

Nazi War Crimes Suspect Asserts C.I.A. Used Him as Anti-Soviet Spy

Californian Says Agency Intervened to Bar Investigation of Him by Immigration Officials

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By RALPH BLUMENTHAL

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A Californian who has been under investigation by Federal immigration officials for alleged Nazi war crimes said yesterday that he had been recruited by the Central Intelligence Agency for anti-Soviet spy work and that the agency had discussed his case with the authorities of the Immigration and Naturalization Service.

The investigation was subsequently dropped, the agency reported back to the suspect, Edgars Laipenieks of San Diego, a former intelligence officer with the pro-Nazi Latvian police during World War II.

The unusual case appears to document a continuing link between United States intelligence agencies and at least one of the World War II war crimes suspects who have been under investigation here for allegedly concealing their past to gain entry into the United States.

Another of the recent suspects, a high-ranking Nazi scientist, was apparently brought to this country after the war by United States intelligence, and there have been indications of similar contacts in other cases.

Deportation Proceedings Begun

Amid an upsurge of interest in the long-unresolved war crimes cases, the immigration service announced Wednesday that it had filed deportation proceedings against three resident aliens who had allegedly concealed their participation in atrocities.

Mr. Laipenieks, a 63-year-old former Olympic sports coach, who came to the United States in 1960, was on a list of 37 war crimes suspects under investigation by the immigration authorities in 1974.

Witnesses have contended that he participated in killings in the central prison in Riga in 1941, and Israeli officials are known to have given more detailed allegations to immigration investigators last month.

Mr. Laipenieks's contacts with the intelligence agency came to light Wednesday during an interview with two reporters from The San Diego Evening Tribune, Bob Dorn and Martin Gerchen.

Showed Letter From C.I.A.

The reporters said that Mr. Laipenieks insisted that he was no longer under investigation and displayed a letter to him dated July 20, 1976 from the agency to support his contention.

The letter, which Mr. Laipenieks also provided to The New York Times, reads in full:

"Please excuse the exceedingly long delay in responding to your last correspondence. During the interim we have been corresponding with the Immigration and Naturalization Service about your status. We have now been told that you are not amendable to deportation under existing laws. It is our understanding that I.N.S. has advised their San Diego office to cease any action against you.

"If such does not prove the case, please let us know immediately. Thank you once again for your patience in this instance, and your past assistance to the Agency."

It was signed by Charles E. Savige for Gene F. Wilson, information and privacy coordinator, the official apparently in

charge of such matters. The letterhead said "Central Intelligence Agency."

A C.I.A. official questioned about the case confirmed yesterday that the agency had communicated with the immigration service about the case but insisted, there had been no intervention. He described Mr. Laipenieks as a man who "rendered some assistance to the agency in the past." He said he did not have the details.

The official added that he did not know if the agency had been aware of the allegations against Mr. Laipenieks when it accepted his assistance.

In a telephone interview with The Times, Mr. Laipenieks said his relationship with the agency began in 1960 when agents approached him at the Rome Olympics where he was coaching.

He had been coaching, he said, ever since the French Army discovered him teaching mountain skiing in Austria after the war and took him to France to teach soldiers.

In 1948, he said, he went to Chile to teach skiing and remained there until coming to this country in 1960. While he was in Chile, he said, he coached at three Olympics. In the United States he has coached at the University of Denver. Now semiretired, he occasionally coaches track and field at San Diego-area schools.

'Gave Me Complete Screening'

"In the summer of '63 they invited me to Washington, D.C., and for 10 days they gave me complete screening," he said in strongly accented but fluent English.

Until 1968, he said, he traveled throughout the world with expenses paid by the agency but no salary. He said his job was to plant certain information about the Soviet Union. He did not elaborate.

An immigration agency spokesman also said that there had been no C.I.A. intervention in the case. He said that the case had been dropped because under existing law, war criminals were not excludable from the United States in 1960.

He did say, however, that "before 1964 there were no satellites—We need [information on] certain sites, certain locations" in the Soviet Union, he said.

Mr. Laipenieks also maintained that he had no role in the killings of civilians by the Nazis and their cohorts. He described himself as a plainclothes police intelligence officer who hunted "Russian terrorists" between 1941 and 1943.

He said he was allowed to quit fighting and return to running his family's bakery in 1943.

The Central Intelligence Agency "knows what I did: They know everything about me," Mr. Laipenieks said.

Connections between United States intelligence and war crimes suspects also have emerged in the case of Dr. Hubertus Strughold, former director of the Medical Research Institute for Aviation of the Nazi Aviation Ministry.

Scientists connected with the ministry performed torture experiments on concentration camp prisoners.

Dr. Strughold has denied knowing about the torture experiments. After the war, according to notations on his files, American intelligence agents brought him here where he helped develop the U.S. space capsule in Texas.