

The Russians were American allies in World War II. The “good” wartime relationship against a common Nazi German enemy was over almost as soon as the war ended. The Russians began to take control of most eastern European countries by establishing and then supporting puppet Communist regimes (e.g., in Romania, Czechoslovakia, Poland). Germany itself was divided into two sectors: East Germany under Communist control with direct ties to the Soviet Union and West Germany, a democratic, parliamentary government closely aligned to America. We should also not forget that Berlin was a divided city with East Berlin becoming one of the most important cities under Communist Russian dominance. This post-World War II era is commonly referred to as the “Cold War.” The Cold War period governed American politics for many years.

After receiving an honorary degree from Westminster College in Fulton Missouri, Winston Churchill gave his famous “Iron Curtain Speech” on March 5, 1946. Churchill introduced the phrase “Iron Curtain” to describe the division between Western powers and the area controlled by the Soviet Union. The speech is important in understanding why the Western powers, especially America and Great Britain, wanted to have a post-Nazi Germany on their side. Go to the following Web site for excerpts from this famous speech: www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/churchill-iron.html

One of the best and most devastating examples of this was the American involvement in the Korean War. On June 25, 1950 Communist North Korea attacked non-Communist South Korea. As part of the United Nations forces, American soldiers entered the conflict—thousands lost their lives.

Why is all this important in a study of the Holocaust? Read the article below for the answer! Then answer the questions at the end of the selection.

The Consortium

CIA at 50: Still Hiding Its 'Original' Nazi Sin

By Martin A. Lee

For U.S. policy-makers, the 50th anniversary of the founding of the Central Intelligence Agency on Sept. 8 provides yet another opportunity for congratulatory pronouncements about “winning the Cold War.” But the American public would be better served if U.S. officials marked the occasion by owning up to the CIA’s “original sin,” which dates back to the spy agency’s earliest days: its covert use of a Nazi spy network brimming with war criminals.

U.S. spy chiefs protected this cast of killers so they ostensibly could help counter the Soviet threat. But for the next five decades, this decision -- the ultimate practice of

situational ethics -- loosened up Washington's tolerance for human rights abuses and a variety of other crimes in the name of anti-communism. The consequences continue to this day, with a resurgent neo-fascist movement in Europe that can trace its ideological lineage back to Adolf Hitler's Third Reich, through some of the men who served the CIA.

The key player on the German side of this unholy alliance was Gen. Reinhard Gehlen, a thin, bespectacled espionage prodigy who was Hitler's top anti-Soviet spy. Gehlen oversaw all of Germany's military-intelligence capabilities throughout Eastern Europe and the U.S.S.R.

As the war drew to a close, the crafty Gehlen surmised that the grand anti-fascist coalition -- led by the United States, Great Britain and the Soviet Union -- would not survive the peace. Gehlen also recognized that U.S. intelligence operations, largely an anti-Nazi improvisation, would be ill-prepared to wage a sustained shadow struggle against the U.S.S.R.

So, at war's end, Gehlen opted to surrender to the Americans. He offered to turn over the vast espionage archive on the U.S.S.R. that he had accumulated for Hitler. Plus, he said he could activate an underground army of battle-hardened anti-communists in Eastern Europe for Cold War duty.

Although the ink had barely dried on the Yalta agreements, which required the United States to give the Soviets any captured German officers who had been involved in "eastern area activities," Gehlen was soon transferred to Fort Hunt, Virginia. There, he dined with U.S. officials whose appetite for Cold War scuttlebutt was growing voracious. The flop-eared German general played their psyches like piano keys, with a seductive anti-Soviet pitch that left competing elements of the U.S. espionage establishment vying for his services.

During his 10 months at Fort Hunt, Gehlen presented a professional image, the pure technician who liked nothing better than to immerse himself in maps, flow-charts and statistics. The persona he projected was, in espionage parlance, a "legend" -- one that hinged on Gehlen's false claim that he was never really a Nazi. He just was dedicated to fighting communism. Among those who took the bait was future CIA director, Allen Dulles, who became one of Gehlen's biggest post-war boosters.

With a mandate to continue gathering information in the East just as he had been doing for Hitler, Gehlen re-established his spy organization, initially under U.S. Army supervision. The Gehlen "Org," as it was called, enlisted thousands of Gestapo, Wehrmacht and SS veterans despite Gehlen's promise to U.S. officials that he would not employ hard-core Nazis.

Yet, even the vilest of the vile -- senior bureaucrats who administered the Holocaust -- were welcome in the Org. (Alois Brunner, Adolf Eichmann's right-hand man and personal favorite, found gainful employment courtesy of Gehlen and the CIA.) "It seems," the *Frankfurter Rundschau* editorialized, "that in the Gehlen headquarters one SS

man paved the way for the next and Himmler's elite were having happy reunion ceremonies."

U.S. officials knew that many of the people they were subsidizing had committed horrible crimes against humanity, but atrocities were overlooked as the anti-communist crusade gained momentum. Through Gehlen, the CIA had access to former leaders of virtually every Nazi puppet government from the Baltics to the Black Sea, as well as to a rogues gallery of Waffen SS fanatics.

Bolted to the CIA in the late 1940s, Gehlen's Nazi-infested spy apparatus functioned as America's secret eyes and ears in Central Europe. Under CIA auspices, and later as head of the West German secret service (BND), Gehlen was able to influence U.S. policy toward the Soviet Bloc. The Org played a major role within NATO, too, supplying two-thirds of raw intelligence on Warsaw Pact countries.

"What we had, essentially, was an agreement to exploit each other, each in his own national interest," said James Critchfield, a CIA operative who worked with Gehlen on a daily basis for eight years.

"The Agency loved Gehlen because he fed us what we wanted to hear," an ex-CIA officer told writer Christopher Simpson. "We used his stuff constantly, and we fed it to everybody else -- the Pentagon, the White House, the newspapers. They loved it, too. But it was hyped up Russian bogeyman junk, and it did a lot of damage to this country."

Washington's growing dependence on Gehlen made U.S. officials sitting ducks for disinformation. Much of what he supplied exaggerated the Soviet threat and whipped up fears about Russian military intentions. The Nazi spymaster fostered paranoia in the West about a worldwide communist conspiracy. Gehlen's strategy was based on a rudimentary equation: the colder the Cold War got, the more political space for Hitler's heirs.

The ODESSA Nazis

While Gehlen catered to his sponsor's anti-communist cravings, his Org became the life raft for legions of Hitler's SS henchmen to escape their World War II crimes and resettle safely in the post-war world, much as the Nazi ODESSA scheme had envisioned. Third Reich expatriates and fascist collaborators then found jobs as "security advisers" in the Middle East and in Latin America, where "death squads" persist as an enduring legacy.

Gehlen's main task all along seems to have been to protect ODESSA Nazis by neutralizing American intelligence, according to William Corson, a retired U.S. espionage officer. Corson described Gehlen's gambit in retrospect as "an exceptionally well-orchestrated diversion."

Being on the U.S. payroll also did not guarantee abiding loyalty. Ironically, some of the Nazis recruited and supported by Gehlen would later play major roles in neo-fascist organizations (in Europe and elsewhere) that agitated against the United States.

But there was another downside. CIA officials eventually discovered that the Nazi old boy network inside the Org was riddled with Soviet spies. Gehlen's employment of ex-Nazis -- some of whom despised democratic America -- enabled the U.S.S.R. to penetrate West Germany's secret service. In effect, the CIA hired Gehlen to keep the Soviets out, but he ended up letting them in.

Even CIA officials recognized they had invested too much trust in Gehlen and "his spooky Nazi outfit," as one U.S. official referred to it. "One of the biggest mistakes the United States ever made in intelligence was taking on Gehlen," an American espionage specialist later admitted.

Yet, more than just a bungled U.S. spy caper, the Gehlen debacle continues to exact a price against human decency in the world. It is a price rarely acknowledged amid Washington's post-Cold War triumphalism. But widespread CIA recruitment of fascists gave these anti-democratic forces a crucial respite.

After 50 years, the resurgence of fascism in Europe and elsewhere underscores the need for Americans to confront -- and understand -- some of these terrible demons of the Cold War past. ~

1. How would you define "situational ethics?" (see paragraph 2) Can you think of present day examples of this?
2. How was former Nazi, General Reinhard Gehlen, able to gain the trust of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA)?
3. How and why did the CIA use Gehlen?
4. Alois Brunner was also recruited by the CIA? Why is this significant? Go to the Simon Wiesenthal Center Web site for the answer: www.wiesenthal.com
5. American officials knew that former Nazis now working for American interests had been active participants in the Holocaust. Why did they tolerate this? Is this an example of "situational ethics?"
6. Gehlen later became head of the West German Secret Service (BND) What is the tragic irony in this fact?
7. The Nazi Odessa movement, an underground Nazi organization, helped many Nazis escape the clutches of the law after the war by financially assisting them in their efforts to settle in countries such as Paraguay, Brazil, and Argentina. Do you know where the money came from? Using an encyclopedia or one of the search engines you will find the answer.

8. What role did former Nazis play in the Middle East and in Latin America? (e.g., In what way did our use of ex-Nazis to fight Communism backfire?)

NOTE: The Vatican was much more fearful of the spread of Communism and its anti-religious fervor than it was of former Nazis who might escape punishment. For anyone interested in finding out what role the Vatican played in helping former Nazis, the following Web site is suggested. Click on the link “From Ratlines to Drug Smuggling Routes” or scroll down the page to this subheading.

<http://www.whale.to/b/guyatt2.html>