first to run a small ring of agents in Bad Godesberg whose target was the French Embassy. Penetration of the French Embassy was allegedly effected by Leopold Pieschel, 44, one of the five persons rounded up at the time of the colonel's defection on suspicion of being Soviet agents. Pieschel was said to have obtained a key to a safe lifted NATO and other secret papers.

Colonel Runge's work with Pieschel was described as so satisfactory to his espionage superiors that he was awarded the Order of the Red Star, a third class, on Dec. 18, 1964, by Vladimir Y. Semichastny, then the chief of the K. G. B. The spy took a copy of the

award certificate with him to the West.

Team Proved Valuable

According to the Western sources, he was assigned to run—that is, manage—the Sütterlins several years ago and as their material became more and more valuable, he was told to concentrate on them.

He has told his interrogators that he was pulled off the job early this year, recalled to Moscow and prepared for a new assignment. He was sent to East Germany to train 30 new German agents for the K.G.B. Conrad Ahlers, West German Government's deputy spokesman, said the training school was operated without the knowledge of the East German State Security Service.

Officials said Colonel Runge decided to defect when he learned that his new assignment would require him and his wife to leave their son behind in Moscow "as a hostage."

Colonel Runge was a so-called Volga German, born March 8, 1928, in the Ukrainian village of Novosolenye. He was sent to Germany toward the end of the war as a forced laborer, served the Soviet occupation army as an interpreter, and was recruited by the M.V.D., the forerunner of the K.G.B., in 1949.

While the exposure of the rings run by Colonel Runge was hailed by Western intelligence officers as "very neat," it was pointed out that the

Soviet agents had acquired "material of great value," providing evidence of "grave security gaps." It is understood that a massive security check is under way in the Foreign Ministry here.