

Argentina, an “Eldorado for Nazis” (June 11, 1960)

Abstract

South America, and Argentina in particular, became a haven for Nazis fleeing Europe after the war; some historical documents suggest that 9,000 Nazis escaped to South America, with as many as 5,000 settling in Argentina, which was dubbed an “Eldorado” for Nazis by this article and the “Nazis’ Cape of Last Hope” by writer and Holocaust survivor Simon Wiesenthal. With the aid of high-level members of the Catholic Church, Nazis fled to South America through so-called “ratlines;” Juan Perón, the president of Argentina, ordered the creation of a ratline for prominent Nazis in 1946 and encouraged them to settle in Argentina. Perón was sympathetic to Nazi Germany and the Nazis and also actively recruited Nazis with scientific and technological knowledge that he believed could be useful to Argentina. West Germany was aware that Eichmann was hiding in Argentina as early as 1952, but had little interest in tracking him down and bringing him to justice—the government employed ex-Nazis in many government jobs, and feared that if Eichmann were prosecuted he would reveal the extent to which denazification had failed in West Germany; East Germany was aware of these concerns and used them for their propaganda, as this article from the East German paper *Neue Zeit* demonstrates.

Source

Fear of a Guilty Conscience

The Argentine government has taken up the Eichmann case with striking zeal, demanding that Israel extradite the murderer of millions of Jews, who was previously living in Buenos Aires under an assumed name. Now Argentina, whose relations with Israel were quite normal, is probably less interested in the little company representative Eichmann than certain other circles whose political home is in both Buenos Aires and Bonn. These people can count on one hand all those whom Eichmann could incriminate if he were to stand before an Israeli court.

As for Argentina, it became an Eldorado after the war for everybody who was anybody under Hitler and who managed to escape the war crimes trials. The entanglement of Argentine industry with the West German monopoly firms gave the Nazis every opportunity to save their own skin and disseminate their filthy ideology across the world. Bonn, for its part, laid on support: Ambassador Junker, one-time chief press officer of the Nazi Party for China, was just the man to comfort and stand by escaped Nazis. And if the German embassy found that a war criminal was “no longer in danger,” it facilitated his return to West Germany.

It is therefore hardly a coincidence that Eichmann, who was able to live unmolested in West Germany until 1950, was able to hide out as a representative of the Mercedes-Benz branch in Buenos Aires. Eichmann’s backers now fear not so much for their protégé, but for the exposure of the widespread Nazi underground network in Argentina and revelations about all those Nazis who rose to new positions of influence in Bonn. In order to exert dual pressure on Israel, Argentina is expected to demand Eichmann’s extradition, while Bonn seeks directly to expedite the extradition of the Jew murderer. On Friday the West German press was thus also rather unanimous in calling for Eichmann to be brought before a West German court, which would mean getting off scot-free.

Finally, a third option would be to let Eichmann “die suddenly of natural causes.” Bonn has deployed a whole army of agents to this end. Whatever the outcome of the Eichmann affair, the entire Bonn system is on trial with him, a system that helped criminal Nazis to occupy high positions in government, the

military, the judiciary and business.

Source of original German text: "Furcht des bösen Gewissens," *Neue Zeit*, no. 135, Saturday, June 11, 1960, p. 2.

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