

Israel Admits to the Arrest of Eichmann in Argentina (June 8, 1960)

Abstract

Israel's decision to arrest Eichmann in Argentina led to tension in Israel's relationship with Argentina. Argentina brought Israel's infringement of its sovereignty to the United Nations and insisted that it be rectified; the issue was ultimately brought before the Security Council, which determined that Israel's apology to Argentina qualified as appropriate reparations and turned down Argentina's request that Eichmann be returned to Argentina. Golda Meir expressed her country's desire to maintain friendly relations with Argentina, and within a few months, relations between the two countries returned to normal. However, Argentine Jews suffered greatly as a result of the tension between the two countries, facing accusations of divided loyalties, antisemitic outbreaks, and a wave of violence.

Source

Israel Admits to the Arrest of Eichmann in Argentina

A Note of Reply Is Presented in Buenos Aires / The Former SS Leader Is Said to Have Gone Willingly
Report from our correspondent in Buenos Aires

F. O. E. BUENOS AIRES, June 7. Former SS-Obersturmbannführer Adolf Eichmann has been taken from Argentina by a task force of Israeli "volunteers" and traveled to Israel of his own accord. This surprising news is part of a memorandum that the Israeli ambassador in Buenos Aires presented to the Argentine foreign ministry, and which was published shortly thereafter. At the time, the Israeli government declared that it would never reveal where Eichmann fell into its hands.

The Israeli note states that the government in Jerusalem had no knowledge that Eichmann had come from Argentina, since the Israeli security services had reported nothing of this. Only after receiving their ambassador's telegram of June 1, 1960 from Buenos Aires had the Israeli government been informed of the fact, and it then requested the details of the action from the security service that arrested Eichmann.

The Israeli note reports that after the end of the Second World War, Jewish "volunteers," including Israeli citizens, had begun to search for Eichmann, who was considered to bear the main responsibility for the massacres of Jews in Europe. For fifteen years, these volunteers had searched in vain for him in several European nations, in the Arab countries and South America. A few months ago, reports had arrived from a group of these volunteers in Argentina, according to which Eichmann was hiding out there under an assumed name and without the knowledge of the Argentine government. It was unclear whether this news was credible or not. In any case, the searchers had discovered that there were many Nazis living in Argentina.

At that point, the search was resumed with new zeal. When the fugitive was found, he was asked whether he was prepared to travel to Israel to face justice. Eichmann admitted that he was living in Argentina illegally and with false papers. He asked for 24 hours to consider turning himself over to the Israeli courts. This was granted. The next day he declared himself prepared to go to Israel voluntarily. At the same time, he presented the group that found him with a handwritten declaration announcing his decision to describe the events of the last years of his career in Germany openly and plainly, so that this description could offer future generations a true picture of what had happened.

The group of volunteers, the diplomatic note continues, then took Eichmann from Argentina “with his complete consent” and turned him over to the Israeli security service. The latter informed the Israeli government on May 23 that it had Eichmann in custody, whereupon the government ordered charges to be brought against Eichmann. Only later did the government in Jerusalem learn that Eichmann had been brought from Argentina.

The letter in which Eichmann offered a full account of his activities reads as follows: “I, the undersigned, Adolf Eichmann, do freely state: Now that my true identity has been revealed, I see there is no point in trying to evade justice. I affirm that I am willing to travel to Israel and be tried there in a court of law. I was assured that I will be granted legal counsel and I will do everything in my power to shed light, without embellishing the facts, upon my last years of service in Germany, so that coming generations will be given a true picture. I provide this statement of my own free will. I have not been promised anything nor have I been threatened. I wish, at long last, to attain inner peace. Because I cannot remember all of the details and may have confused them in memory, I request that I be provided with the documents and testimonies that will aid in arriving at the truth.

Adolf Eichmann, Buenos Aires, May 1960.”

The eighth and final paragraph of the Israeli note contains an assurance that the Israeli government wishes to express its regret should the “group of volunteers” have violated Argentine laws or sovereignty. It expects understanding for the “extraordinary” character of the operation and the importance of placing this man, who was responsible for the murder of millions of Jews, before a tribunal. It should also be taken into account that the volunteers who escaped the mass murders, took up this historic task for this reason alone. The Israeli government is absolutely convinced that the Argentine government respects such historical and moral values.

Argentine Foreign Minister Dr. Taboada told the press Monday evening that the Israeli note was being considered. The Argentine government did not wish to express any opinion about it at the moment. It will do so within the next three days. Circles close to the foreign ministry suggest that the government considers the case to be very serious.

As the news agencies report, Israeli Foreign Minister Mrs. Golda Meir said on Monday evening in Milwaukee, Wisconsin that Israel can defend at any time its decision to arrest Eichmann in a foreign country. Eichmann was not a citizen of the country in which he was discovered. “I am not claiming that this is a normal situation,” said Mrs. Meir. “But we are also not dealing with a normal case.”

The case against Eichmann in Israel entered a new phase on Monday. For the first time, the Yad Vashem Foundation, which mainly gathers documents about the National Socialist operations to exterminate the Jews during the Second World War, has provided documents about Eichmann’s crimes to “Bureau 06,” which has been charged with investigating the case of Eichmann. The Yad Vashem Foundation has also supplied the Israeli foreign ministry with two additional lists of Nazi war criminals. The lists contain 350 names and are to be turned over to the judicial authorities in the Federal Republic.

Source of original German text: “Israel gibt die Festnahme Eichmanns in Argentinien zu,” *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, June 8, 1960, pp. 1, 4.

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