

- Verschuer, Helmut von, 13, 77-78
 Verschuer, Otmar Freiherr von, 11-13,
 14, 17-18, 33, 34, 39, 41, 59, 60, 69,
 77-78
 Vessey Camben, Juan, 171
 "Vieland," 68-70, 74, 75, 76, 78, 80
 Viera de Castro, Maria, 320, 321
 Vilka Carranza, Juan, 247-248
- Wagner, Gustav, 315
 Wagner, Richard, 13
 War Crimes Branch, Civil Affairs Division,
 Washington, 82, 85
 Ware, John, xviii, 202-203, 296
 Warren Commission, 302-303
 Washington Times, 308
 Welt, Die, 317
 West German Prosecutor's Office, 24
 White, Peter, 296, 297-298
 Wiedwald, Erich Karl, 216-217
 Wiesenthal, Simon, 23n, 136n, 161, 169-
 170, 193, 199, 206-210, 212, 213-
 Wiesenthal, Simon (cont.):
 214, 219, 245-247, 248, 251-252,
 256, 294, 298, 299, 304, 306, 317-
 318, 320n, 321
 Wiesenthal Center; 84, 208, 209, 306,
 308, 319
 Wirths, Eduard, 24, 25-26, 78
 Wladeger, Anton and Edeltraud, 162n
 Wollman, Henrique, 301
 World in Action (TV), special program on
 Mengele, 202-203
 World Health Organization, 122
 World Jewish Congress, 126-127
 "Worthless life" concept, 11n, 45, 80
- "Xavier," 88
- Ynsfran, Edgar, 129, 149, 159, 180, 194,
 195-196, 197, 201
- Zamir, Zvi, 246
 Zinn, August, 136

28 of onsu

MENGELE

THE
COMPLETE
STORY

Gerald L. Posner and
John Ware

This is the definitive life story of Dr. Josef Mengele, the notorious "Angel of Death." Responsible for the death and mutilation of thousands of prisoners at Auschwitz, Mengele vanished into South America after World War II, where he remained free for more than three decades. How did he escape from the Allies? And how did he elude his pursuers?

Granted exclusive and unrestricted access to the Mengele family papers and diaries, Posner and Ware have sifted through more than 5,000 pages of Mengele's writings to construct this extraordinary record of his life—from his childhood in Germany to the horrors of Auschwitz to his years in exile. Among their headline-making revelations:

- Conclusive proof that Mengele was aided by an extensive network of people who supplied him with passports, shelter, money, and diverted his pursuers.
- Unprecedented new insights into Mengele's mind and character.

(continued on back flap)

(continued from front flap)

- Proof that Mengele was captured and held for two months under his own name by the U.S. Army.

- Substantial evidence that West Germany and Israel could have captured Mengele on two separate occasions and failed to do so.

In this masterful biography, the infamous, elusive Mengele has at last been captured.

Gerald L. Posner, recognized as a leading authority on Josef Mengele, is a partner in the New York City law firm of Posner and Ferrara. He has been studying Mengele for five years, traveling to Europe and South America to collect more than 25,000 documents.

John Ware is a London-based TV producer for the current affairs documentary program *World in Action* made by Britain's Granada Television. His documentary "The Hunt for Dr. Mengele" was aired on the Independent Television Network as well as on *60 Minutes* in this country.

jacket design by Judith K. Leeds

McGraw-Hill Book Company
1221 Avenue of the Americas
New York, NY 10020

1982-6
Luc

MENGELE

The Complete Story

Gerald L. Posner and
John Ware

McGraw-Hill Book Company

New York St. Louis San Francisco

Hamburg Mexico Toronto

Acknowledgments

Writing about a man who spent more than half his life as a fugitive, resolved to escape recognition and retribution, was a singularly difficult task. This book is the result of five years of research. During that time we have gathered one of the largest documentary archives on Josef Mengele, some 25,000 pages of published and unpublished documents. We have spent months in South America, many days researching in the archives of different countries, and have taped more than ninety hours of interviews with individuals involved in Mengele's life. We are satisfied that we have conducted a diligent and thorough investigation, and we take full responsibility for the accuracy of the facts and the validity of the judgments presented. Much of our research would not have been possible without the help of many people and organizations, in more than a dozen countries, on four continents.

In the development of documentation we were aided by Dr. Robert Wolfe, Dr. John Mendelsohn, and John Taylor of the National Archives and Records Service, Washington, D.C.; by Daniel Simon, director of the Berlin Document Center, West Berlin; Dr. Y. Arad, director of Yad Vashem, Jerusalem; Dr. Graciella Swiderski, director of the National Archives of Argentina, Buenos Aires; Dr. Celina Moreira Franco, director of the National Record Center of Brazil, Rio de Janeiro; Dr. Alfredo Viloa, director of the National Document Archives of Paraguay, Asunción; Charles Palm, archivist at the Hoover Institution, Stanford University, California; and Dr.

Howard B. Gotlieb, director, and Charles Niles, archivist, of the Special Collections, Boston University, Boston, Massachusetts.

We also acknowledge the extensive and rapid research, exceeding the statutory mandates of the Freedom of Information Act, performed by James K. Hall, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Washington, D.C.; Thomas F. Conley, United States Army Intelligence and Security Command, Fort Meade, Maryland; and Larry Strawderman, Central Intelligence Agency, Washington, D.C.

We record with gratitude the constructive help provided by American diplomatic missions in South America, especially the efforts of Robert Minutillo and Larry Estes, public affairs officers of the U.S. embassies in Asunción and Buenos Aires, respectively. Their extensive knowledge of the countries in which they are posted, and their generous assistance, opened many doors which might otherwise have stayed closed.

Helping us through a myriad of difficulties in South America, in addition to many who did not want to be publicly acknowledged, were Evandro Carlos de Andrade, editor-in-chief, *O'Globo*, Rio de Janeiro; Zevi Ghivelder, executive director, *Manchete* magazine, Rio de Janeiro; Roberto Guareschi, political editor, *El Clarín*, Buenos Aires; Roberto Forchiniti, archive director, *Abril*, Buenos Aires; Enrique Jara, Latin American director of Reuters, Buenos Aires; Cesar Sanchez Bonitato, archive director, *La Nación*, Buenos Aires; and Donillo Manzini, political editor, *Tiempo Argentino*, Buenos Aires. These individuals not only provided unrestricted access to the confidential files of their publications, but they also led us to unexpected and useful sources of information.

Also in South America, special acknowledgment should be given to a number of government officials who collectively gave us access to voluminous and hitherto undisclosed government documentation on Josef Mengele: Dr. Adolfo Barreyro, private secretary to the minister of the interior, Buenos Aires; Dr. Carlos Castro, director of press affairs, presidential palace, Buenos Aires; Dr. Carlos Alberto Flores, director of the Federal Police, Buenos Aires; Dr. Albino Gomez, director of press affairs at the ministry of foreign affairs, Buenos Aires; Dr. Emilio Gibaja, secretary of public information, interior ministry, Buenos Aires; and Dr. Jaime Malamud, human rights advisor to the President of the Republic, Buenos Aires.

Two journalists were instrumental in uncovering new infor-

mation and so John Martin o Welles of the mitment to th constant inspi

Some rese or the call of f here of Alexa don, for who pulous regard Tony Wells o Robert Hodg of himself; an her spare tim

Dr. Güntl help in decipl pages of pros

A very sp vivors of Mer kowitz and th of Auschwitz bers of their experiences v should be sai Mengele's car

We woul of Israel's Ce who helped account of th

Special tl director for C for his generc in Action," C events were and inborn o

With apo ted, we list t in bringing tl

Zvi Ahar Dr. Pedro A

mation and sources: Ralph Blumenthal of the *New York Times* and John Martin of ABC Television. We owe a special thanks to Elliot Welles of the Anti-Defamation League in New York, whose commitment to the work of bringing Nazi criminals to justice was a constant inspiration to us.

Some researchers gave assistance far beyond their obligations or the call of friendship. We would like to make particular mention here of Alexandra Wiessler, archivist of the Wiener Library, London, for whom no task was too great; her wise counsel and scrupulous regard for accuracy prevailed on countless occasions. Also Tony Wells of the Wiener Library, and the Wiener Library itself; Robert Hodges, Major (ret.), U.S. Air Force, who gave so much of himself; and Annette Mills, who went out of her way to help in her spare time.

Dr. Günther Deschner, historian, of Munich, was an invaluable help in deciphering the more cryptic passages of Mengele's 5,000 pages of prose.

A very special acknowledgment, of course, is due to the survivors of Mengele's experiments, especially Eva Kor and Marc Berkowitz and their worldwide organization C.A.N.D.L.E.S. (Children of Auschwitz Nazi Deadly Lab Experiment Survivors). Many members of their group spent harrowing hours retelling their dreadful experiences when they would much rather have forgotten them. It should be said that the photographic memory of Marc Berkowitz, Mengele's camp messenger, was the actual inspiration for this book.

We would like to thank several former anonymous members of Israel's Central Institute for Intelligence and Special Missions who helped us compile what we know to be the most detailed account of the Mossad's role in the hunt for Josef Mengele.

Special thanks are certainly due to Brian Moser, producer-director for Central T.V., England, of the documentary "Mengele," for his generous contribution; and to Ray Fitzwalter, editor of "World in Action," Granada Television, England, who understood when events were at their most critical. The insight of Andrew Stephen and inborn optimism of Paul Greengrass were priceless assets too.

With apologies to those whom we may have inadvertently omitted, we list the following who were most active and instrumental in bringing this project to fruition:

Zvi Aharoni, London/ Wilfried Ahrens, Argnt, West Germany/
Dr. Pedro Alvarez, Encarnación, Paraguay/ Koby Behar, police

spokesman, Jerusalem/ Lutz Bergmann, publishing director, *Bunte*, Munich/ Lawrence Birns, director, Hemispheric Resources Council, Washington, D.C./ Jonathan Bush, general counsel, Holocaust Memorial Council, Washington, D.C./ Dr. Francisco Carmargo, *O'Estado do Parana*, Curitiba, Brazil/ Aaron Citinblum, archivist, *El Clarín*, Buenos Aires/ Cynthia Cohen, Buenos Aires

Martin A. Crowe, special agent, FBI, New York/ Dr. David Crown, Fairfax, Virginia/ Commodore Juan Carlos Cuadrado, Buenos Aires/ Elena S. Danielson, archivist, Hoover Institution, Stanford University, California/ Denny Debbaudt, Detroit/ Delegado Priamo Amaral, Santa Catarina, Brazil/ Delegation of Israeli Associations, Buenos Aires/ William G. Dolde, Esq., FBI, Miami/ Joel Filartiga, Asunción/ Francisco Cunha Pereira Filho, editor, *Gazete do Povo*, Curitiba, Brazil

Dr. Carlos F. Valerio Fo, forensic dentist, São Paulo/ Francis Grant, Inter-American Association for Democracy and Freedom, New York/ Paul D. Gray, assistant director of U.S. Military Records, St. Louis, Missouri/ Art Harris, *Washington Post*, Atlanta, Georgia/ Dr. Stanley Hilton, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge/ Lt. Col. Barry Hussey, Buenos Aires/ Jaime Jariton, Asunción/ Barbara Jentzch, German State Radio, Washington, D.C./ Jewish World Congress, Buenos Aires

Peter Jones, archivist, British Library, London/ Simon Jones, London/ William B. Jones, U.S. Department of Justice, Washington, D.C./ Mattis Kalir, Tel Aviv/ Gregory Katz, Gannett newspapers, Washington, D.C./ Ottmar Katz, Munich/ Beate and Serge Klarsfeld, Paris/ Dr. P. Kossack, Humboldt University, East Berlin/ Felix Kuballa, journalist, Cologne/ Hermann Langbein, Vienna

Carlos A. van Lerberghe, Buenos Aires/ Augusto Juan Lertora, Argentine deputy consul general, New York/ Malcolm Levene, London/ M. J. Levin, National Security Agency, Washington, D.C./ Robert A. Liff, Miami/ Dr. Carlos Perez Llanas, advisor to the minister of the interior, Buenos Aires/ John Loftus, Boston/ Bill Lowthar, Washington, D.C./ Federal Judge (ret.) Jorge Luque, Buenos Aires/ Eduard R. Malayan, first secretary of bilateral and cultural affairs, U.S.S.R. embassy, Washington, D.C./ Angelo Marfisi, New York

Mac Margolis, *Newsweek*, Rio de Janeiro/ Chaim Margolit, Tel Aviv/ David Marwell, historian, U.S. Department of Justice, Washington, D.C./ Sally Millwood, New York/ Jorge Mirkin, Buenos

Aires/ Lt. Col. sky, assistant to D.C./ Jorge O Powell, Immigration and Naturalization Service

Kirn Rattas, London Buenos Aires/ L. J. D.C./ Dr. Cesar Frankfurt/ Anords, Washington

Gad Shim Socolosky, Astover, National Washington, I managing editor David and E Tulian, Buenos Aires/ Dr. Alfredo Rona Weitz, Dr. Zdenek

In the preface Eckerman for a biography a to bring this contentious line Susan Mayer. Quinn, our sponsor the book. He the most difficult Pam Bernstein socialism and

This book practical help skills, friend insurmountable

Finally, a and Helena

spokesman, Jerusalem/ Lutz Bergmann, publishing director, *Bunte*, Munich/ Lawrence Birns, director, Hemispheric Resources Council, Washington, D.C./ Jonathan Bush, general counsel, Holocaust Memorial Council, Washington, D.C./ Dr. Francisco Carmargo, *O'Estado do Parana*, Curitiba, Brazil/ Aaron Citinblum, archivist, *El Clarín*, Buenos Aires/ Cynthia Cohen, Buenos Aires

Martin A. Crowe, special agent, FBI, New York/ Dr. David Crown, Fairfax, Virginia/ Commodore Juan Carlos Cuadrado, Buenos Aires/ Elena S. Danielson, archivist, Hoover Institution, Stanford University, California/ Denny Debbaudt, Detroit/ Delegado Priamo Amaral, Santa Catarina, Brazil/ Delegation of Israeli Associations, Buenos Aires/ William G. Dolde, Esq., FBI, Miami/ Joel Filartiga, Asunción/ Francisco Cunha Pereira Filho, editor, *Gazete do Povo*, Curitiba, Brazil

Dr. Carlos F. Valerio Fo, forensic dentist, São Paulo/ Francis Grant, Inter-American Association for Democracy and Freedom, New York/ Paul D. Gray, assistant director of U.S. Military Records, St. Louis, Missouri/ Art Harris, *Washington Post*, Atlanta, Georgia/ Dr. Stanley Hilton, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge/ Lt. Col. Barry Hussey, Buenos Aires/ Jaime Jariton, Asunción/ Barbara Jentzch, German State Radio, Washington, D.C./ Jewish World Congress, Buenos Aires

Peter Jones, archivist, British Library, London/ Simon Jones, London/ William B. Jones, U.S. Department of Justice, Washington, D.C./ Mattis Kalir, Tel Aviv/ Gregory Katz, Gannett newspapers, Washington, D.C./ Ottmar Katz, Munich/ Beate and Serge Klarsfeld, Paris/ Dr. P. Kossack, Humboldt University, East Berlin/ Felix Kuballa, journalist, Cologne/ Hermann Langbein, Vienna

Carlos A. van Lerberghe, Buenos Aires/ Augusto Juan Lertora, Argentine deputy consul general, New York/ Malcolm Levene, London/ M. J. Levin, National Security Agency, Washington, D.C./ Robert A. Liff, Miami/ Dr. Carlos Perez Llanas, advisor to the minister of the interior, Buenos Aires/ John Loftus, Boston/ Bill Lowthar, Washington, D.C./ Federal Judge (ret.) Jorge Luque, Buenos Aires/ Eduard R. Malayan, first secretary of bilateral and cultural affairs, U.S.S.R. embassy, Washington, D.C./ Angelo Marfisi, New York

Mac Margolis, *Newsweek*, Rio de Janeiro/ Chaim Margolit, Tel Aviv/ David Marwell, historian, U.S. Department of Justice, Washington, D.C./ Sally Millwood, New York/ Jorge Mirkin, Buenos

Aires/ Lt. Col. sky, assistant to D.C./ Jorge Or Powell, Immigr Martina Puzynational Justice a

Kirn Rattarseum, London/ nos Aires/ L. Je D.C./ Dr. Cesa Frankfurt/ Am ords, Washing geles/ Gavin S

Gad Shim Socolosky, As Stover, Natio Washington, D managing edit David and Er Tulian, Buenc Dr. Alfredo V Rona Weitz, / Dr. Zdenek Z

In the pur Eckerman for a biography al to bring this entious line c Susan Mayer, Quinn, our se the book. He the most diffi Pam Bernstei sionalism and

This boo practical help skills, friends insurmountal

Finally, a and Helena V

publishing director, *Bunte*,
Spheric Resources Council,
General counsel, Holocaust
Dr. Francisco Carmargo,
Leon Citinblum, archivist, *El*
Buenos Aires

FBI, New York/ Dr. David
Juan Carlos Cuadrado, Bue-
t, Hoover Institution, Stan-
ebbaudt, Detroit/ Delegado
/ Delegation of Israeli As-
solde, Esq., FBI, Miami/ Joel
Pereira Filho, editor, *Gazete*

dentist, São Paulo/ Francis
or Democracy and Freedom,
irector of U.S. Military Rec-
is, *Washington Post*, Atlanta,
State University, Baton Rouge/
Jaime Jariton, Asunción/ Bar-
ashington, D.C./ Jewish World

ibrary, London/ Simon Jones,
rtment of Justice, Washington,
ry Katz, Gannett newspapers,
unich/ Beate and Serge Klars-
dt University, East Berlin/ Felix
ann Langbein, Vienna
os Aires/ Augusto Juan Lertora,
New York/ Malcolm Levene,
rity Agency, Washington, D.C./
s Perez Llanas, advisor to the
ires/ John Loftus, Boston/ Bill
al Judge (ret.) Jorge Luque, Bue-
secretary of bilateral and cultural
gton, D.C./ Angelo Marfisi, New

de Janeiro/ Chaim Margolit, Tel
.S. Department of Justice, Wash-
ew York/ Jorge Mirkin, Buenos

Aires/ Lt. Col. (ret.) William Orbello, Austin, Texas/ V. Orechov-
sky, assistant to the military attaché, U.S.S.R. embassy, Washington,
D.C./ Jorge Ortiz, New York/ Christina Patel, London/ Russel A.
Powell, Immigration and Naturalization Service, Washington, D.C./
Martina Puzyna, London/ Thomas E. Quigley, Office of Interna-
tional Justice and Peace, Washington, D.C.

Kirn Rattan, London/ Philip Reed, archivist, Imperial War Mu-
seum, London/ Dr. Klaus Richter, New York/ Ricardo Rivas, Bue-
nos Aires/ L. Jeffrey Ross, U.S. Department of Justice, Washington,
D.C./ Dr. Cesar Augusto Sanabria, Asunción/ Juergen J. Schillinger,
Frankfurt/ Amy K. Schmidt, Modern Military Field Branch Rec-
ords, Washington, D.C./ Richard A. Schussler, Esq., FBI, Los An-
geles/ Gavin Scott, *Time*, Rio de Janeiro

Gad Shimron, Tel Aviv/ Paul Silveira, Miami/ Dr. Benjamin
Socolosky, Asunción/ Dr. Norman Stone, Oxford University/ Eric
Stover, National Endowment for the Advancement of Science,
Washington, D.C./ Patrick Swaffer, London/ Hans-Hermann Tiedge,
managing editor, *Bunte*, Munich/ Jacobo Timmerman, Buenos Aires/
David and Enriqueta Trachter, Buenos Aires/ Dr. Horacio Luis
Tulian, Buenos Aires/ Ambassador (ret.) Benjamin Varon, Boston/
Dr. Alfredo Viamoso, Foz de Iguacu, Brazil/ Esa Webb, London/
Rona Weitz, Amnesty International, New York/ Albert Zarca, Paris/
Dr. Zdenek Zofka, historian, Munich.

In the pursuit of this project, a special acknowledgment to Joan
Eckerman for her unfailing receptiveness to the original concept of
a biography about Josef Mengele. Her enthusiasm and work helped
to bring this book to fruition. To Katherine Ness, whose consci-
entious line editing repeatedly saved us from serious errors. To
Susan Mayer, for kind support and devotion to the project. To Tom
Quinn, our senior editor, for his valuable criticisms of the drafts of
the book. He provided reassurance and encouragement through
the most difficult of times, and his judgment was always impeccable.
Pam Bernstein, the literary agent for this project, provided a profes-
sionalism and drive which assisted us at all stages.

This book would not have been possible without the constant
practical help and indomitable optimism of Joseph Ferrara, Esq. His
skills, friendship, and incredible patience lifted us over apparently
insurmountable obstacles.

Finally, and most important, we thank our wives, Trisha Posner
and Helena Ware, who have lived with Josef Mengele for five years,

and whose support and positive attitudes contributed to and are a part of every aspect of this book. It was they who stayed the course, especially during the hectic summer of 1985. It was they who deserve the ultimate credit for this record being written.

no indication a
identification of
client(s) in attempt
to see Mengele family
and German
government

see xviii

Barkovitz xviii

of
the
re
of
the
er
or
sc
luc

cce
iari
rro
feng
aor
hildt
usct
neir
• Co
ided
ho st
oney,
• Un
lengel

P

Josef Mengele has become a version of medicine in purring smile and soft but deadly of Death." The barbarity of the issue is how he escaped

As a fugitive, Mengele was involved in experiments on Indian dictators, and to have been portrayed as a ruthless provider of armed guards and a score of impenetrable fortifications. In this legend, the only clue to his whereabouts was provided by Israeli agents and independent investigators who picked up on the banks of the

These apparently spurious legends on myths about Mengele are more than 5,000 pages of diary entries, unique and unrestricted unpublished photographs, Mengele papers included within weeks of his death. The autobiography that Mengele omits any discussion of

s contributed to and are a
ney who stayed the course,
1985. It was they who de-
being written.

Preface

Josef Mengele has become the symbol of the Third Reich's perversion of medicine in pursuit of racist scientific theories. His mocking smile and soft but deadly touch earned him the title "The Angel of Death." The barbarity of his crime is not in doubt. What is still at issue is how he escaped justice.

As a fugitive, Mengele was variously rumored to be involved in experiments on Indian tribes in South America, to have the ear of dictators, and to have had numerous brushes with death. He was portrayed as a ruthless power broker who could call upon the services of armed guards and killer dogs, and who moved among a score of impenetrable fortresses deep in the jungle. According to this legend, the only clue to his whereabouts was a trail of dead Israeli agents and independent Nazi-hunters whose corpses washed up on the banks of the Parana River.

These apparently superhuman powers of evasion were based on myths about Mengele's postwar life and are disproved by more than 5,000 pages of diaries and letters that he wrote. We have had unique and unrestricted access to them as well as to previously unpublished photographs, some of which appear in this book. The Mengele papers include a diary that he kept from May 1960 to within weeks of his death. There are also many extracts from an autobiography that Mengele started during the 1960s, but which omits any discussion of both Auschwitz and a ten-year period in

Argentina from 1949 to 1959. We believe that Mengele never wrote about Auschwitz, fearing that any record of it might help identify him. We can offer no rational explanation for the absence of any account of the 1950s. His son, Rolf, has never seen any writing by his father about this period and does not believe that any exists. We also have several hundred pages of letters that Mengele sent to his family and friends in Germany, and their replies, from 1973 on. (Letters written before 1973 were destroyed by the Mengele family.)

Our comprehensive study of Mengele's own thoughts, together with the unique accounts given to us by members of his family and friends, betrays a perverse pride in what he did at Auschwitz. It is the evidence of his unqualified lack of remorse that is so astounding. This is not, however, just a study in the banality of Mengele's evil. We have focused on Mengele's charmed escape from the Allies and on how he managed to successfully stay on the run for thirty-five years.

This book is an attempt to separate fantasy from reality. It is a straightforward chronicle of Josef Mengele's life, from his silver-spoon childhood in Bavaria to his pauper's grave in Brazil sixty-eight years later. We examine the efforts, and the lack of them, to bring him to trial. We think we have provided many answers to what we regard as the most important question of all: Why was he never caught?

This endeavor is the result of a joint enterprise. John Ware, a television producer, became involved in the Mengele case in 1977 when he prepared a documentary for the "World in Action" program of England's Granada Television. Gerald Posner, a lawyer, was drawn to the case in 1981 during his pro bono legal effort to obtain compensation for the surviving twins who had been subjects of Mengele's experiments. Ware and Posner joined forces in 1984, a partnership that flourished despite the transatlantic separation.

Our conclusion is a simple one, written more in despair than in anger. It is not just that Mengele was not punished for his crimes. He did serve a sentence of sorts, biding his time in a succession of seedy South American hideouts—a nasty old man consumed with self-pity, lonely, even bitter with his family who shielded him so effectively. Nor is it just that a chance was missed to confront the

powerful Mengele family, I
of the civilized world. The
pursue Mengele when he w
many, Israel, and the Unite
Paraguay, and Brazil—robb
mind of a man who was the

face

to believe that Mengele never wrote a record of it might help identify a explanation for the absence of any ac-; has never seen any writing by his es not believe that any exists. We s of letters that Mengele sent to any, and their replies, from 1973 3 were destroyed by the Mengele

Mengele's own thoughts, together to us by members of his family and e in what he did at Auschwitz. It is ck of remorse that is so astounding. y in the banality of Mengele's evil. harmed escape from the Allies and fully stay on the run for thirty-five

separate fantasy from reality. It is a self Mengele's life, from his silver- his pauper's grave in Brazil sixty- he efforts, and the lack of them, to ve have provided many answers to portant question of all: Why was he

of a joint enterprise. John Ware, a volved in the Mengele case in 1977 ntary for the "World in Action" da Television. Gerald Posner, a in 1981 during his pro bono legal or the surviving twins who had been ents. Ware and Posner joined forces ourished despite the transatlantic

one, written more in despair than gele was not punished for his crimes. s, biding his time in a succession of s—a nasty old man consumed with ith his family who shielded him so chance was missed to confront the

powerful Mengele family, living in dynastic isolation from the rest of the civilized world. The real travesty is that by their failure to pursue Mengele when he was alive, the governments of West Germany, Israel, and the United States—as well as those of Argentina, Paraguay, and Brazil—robbed the world of a chance to explore the mind of a man who was the very personification of evil.

ced laborers were
ons of the Jews.⁶

for inmates, life for
l the camp—partici-
as “special actions,”
—was tolerably com-
extra rations: ten cig-
and four ounces of
Mengele, the rewards
Auschwitz colleagues,
e devoted only a few
” he recalled in detail
ood served up by chefs
were particularly mem-

tomato soup, one half
nd magnificent vanilla
nded another special
eceived most welcome
ed from my wife from
is the physician at the
execution by shooting
nd 2 cakes of soap . . .
1 Berlin. *Sept. 20*: This
'till 6 p.m. to a concert
e; the bandmaster was
Eighty musicians. Roast
was present at the 6th
the evening, supper in
y festive meal. We had
offee, excellent beer and

e were preserved by camp
wife and five children in a

up at Drancy, France, to Auschwitz.
admitted to the camp as prisoners.

Drancy, France, were gassed after

white stucco house surrounded by a white picket fence. The garden that circled the house was filled with red hedges and begonias in blue flower boxes. It was, as Hoess recalled, an idyllic setting for his camp home:

Every wish that my wife or children expressed was granted them. The children could live a free and untrammelled life. My wife's garden was a paradise of flowers. . . . The children were . . . particularly fond of the ones [prisoners] who worked on the garden.

My whole family displayed an intense love of agriculture and particularly for animals of all sorts. Every Sunday, I had to walk them all across the fields and visit the stables, and we might never miss out on the kennels where the dogs were kept. Our two horses and the foal were especially beloved.

The children always kept animals in the garden, creatures the prisoners were forever bringing them. Tortoises, martens, cats, lizards: there was always something new and interesting to be seen there. In summer they splashed in the paddling pool in the garden or in the Sola [river]. But their greatest joy was when daddy bathed with them. He had, however, so little time for all these childish pleasures.⁸

It was this attempt to maintain a normal life in the midst of extraordinary cruelty and inhumanity that made Auschwitz a place out of Dante's *Inferno*. At times Auschwitz resembled the theater of the absurd. There were even traffic regulations in the camp, and red and green traffic lights. Infractions brought an investigation by the SS traffic court, as Mengele himself discovered a month after his arrival when he hit an SS armaments truck while speeding on his motorcycle toward Birkenau. * Mengele was “injured† and parts of his uniform as well as the motorcycle were damaged,” but the

* Auschwitz was originally a military barracks for the Polish army. Himmler built another camp nearby at Birkenau in 1941. Thereafter it was known as Auschwitz-Birkenau.

† During the forensic examination in Brazil in June 1985, the doctors determined that the skeleton had suffered a hip fracture which was compatible with the type of fracture that could result from a motorcycle accident. Simon Wiesenthal, the Vienna-based Nazi-hunter, speculated that Mengele's Auschwitz accident might have caused a broken hip. The SS files, normally meticulous in reporting details of accidents, omit any mention of this. Irene Mengele does not recall her husband ever talking about a broken hip. The injury discovered in the 1985 examination must therefore have resulted from a postwar accident which none of Mengele's friends know about.

it was clear from the few scraps they had that the Auschwitz doctor was leading a wholly different lifestyle than that of his murderous counterpart. Mengele lived under his own name (Eichmann used a pseudonym); Mengele's wife, Martha, was in the telephone book (although at an old address); the Israelis even had some details of Mengele's business activities. One complication, however, threatened to torpedo both operations. Late in 1959 newspaper stories on Eichmann and Mengele began to appear. Ben-Gurion was asked in the Israeli parliament what steps were being taken to bring Eichmann to trial. Fearing that publicity might alert both men, who knew each other, Harel encouraged false press speculation that Eichmann had been seen in Kuwait.

One of the few men outside Israel who knew the truth was Dr. Fritz Bauer, public prosecutor for the state of Hesse in West Germany. In September 1957 he had sent word to the Israelis that Eichmann had been traced.* The message to Jerusalem was dispatched in the strictest secrecy. Only he and the prime minister for Hesse, August Zinn, were privy to the information. Harel agreed with Bauer that the Bonn government was most unlikely to deal with Eichmann. "Bauer told me that no one else knew," said Harel. "He said that he didn't trust the [German] foreign office and he didn't trust his embassy in Buenos Aires. He said we were the only people who could be relied upon to do anything with the information."⁵

Aside from the fact that the West German ambassador in Buenos Aires was Werner Junkers, a wartime foreign office Nazi functionary, Bauer had one other reason for deeply mistrusting his own countrymen: he had been jailed twice by the Nazis, both before and during the war, because he was a Jew. Twice he managed to escape, the second time to Sweden, and on his return vowed he would do all he could to bring men like Mengele and Eichmann to trial.

The source of Bauer's information on Eichmann was a series of letters from a German Jew named Lothar Hermann, who lived in the remote Argentine town of Coronel Suárez. Harel sent agents out to meet Hermann, and at first he did not impress them as a credible witness. For one thing, he was blind, a condition that did not

* Nazi-hunters Simon Wiesenthal and Tuvia Friedman have variously claimed credit for pinpointing Eichmann, much to Harel's irritation.

seem to let the Israeli daughter, a young G Eichmann.

As the to the girl war and re the Jews. I the son of in the Ar/ them in th ported the Street, in vined the in fact Eic sumed wi the same Schmidt's Israeli age Eichmann bious clai was nothin in his pri men, ever the hunt Harel exp

Th ably . . . contac

Yet F of judge Eichmann Austrian of Operat

* His r other sons, used an alia

CHAPTER

9

The Man in the
Watchtower

Mengele's Brazilian savior, Wolfgang Gerhard, was as fanatical a Nazi as they come. Each Christmas he adorned his tree with a swastika. "You always have to take good care of swastikas," he used to say. He told friends he dreamed of "putting a steel cable to the leg of Simon Wiesenthal [the Vienna-based Nazi-hunter] and dragging him to death behind my car." His Brazilian-born wife, Ruth, was just as unhinged. She once gave her landlady two bars of soap, in their original 1943 wrappers, made from the corpses of Auschwitz inmates.¹

After his wartime service as a Hitler Youth leader in Graz, Austria, Gerhard remained a Fascist for the rest of his life. He even christened his son "Adolf." "Wolfgang made no bones about being 150 percent Nazi," a former workmate recalled. In Brazil he was vague about what he did, having variously owned a small textile printing plant and worked in a publicity agency and as a welder. But what made Gerhard useful to Mengele was that he dabbled in real estate.

As a small-time property owner, Gerhard knew people with farms and estates that were far off the beaten track, ideal for a man like Mengele, now desperately seeking a Brazilian sanctuary. Gerhard had been introduced to Mengele in Paraguay, through Hans Rudel, the Luftwaffe ace. Rudel asked Gerhard to help his friend find a new refuge in Brazil and Gerhard jumped at the opportunity. Too young to have played an important role during the war, Ger-

lived in Palestine. She was Norit Eldad, an attractive, blonde, middle-aged woman, born in Frankfurt. She was reported missing in March 1960, only two months before the Eichmann kidnapping, after she went for a walk on the footpath of Cerro Catedral, the tallest mountain in the region. The leader of the search team, Professor Esquerro, president of the local ski club, was quoted as saying that when the body was finally found, he "immediately thought it was a strange place for a hiker to have a fatal accident. If it was a natural death, fate had done an excellent job in hiding the body from view." The body was deep in a crevasse, the result of an accidental fall from a precipice. Perhaps the "Angel of Death" had showed his hand? A simple spelling mistake in the hotel register had listed Norit Eldad as "Eldoc." Investigators mistook the error to be the pseudonym of an Israeli agent. The theory certainly appealed to local police inspector Victor Gatica, who said:

The apparent motive now is that she was searching for Josef Mengele, the Nazi doctor. Now it is considered that Dr. Mengele may have been staying in Bariloche.¹⁸

No one proved that Mengele had stayed there. But neither could they prove that he had not. Thus Mengele was reported as having accompanied Norit Eldad on her fatal walk. They had become lovers, according to the story, she with the purpose of setting him up for an ambush by a team of Israeli hit men waiting in a nearby hotel. A false-bottomed suitcase had been found by Mengele's bodyguards while the couple were out; they had rushed out to tell Mengele; she was pushed over a precipice; Mengele had fled town. Now everything fit. The South American newspapers banner-headlined this news of Mengele's mountaintop encounter with an Israeli assassin.

On March 21, 1961, the Israeli embassy in Buenos Aires vainly tried to convince the newspapers that Norit Eldad was not a Mossad agent, saying she was known as a "timid and nervous person. Certainly it is not possible that she was an agent involved in a mission as difficult as finding Mengele." But after the cloak-and-dagger kidnapping of Eichmann, no one believed the Israelis. And when Simon Wiesenthal published his book, *The Murderers Among Us*, in 1967, claiming that Miss Eldad had been in a concentration camp, the story was accepted as fact. Wiesenthal even added one more touch

ow
its
red
ght
nch
was
CIA
fato
ures
ries.
doc-
Para-
They
emi-
reme
aging

ay
n.
ay
er-
out
en,

engele,
wealthy;
i secret
vidence
: resort
y fallen
ot have
im, but

limbing
ad once

of drama: Miss Eldad had been sterilized by Mengele, who recognized her while she was staying at the hotel. He had spotted her camp tattoo at a hotel dinner dance and had her killed because he feared she would betray him. Here was the genesis of *Marathon Man* and *The Boys from Brazil*.

The real hunt was a lot more hit-and-miss than that. Early in March 1961, the Argentine police followed up a tip from the West German embassy, a letter from a Señora Silvia Caballero de Costa. It claimed that Mengele was living under a false name and was engaged to a wealthy young woman in Santiago del Estero, the northern provincial capital of Argentina. Interviewed by the police, Señora de Costa proved to be illiterate; she could not possibly have been the author of the mysterious letter. The author was soon revealed to be a wealthy merchant whose only daughter was engaged to a man he was convinced was Mengele because he claimed to be a German doctor. The fiancé turned out to be a New York con man, Willy Delaney, twenty-five years older than Mengele, without the slightest resemblance to him, and with prior convictions for assault, bribery, and practicing medicine illegally.¹⁹

The Delaney case was followed by numerous press reports that the Mossad was back on Mengele's trail. The most spectacular, in the London *Sunday Dispatch*, quoted "reliable sources" who claimed that the Israelis had been given orders to "liquidate Mengele before the start of the Adolf Eichmann trial," scheduled to start on April 11. One of the five Mossad agents, code-named "David," had been relentlessly tracking Mengele for two years according to this story.

That same day another report came thundering over the wire services from Hamburg, where a German businessman, Peter Sosna, said he was sure he had met Mengele on a recent trip to Brazil. Sosna said that while he was in the Mato Grosso, in the town of Corumbá, a group of unidentified Germans introduced him to a doctor. Sosna reported that the doctor had Indian bodyguards and the meeting was held in great secrecy. On his return to Hamburg, Sosna went straight to the German prosecutor's office and after being shown photographs of Mengele, positively identified him as the man he had seen. Much credibility was given to the sighting. Sosna worked for a marine chandler supply company and seemed a reliable witness. The idea of Mengele living in a vast, virtually unexplored rain forest the size of Texas added a touch of drama to

But the Klarsfelds were not the only casualties of the discovery of the grave at Embu. Simon Wiesenthal, who often claimed to have been a breathless few paces behind Mengele, had also been "one hundred percent sure" he was hiding in Paraguay. For those who have wondered at Wiesenthal's elevation to a kind of international Sherlock Holmes, his charge was typically absolute. For the Klarsfelds, whose real successes as self-appointed Nazi-hunters are no idle boast, their certitude in this case was an untimely lapse. How, then, did Paraguay endure as part of the Mengele myth? The Klarsfelds and Wiesenthal alone cannot be blamed. They were just part of a stream of bounty hunters and journalists, the authors included, who were certain that somewhere in the darker recesses of the Paraguayan jungle lurked the "Angel of Death."

President Stroessner himself carries a share of the guilt for a wound to his country's reputation that was largely self-inflicted. As Beate Klarsfeld pointed out, "If Mengele left, the police must know it; it must be in their files." Stroessner tried to persuade the world that Mengele had left in 1961 or 1962. Not once did he or his police attempt to find out exactly where Mengele had gone. That his government could have done so through Hans Rudel or Alban Krug is not in doubt. The real question is why no one believed Paraguay's claim that their most infamous citizen had flown.

The myth was based on fact. Josef Mengele *had* been in Paraguay, and as the West German chargé d'affaires, Peter Bensch, discovered in 1961, he had become a citizen. Thereafter, the onus was on the government of Paraguay to prove that he was no longer there. It was largely the diplomatic skirmishes between the West Germans and the Paraguayans, and their failure to resolve the mystery of Mengele's whereabouts, that allowed fiction to develop out of fact.

Certainly for most of the 1960s and much of the 1970s, the West German government led everyone to believe that Mengele was likely to be in Paraguay.* As early as 1963, West German

* Indisputably, most amateur hunters looked in Paraguay most of the time. But there was police activity in neighboring countries too. In 1964 the Argentine federal police burst into a jungle compound in the north of the country and arrested an eccentric seventy-one-year-old Hungarian doctor on suspicion that he was Mengele. In Brazil, press reports circulated that an Israeli agent close on Mengele's heels had been killed. And in Rio de Janeiro, a former Auschwitz inmate fainted when she saw a man she thought was Mengele. Nonetheless, Paraguay continued to be the focus of the hunt.

secret po-
of Para-
you say
aimed in
ourt that
a century
out. Mrs.
ng oppo-
l to move
ent asked
g dictator
ado party.
lleged by
z, and the
back her
of "making
she says he
ly respond,
be."¹

Josef Men-
ib, his skull
e was Embu,
d miles east

could be no clearer message that Bonn believed Mengele to be hiding with presidential blessing. Bucher told the Haifa Nazi Crimes Documentation Center that his government could never contemplate such action, but perhaps the Israelis should. Behind Bucher's remark lay an undeniable truth. Again and again, the record showed that information trickling through to Bonn was out of date and poorly researched. It was a deficiency that could be remedied by a full-time team of agents, such as the Israelis had deployed in the early 1960s and then abandoned.

But the Germans did not seriously consider extralegal methods of bringing Mengele to justice. Instead they pursued the case within the confines of their legal system. In an effort to make a breakthrough, the West German prosecutors applied to the courts for a search warrant to inspect the house of Hans Sedlmeier, Mengele's longtime friend and family company executive. Fritz Bauer was convinced that if anyone in Germany maintained contact with the fugitive doctor, it was Sedlmeier. Simon Wiesenthal was also convinced that Sedlmeier was a key figure in the Mengele case, and he informed the German prosecutors of his suspicion in a 1964 letter. Their hunches were right. Not only was Sedlmeier the family courier for South American visits to Mengele, but he was also the "post office" for receipt of dozens of Mengele letters. However, when West German police agents burst into Sedlmeier's home in mid-1964, they did not find one scrap of incriminating evidence.* According to Rolf Mengele, unknown to Fritz Bauer and the federal police, Sedlmeier had a high-ranking contact in the local police who warned him of the impending raid. Sedlmeier received a telephone call from his police friend and was told: "We are coming to search your house, make sure we do not find anything." Sedlmeier had plenty of time to ensure that all relevant documents were removed. If there had not been police collusion with Sedlmeier, the Mengele case might very well have been over in 1964, and Mengele would have joined the ranks of defendants at the Frankfurt trial.

The abortive raid on Sedlmeier's house was not publicly disclosed. Yet the Mengele case continued to maintain a high profile

* On May 31, 1985, West German federal police raided Sedlmeier's house and discovered letters from Mengele, which led directly to the South American protectors and the grave in Brazil. According to Rolf, the 1985 raid was successful because not only had Sedlmeier's local police contact retired but the Mengele case had gone so high in the federal government hierarchy that the local police could no longer interfere.

C H A P T E R

12

“I’ve Seen Mengele”

Josef Mengele was a regular visitor to the best restaurants in Asunción, the Paraguayan capital. Naturally, he also visited the German Club—his black Mercedes 280SL regally sweeping up and armed guards jumping out, anxiously surveying the scene. One evening he made a spectacle of himself by slamming his pistol on the bar.¹

To most people the source for this colorful story was a credible one. It was Simon Wiesenthal, the Nazi-hunter from Vienna, a familiar figure on TV screens. The evidence had come from his network of informants who were said to be scattered around the globe.

Wiesenthal would often claim that his informants had “seen” Mengele. Sometimes they had “just missed” Mengele. One of the closest shaves, according to Wiesenthal, had occurred in the summer of 1960, when Mengele was seeking refuge in Egypt. Concerned for his international image, President Nasser barred Mengele’s entry, and the doctor was taken by a former SS *Obersturmführer* Schrawz on a chartered yacht, together with his wife, Martha, to the tiny Greek island of Kythnos. “I was about to leave for Jerusalem to attend the Eichmann trial,” Wiesenthal wrote in his book about his sleuthing exploits:^{*}

^{*} *The Murderers Among Us* (London: Heinemann, 1967).

If I notified the Greek authorities through international channels, several weeks would be lost. This time, as I often had in the past, I chose a non-routine approach. I called up the editor of a large illustrated magazine in Germany with whom I had cooperated before. The magazine wanted the story. I wanted the man.²

Two days later, said Wiesenthal, a reporter from the magazine arrived by boat and was told by the owner of the island's only inn that a "German and his wife left yesterday. A white yacht came into the harbor. The German and his wife went aboard and the yacht left again, heading west."³ The reporter showed the owner a batch of photographs. "Without hesitation, the innkeeper picked a picture of Mengele. Two monks who happened to come in also agreed that this man had been there only yesterday.

"We had lost another round."

Wiesenthal did hire a magazine reporter. His name was Ottmar Katz. But according to Katz, the rest of Wiesenthal's story was fiction from beginning to end:

I got the OK from my editor after Wiesenthal asked us by letter to check. Not a single detail in the letter was correct. I spent four or five days on Kythnos. Mengele was certainly not there. There was no monastery. I spent two days with the local justice of the peace, who was strongly anti-Nazi, and we inspected the register of the only hotel, and the only name we thought that was worth checking we discovered belonged to a Munich school-teacher. I did explain to Wiesenthal that it was all wrong and then seven years later I read his book and he said we'd missed Mengele by a few hours.⁴

In 1967 Wiesenthal claimed to have traced Mengele's movements "quite exactly." At various times he boasted of tracking him to Peru, to Chile, to Brazil, to military installations in Paraguay, always a few paces behind. Mengele was a "millionaire," a "doctor"; he was "surrounded by comforts . . . moreover he lives very close to where Martin Bormann lives." In 1978 a typical Wiesenthal bulletin on his hunt for Mengele read:

Mengele is living in Paraguay, where he is protected by the local junta, which is dominated by ethnic Germans. Mengele is

s in Asun-
e German
and armed
ie evening
n the bar.¹
; a credible
Vienna, a
e from his
around the

had "seen"
One of the
the summer
Concerned
engele's entry,
rter Schrawz
, to the tiny
Jerusalem to
ok about his

Number One on our wanted list. Although his observation in Paraguay and the monitoring of his occasional trips abroad has cost us a lot of money, we have continued our activities against this arch criminal through 1977 and will continue to do so in the future.⁵

The extraordinary thing is that the myth of Wiesenthal's hunt remained intact even after Mengele's body was discovered. He told reporters that it was he who had tipped off the West Germans and persuaded them to raid the Günzburg home of Hans Sedlmeier, where coded letters giving Mengele's Brazilian address were found. In fact, the breakthrough came from a university professor in whom Sedlmeier had confided his relationship with Mengele. The few—like Benjamin Varon, former Israeli ambassador to Paraguay—who dared to challenge Wiesenthal's role as the world's preeminent Nazi-hunter have been savaged by his supporters at the influential Simon Wiesenthal Center in Los Angeles. Gerald Margolis and Martin Mendelsohn, counsel to the Wiesenthal Center, complained about this statement by Varon:

He [Mengele] would be a prize catch for any Nazi-hunter. But no one has specialized in him. Simon Wiesenthal makes periodic statements that he is about to catch him, perhaps since Wiesenthal must raise funds for his activities and the name Mengele is always good for a plug.⁶

Varon's observations drew an intemperate blast from Messrs. Margolis and Mendelsohn:

To denigrate Wiesenthal's efforts, as Varon does, is to defame a man who has successfully brought to justice 1,100 Nazi war criminals; a man who embarked on his sacred mission in 1945, unlike some recent arrivals who have embarked with much passion and fury and scant results in the 1980s.⁷

Varon's response to them went to the very heart of the matter: money.

Sometimes in the seventies Wiesenthal confided to me in Boston that it was not at all easy to keep his outfit in Vienna going. [There was as yet none in Los Angeles.] He said that his

lectur
went i
for sev
ings in
where
a year
leadin
"even
of the
aware
And l
is abo
which
induc
who v
catchi

Marg
profoun
Holocau
in vain."
pursuing
placed to
essential
senthal's
and a kn
his cred
Mengele
mation,
confirma
apparent

Wha
his succe
ernment
One mu
that role
when fe
self-imag
and sinis
full-leng
The Boys
part in k

lecture fees and the contributions of some 17,000 Dutch Gentiles went into it. I recounted in my article that Wiesenthal maintained for several years a steady flow of statements about Mengele sightings in different countries. He said in 1980: "Now I cannot say where he is, but . . . I am much closer to catching him than I was a year ago." In 1982 he offered a \$100,000 reward for information leading to Mengele's arrest and claimed that because of the reward "even his bodyguards would sell him out." It is 1984, and none of these predictions have come true. Wiesenthal must be fully aware that just finding Mengele does not equal "catching" him. And how opportune is it to warn him every few months that he is about to be "caught"? On the other hand an award of \$100,000, which is in no danger of ever having to be paid out, is subtle inducement for contributing to the Simon Wiesenthal Center: who wouldn't gladly part with some money for the prospect of catching a genocidal monster?⁸

Margolis and Mendelsohn accused Varon of "profaning what is profound and trivializing the Holocaust"; Varon replied that the Holocaust was "no one's private property and should not be invoked in vain." It was an unseemly row, provoked by a man who avoided pursuing Mengele leads in South America while he was uniquely placed to do so as the Israeli ambassador. But Varon had raised an essential truth. As a survivor of several concentration camps, Wiesenthal's sincerity was never in doubt. It was financial constraints and a knack of playing to the gallery that ultimately compromised his credibility. The truth is that for many years Wiesenthal's Mengele file at his Vienna office had been a potpourri of information, which as the *London Times* said, "only sustained his self-confirmatory myths and gave scant satisfaction to those who apparently needed a definite answer to Mengele's fate."⁹

What no one can take from Wiesenthal is his missionary zeal, his success in ensuring that many people and some reluctant governments pursued Nazis when they would have preferred to forget. One must ask: if not Wiesenthal, who else would have performed that role? He really was the public conscience of the Holocaust when few others seemed to care. It was largely on Wiesenthal's self-image of a tireless, dogged sleuth, pitted against the omnipotent and sinister might of Mengele and a vast Nazi network, that two full-length Hollywood films were made. Both *Marathon Man* and *The Boys from Brazil* were box-office hits. They played an important part in keeping Mengele at the forefront of the public's mind, an

1
s
t
e

hunt
e told
is and
neier,
ound.
whom
few—
—who
Nazi-
Simon
Martin
about

ter.
pe-
nce
len-

Messrs.

fame
i war
1945,
ssion

e matter:

me in
/ienna
hat his

easily identifiable symbol of the Allies' betrayed pledge to pursue Nazis wherever they fled. But these movies also created a mood of despair: Mengele was simply too powerful, he was too clever, he was "bionic," he would never be caught. And yet . . . he was here, he was there, he was everywhere, said Wiesenthal. He had been seen: he really could be found.

Wiesenthal's information was right on target sometimes, as when he pinpointed Hans Sedlmeier as a key figure in the Mengele conspiracy, as early as 1964. But often Wiesenthal's pronouncements raised the public's expectations, only to dash their hopes each time. But he was not alone. Beate and Serge Klarsfeld, in Paris, once claimed that Mengele was within their grasp. Tuvia Friedman, in Haifa, said his network of informants "provided definite and precise information by which to identify him [Mengele]."^{10*}

And there were many others, quite independent of the full-time Nazi-hunters, who claimed to have seen Mengele. They seem to fall into three categories. The first consists of those people who were thirsting for what American artist Andy Warhol once called "the fifteen minutes of fame to which everyone is entitled in their lives." The second category was made up of Fascists who got a sick satisfaction from disseminating false information to throw legitimate hunters off the track. This role was best exemplified by Wolfram Bossert, Mengele's protector in Brazil for the last four years of his life. When Bossert wrote to the Günzburg clan informing them of Mengele's death in 1979, he suggested that it should not be announced so that "the opposing side waste time and money." The third category of Mengele "witnesses" were those who reported in all good faith that they had caught a glimpse of the world's most elusive Nazi criminal.

Sonia Tauber, a survivor from Auschwitz-Birkenau, was a witness whose sincerity was not in doubt. She claimed she saw Mengele in April 1965, when he walked into her jewelry shop in the Casa Inolvidable in Asunción. She said she was paralyzed when she realized that the customer browsing through her showcase diamonds was the man who had spared her life with one flick of his thumb.

* Both Wiesenthal and Friedman claim to have found Adolf Eichmann. Wiesenthal says he proved that Eichmann was still alive; Friedman says that Eichmann's first words to his Israeli kidnappers were: "Which of you is Friedman?" Isser Harel, chief of the Mossad team that captured Eichmann, denies that either Nazi-hunter played any role in finding Eichmann.

Her husband s
stammered: "M

Even before
bassador Varon

I was not
to be receive
mysterious, I
find Dr. Men
man had met
He assured I
able to see ju
where behin
and took his

Any tem
pelled as soo
week passed
Mengele's w
and educated
and no matt
two tips I r
seemed ubiq
an army doc

Another wi
Orbello, a U.S.
embassy in Asu
Hotel in 1969, t
out Mengele:

My Parag
pearance we:
He told me
that it was M
word.¹³

Sightings lik
witnesses who
certainly they h
to his family de
1970s. The ove

venture into Paraguay after late 1960. None of the Mengele sightings reported over the years coincides with a place and time where Mengele is now known to have been. Such sightings, although well-intentioned, mainly served to pinpoint Paraguay, the wrong country, as Mengele's refuge.

Unlike those witnesses who genuinely thought they had seen Mengele, there were many others whose reports served to perpetuate the Wiesenthal fantasy of a fugitive who was armed, dangerous, and wielded presidential power. One imaginative example followed the violent death, in February 1965, of another Nazi on the run in South America, Herbert Cukurs. Cukurs had been a notoriously cruel SS officer, who supervised massacres at the Riga concentration camp from horseback. His battered body was found in a derelict house in Montevideo, Uruguay. He had been savagely bludgeoned to death by a group claiming to be Jewish avengers, as a cable from Bonn to a Montevideo newspaper announced:

Herbert Cukurs, the executioner of thousands of Jews in Riga, was murdered two days ago in Uruguay by THOSE WHO CANNOT FORGET. His body lies in a trunk in an abandoned house in Colombia Street near Carrasco.¹⁴

The Brazilian police became involved in the investigation because Cukurs had traveled to Montevideo from his home in São Paulo shortly before his death. At first they speculated that Cukurs may have been murdered by a group of fellow Nazi fugitives, whom Cukurs, having financial troubles, was preparing to sell out for a reward. But the police soon ruled this out when evidence of Jewish involvement came to light. However, years later, nationally syndicated Washington columnist Jack Anderson resurrected the Nazi reward story. Anderson claimed the fugitive Cukurs was about to betray Mengele himself:

Cukurs tried to make a deal with the Jewish underground after I published his whereabouts. In return for his own safety, plus \$100,000 in cash, he offered to lead them to Mengele. . . . Mengele clearly was the bigger catch.

Cukurs informed the Jewish agents that Mengele was hiding out in Paraguay across the Parana River from the small Argentine town of Eldorado. . . . He warned that it would be impossible to approach the Mengele hideout without being spotted.

The
hand
army
Wie
of e
calli
mini
hote

t
s
e
f
c
t
T
The
dead
Wies

rr
fe
hi
tc
T
Room

Cukurs offered, upon payment of \$100,000, to fly the Jewish commandos into the area by seaplane. They could land secretly and approach the unsuspecting Mengele by water.

My sources say that Mengele got wind of Cukurs' doublecross. Not long afterwards, two men showed up in Uruguay on a Lufthansa airliner from Düsseldorf, Germany.

My sources believe he [Cukurs] was slain by the Nazi underground although he had been one of its heroes.

Did Mengele, on hearing of Cukurs' offer to sell him out, order his assassination? My sources believe so.¹⁵

In fact, Cukurs was killed by a team from the Israeli Mossad.¹⁶ The Anderson story was a well-written piece of fiction, which enhanced the growing legend of Mengele. The image of the well-armed avenging demon was complemented by another from Simon Wiesenthal, portraying Mengele as a man with Houdini-like powers of escape. Wiesenthal claimed that a dozen Auschwitz survivors calling themselves "The Committee of Twelve" missed Mengele by minutes when they tried to kidnap him at the Paraguayan jungle hotel Tirol, near the Argentine border in March 1964. He wrote:

It was a hot dark night. . . . A few minutes before 1:00 a.m. the men entered the lobby of the Hotel Tyrol [sic], ran up the stairway, and broke open the door of bedroom No. 26. It was empty. The hotel owner informed them that "Herr Dr. Fischer" had left in a hurry ten minutes earlier after getting a telephone call. He had been in such a hurry that he hadn't even bothered to take off his pyjamas.¹⁷

The story was embellished by Michael Bar-Zohar in his book *The Avengers*, in which he said one of the avenging group was found dead a few days later, shot in the head. According to Bar-Zohar, Wiesenthal claimed the gang first came to see him in Vienna:

I know about these men. . . . They came to see me, here in my office. They were after Mengele and they asked me for information as to where he was hiding. This "Committee of Twelve" had plenty of money and planned to kidnap Mengele to take him to a yacht and judge him when out at sea.¹⁸

The difficulty with this story is that the Hotel Tirol had no Room 26, or even a second floor. There was no telephone by which

Mengele could have been warned. Finally, Paraguay is landlocked, making the possibility of an escape by yacht to the open sea somewhat ambitious. Nevertheless, the story flourished and was expanded in subsequent retellings.

Even sober people were infected by the fever of the mythical hunt. Alejandro von Eckstein, the Paraguayan army captain who co-sponsored Mengele's Paraguayan citizenship, recalled that during 1965 he was told by the chief of Paraguayan security that Mossad agents were scouring Asunción, looking for Mengele. In fact, Israeli agents had not been in the country for several years. But von Eckstein did not know that:

I was told there were five Israelis that had come to Paraguay to search for Mengele. I was told to be very careful.

So I sent my wife to her sister's house. I stuffed my bed with pillows under the sheets so it appeared that a man was sleeping there. Then I slept next to the front door, on the floor, with a pistol next to me. I was ready for them if they came to my house.¹⁹

The myth of the "bionic" Mengele was growing. The mere mention of Mengele's name seemed to provoke a sense of awe and fear, as if anyone who followed his trail was sure to die. Rational people did not act in rational ways. The old pistol that von Eckstein kept by his side in readiness for a shootout with the Mossad was rusty and had not been fired for twenty years. Right up to the moment Mengele's death was revealed, reporters were scouring the Hotel Tirol looking for souvenirs left by the fictional "Committee of Twelve."

One other sensation-seeker on the Mengele trail also succeeded in fooling everyone right up to the day Mengele's bones were found. Adolfo Cicero, a Brazilian TV reporter, claimed to have shot a three-second film clip of Mengele in 1966. This now famous film shows a slightly built man dressed in a light sport shirt, with dark receding hair and a moustache, half turning toward the camera. A blowup photograph from the film was used to illustrate every major Mengele story in newspapers, magazines, and TV stations around the world. For a time even camp survivors, the West German prosecutors, and the Nazi Crimes section of Israel's police believed the picture was Mengele. It was also printed on Interpol memoranda. The skull shape, jawline, ears, and hairline of the man in the photograph did show a remarkable degree of consistency with known

pre
Ba
bel

Cze
mat
trav
Par
Par
SS

old
Just
the
for

Per
mo

wro
trib
in t
But
was
sigh

der
Me
He
fit a

navigate

low account
es, and later
to describe
pted as they

the dark-
with sub-
: Mengele
e opened
and neck
and torso

c kill him,
water for

ad and every-
Erdstein fled
o way for me
e real reason
anted by the
eventy-seven,
that Mengele
said, "Well, I

inventive ac-
f information,
h better. On
g report from

: José [sic]
y as 25 Oc-
4 Kms from
was working

The next day, however, unnamed informants told the CIA station in Asunción that, although others were skeptical, they "agree with the pronouncements of the GOP [Government of Paraguay] to [the] effect [that] no information has come to light in recent years to indicate Mengele in Paraguay."³¹

It took ten years of wild rumors before this first sane glimmer of analysis appeared. Mengele may not have been a mechanic, but he was leading a mundane lifestyle. And as the report said, he was not in Paraguay.

Little of all this drama filtered through the Brazilian bush to "Pedro" on his farm in Serra Negra, cut off as he was from the daily news. Jungle hideouts with armed guards and killer dogs, face-to-face confrontations with Israeli secret agents, last-second reprieves from Wiesenthal's worldwide network of sleuths, Eric Erdstein's bullet through the head—no one would have marveled at his immortality more than the authoritarian farmhand at Serra Negra.

an admission by Paraguay that Mengele was within her borders. In reality, it was a cynical exercise in public relations because the Paraguayans knew that Mengele had long since departed. But Paraguay's ambassador to Bonn, Venceslao Benitez, was apparently caught off guard. Questioned by reporters, he was refreshingly candid:

I don't believe these reports, but it is only my opinion and I have not received any communication from my government. This is a political conversation that is really only intended to take place between the Paraguayan embassy in Bonn and the German embassy in Asunción.

Benitez then made a most revealing statement. Pressed further, he said in exasperation: "Let's talk about Brazil." In hindsight, one wonders if Benitez was trying to signal that his government knew Mengele was in Brazil. But at the time the ambassador would not elaborate, saying that he knew nothing about Mengele, and: "I think it much better for my country to know nothing about him."²

Into this murky sea of hints, half truths, and speculation jumped the irrepressible Tuvia Friedman, the Nazi-hunter from Haifa. His Nazi Crimes Documentation Center offered a \$50,000 reward for Mengele's capture, and Friedman urged the West Germans to match it with a \$10 million reward.* "That would be a dollar for every one of the ten million killed," said Friedman, adding confidently: "It will help find him. We are not interested in killing him. That would be too good for him."³

A few days after Friedman's offer, he claimed he had found Mengele. Brandishing a postcard from South America, he claimed it "told me where Mengele has been for the past two months and it provides definite and precise information by which to identify him."

Friedman's reward offer was the first involving private funds, and it drew extensive coverage in the South American press. Simon

* Had West Germany offered that sum to the public, rather than in the form of extra aid to the Paraguayan government as had former chancellor Konrad Adenauer, it might well have succeeded in bringing Mengele to justice. While the Bosserts and Stammers were unlikely to have been bought, there were two other people who learned of Mengele's true identity in São Paulo before he died, and both said they would have been sorely tempted by a large sum. By the time the government and private rewards totaled \$3.5 million in 1985, Mengele had been dead six years.

ere

ny, Gustav
he hunt for
Heinemann
assistance in
e issued the

efore he
near the
ation he
as access
ans, and
is almost

on saying
ip. Even
empt any

rez Domin-
sunción, re-
r Mengele's
ked out. But
was a public
the press as

Wiesenthal, not to be outdone, then dropped a bombshell. In a television interview with Israel's former prime minister David Ben-Gurion, Wiesenthal claimed he had "new information that Dr. Mengele is in Puerto San Vicente in Paraguay. I hope the authorities in Bonn will act immediately." He said the area was a military zone located in the Alta Parana region which civilian police could not enter. The Paraguayans responded that no such place as Puerto San Vicente even existed in the Alta Parana, and they were right. The Mengele affair had begun to look like a circus.

This was Wiesenthal's first major statement on Mengele since November 1968, when he had claimed that his "agents" had snapped pictures of Mengele on the streets of Asunción. That too had been a mistake, and to his credit, Wiesenthal admitted as much twenty-four hours later.

The Israelis did nothing to relieve Wiesenthal's discomfort about this new claim. A government spokesman said that Jerusalem "did not have conclusive evidence that Mengele is in Paraguay." In fact, by then the Israelis had no up-to-date information on Mengele at all. The Mossad was no longer watching Mengele, since his capture had long since ceased to be a priority target under General Meir Amit's administration. That policy was continued by Amit's successor, Zvi Zamir, who ran the Mossad from 1969 to 1976. "I don't think I spent more than about ten minutes on Mengele during my term of office," said Zamir. "It was something to do with fingerprints, or something like that. Whatever it was, it didn't come to anything."⁴

One of the few people who did know Mengele's precise location was tracked down by an Argentine reporter and his Italian colleague in February 1971. They persuaded Mengele's estranged wife, Martha, to briefly answer questions from the balcony of her apartment in Merano, in northern Italy. Martha had maintained regular contact with Mengele ever since he went to live with the Stammers in 1961. She had also received letters from him. But, with a convincing act of complete ignorance, Martha breezily lied:

It's been years since I heard anything. I've heard nothing from Herr Doctor. But the stories they print about him—they're just stories. Lies. No, no, they're just not true. He's a very educated, very gentle, very affectionate man, a wonderful husband, a wonderful father.⁵

The catching had been of the tr from W: dation to announc he achie

By t toriety t bargaini Schwenc who trie ping cou after hel ican cou

On Branche Lima. H for Ross South A zola, the group, o police at volveme at the o

Schv need. H interests it over. Judge Cl Rossi's g Vilka Ca were alre gele had when Re afternoo

On 1 controve Their in-

no source

shell. In a
David Ben-
t Dr. Men-
authorities
ilitary zone
could not
Puerto San
right. The

engele since
had snapped
had been
uch twenty-

omfort about
usalem "did
ay." In fact,
Mengele at
e his capture
eneral Meir
Amir's suc-
976. "I don't
le during my
with finger-
didn't come to

ecise location
lian colleague
ed wife, Mar-
her apartment
egular contact
mers in 1961.
convincing act

othing from
-they're just
ry educated,
and, a won-

The following month, Wiesenthal claimed he had just missed catching Mengele on a lightning visit to Spain. Mengele, he said, had been seen driving a car. But by the time Wiesenthal had learned of the trip, it had been too late. Near misses became a familiar cry from Wiesenthal, but the world did not know there was no foundation to his claims. To Wiesenthal, the overriding purpose of his announcements was to keep Mengele in the public eye, something he achieved with great success.

By the end of 1971, Mengele's name had attracted such notoriety that it was used by a fellow Nazi, Frederick Schwend, as a bargaining chip when he was arrested in Peru, suspected of murder. Schwend was the Third Reich's master con man, a former SS major who tried to persuade Hitler to sink the British economy by dropping counterfeit pound notes all over the world. He fled Europe after helping to run an escape organization working for the American counter-intelligence corps, and ended up in Peru.

On December 31, 1971, one of Peru's wealthiest men, Luis Branchero Rossi, was found shot dead at his palatial home outside Lima. Herbert John, a West German journalist, had once worked for Rossi and was still intrigued by the shadowy world of Nazis in South America. John told the investigating judge, Santos Chichizola, that he suspected Rossi had been murdered by a neo-Nazi group, of which Schwend was the mastermind. In mid-February the police arrested Schwend, who offered details about Mengele's "involvement" in the case in return for immunity. The Peruvians jumped at the opportunity.

Swend's lively imagination did not desert him in his hour of need. He spun a whole series of stories about Mengele's business interests in Rossi's empire and even about Mengele's plot to take it over. At first the Peruvians fell for the ruse. On March 5, 1972, Judge Chichizola announced that Mengele was a suspect in the case. Rossi's glamorous secretary, Eugenia Sessareyo de Smith, and Juan Vilka Carranza, the nineteen-year-old son of a neighbor's gardener, were already being held as suspects. The press speculated that Mengele had been the mastermind behind the killing, which took place when Rossi and Eugenia Sessareyo had gone to his home for an afternoon's lovemaking.

On March 6 the Peruvian police announced that they had incontrovertible evidence that Mengele had visited Peru during 1971. Their inquiries suggested he had been in the country when Rossi

was killed, then left shortly afterward. That same day Judge Chichizola said that Schwend was cooperating with their investigation into Mengele's alleged involvement. This time Simon Wiesenthal showed an uncharacteristic degree of caution. He warned that Schwend was pulling the wool over the Peruvian police's eyes, saying that Mengele was "not an appropriate suspect in the Rossi murder in Lima. It is a diversionary tactic." Not long afterward, Judge Chichizola agreed and said so publicly. Schwend was released, and the gardener's son was convicted of Rossi's murder, though neither a motive nor Schwend's involvement was ever properly established.

Another Nazi-hunter in Peru was not so restrained. Flushed with her success at identifying Klaus Altmann as Klaus Barbie, the "Butcher of Lyons," Beate Klarsfeld announced that Mengele was living in a jungle zone 250 miles from Lima. She said that Martin Bormann might be there too. Soon afterward, Mrs. Klarsfeld issued a second bulletin on Mengele. She said that a knowledgeable German had told her that Bormann, Mengele, and sixteen other prominent Nazis lived in South America and had business ties in an organization called "Telerana." She added that Bormann himself often lived in Bolivia disguised as a priest, and that she knew of a photograph of Bormann hiding in a fortress with Freddy Schwend. No trace of an organization dubbed "Telerana" was ever found, and Bormann's survival of the war remained much in doubt. But Beate Klarsfeld was new to the Nazi-hunting business, and this was a salutary lesson in the hazards of relying on the tales spun by informants in the shadowy business of tracking Nazi fugitives.

Back in Bonn, the government's hunt had halted. Following President Heinemann's handwringing admission that no further progress could be made, a *Catch-22* deadlock had taken hold. As far as Bonn was concerned, the hunt began and ended with Paraguay, which the government continued to believe was Mengele's likeliest hideout. Since the Paraguayans had made it clear that as a citizen Mengele could not be extradited should he be found, Bonn was convinced Mengele was there and he was protected. Therefore the West Germans made no serious effort to search elsewhere. Although President Stroessner was in a position to provide the information that would have led the West Germans to Brazil, Bonn never played its ultimate card—threatening to withdraw foreign aid. West German conglomerates had too much to lose. Instead,

the
imp

case
enti
dep
evic
in t
bef
But
was
of
arre
abu

Gla
ma
the
pris
the
not

son
of
to
hur
Un
He
wh

gel
wh
par
cou
gel
tol

mail or his telephone. We did as much as we were legally entitled to do. In order to grant a warrant, there has to be reasonable grounds for suspicion. I was suspicious, but I had no grounds.⁸

Von Glasenapp had already been told by Fritz Steinacker, Mengele's lawyer in Frankfurt, that he would be wasting his time talking to Sedlmeier and the Mengele family. Steinacker had represented Mengele in his divorce, and he assisted Dr. Hans Latenser in their unsuccessful appeal against the decision by Frankfurt and Munich universities to strip Mengele of all his professional degrees. "I knew Steinacker quite well," said von Glasenapp, "but there was not much point in pressing him for information because of his confidentiality to his client. He did tell me, however, that he had received his instructions through a Swiss intermediary when he acted for Mengele in relation to his divorce and degrees. I don't imagine he knew where Mengele was for that reason."

Von Glasenapp decided not to travel to Günzburg, taking Steinacker's advice that he would find the family and their close friends "had lost their memory." He turned to Simon Wiesenthal, whose many claims to have known Mengele's movements von Glasenapp had read:

I met Wiesenthal several times but I never got much out of him. I naturally wanted to know if he really did have anything of value. It was difficult to make that judgment from the various newspaper articles I had read.⁹

On one occasion von Glasenapp arranged to take evidence from Wiesenthal before a judge in Vienna:

I put my questions to the judge and he in turn put them to Wiesenthal. The hearing had been specially convened for Wiesenthal himself. I had told the judge that I was eager to learn the names and addresses of persons who might have accurate information as to Mengele's whereabouts. Wiesenthal was quite angry that I had asked him these questions and he refused to answer them. He said he was bound by confidentiality to his informants, which I understood.

I left feeling he was eager to convey that he was leading the field on this question, that he was the man out in the front. Perhaps behind his refusal to answer the questions was a feeling that the

le does
of the
m since
quently
is such
had he

eters from
ily, and he
y a lie. But
be proved.

once, in
portunity
nd, I can
he have
ould have
e accused
business
business
ns. If my
was about
n Buenos
nann was
then, all
been sev-
ly am not
ng now-a-
company

ier had seen
-when he vis-
ere in regular
/ where Men-
ier was lying
I not prove it:

was nothing
ove he was
intercept his

people he had in mind were not so reliable after all. I myself remained a little skeptical and did not raise the subject with him again.¹⁰

For a man with a healthy degree of skepticism about Wiesenthal's evidence, von Glasenapp's relationship with another Nazi-hunter, who made even more extravagant claims, was strange. It raised serious questions about his integrity as a senior member of the West German judiciary.

At the end of 1972, Ladislav Farago, a best-selling American author and wartime naval intelligence officer, claimed to have pinpointed Mengele's hideout. Farago was wrong, and his bogus information may have cost the life of an innocent man.

The origins of Farago's relationship with von Glasenapp can be traced to the grueling circulation war in which Britain's popular newspapers engage periodically. Late on the afternoon of November 26, 1972, word spread that the *Daily Express* was taking delivery of a very large order of newsprint for that night's print run. The *Express*, which enjoyed an enviable reputation for exclusives, believed it had a major story. It was confident its circulation would rise dramatically.

Shortly before midnight, the paper's first edition came out with the claim that reporters had tracked down Hitler's elusive deputy, Martin Bormann, and the news was flashed around the world. The source of the *Express*'s "scoop" was Ladislav Farago, who said he had run Bormann to ground in Buenos Aires. Farago's evidence was a balding man with a passing resemblance to Bormann. He turned out to be a respectable Argentine schoolteacher named Nicholas Siri.

In his Bormann article, Farago also claimed to have spoken to Josef Mengele, who he said was living under the alias "Dr. Nadich." Farago said he had tracked Mengele to the Paraguayan border town of Pedro Juan Caballero. The Paraguayans scornfully invited reporters to the town to see if they could find him.

The discovery that the Bormann information was a fabrication provoked a bitter row between Farago and the *Daily Express*. The editor, Ian McColl, demanded that Farago repay a \$5000 advance:

As far as producing Martin Bormann is concerned you have gone on record, on television and in print, saying that you know

wh
hir
at

In
report
gele c

un
art
me
we

Fa
on Mc
claime
jumpi

the
up
the
ne
par
Ex,
col
rer
go

De
Borma
ishing
windsv
of pub
Reich.

jus
was
Or
Pr

had tracked Mengele to Pedro Juan Caballero, Simon Wiesenthal, in May 1973, claimed he too knew Mengele was living there. Then came Tuvia Friedman, who said that his \$50,000 reward had also led to information that Mengele might be hiding in the same small border town. On October 17, 1973, the Polish War Crimes Commission said that their inquiries also suggested Mengele was there. On October 25, West German justice officials in Bonn were quoted in the *New York Times* as saying that Mengele had indeed been located in Pedro Juan Caballero. The same report quoted Judge von Glasenapp as saying that he did not think Mengele would be caught, but that several witnesses he regarded as reliable had told him Mengele was in Paraguay and was willing to talk about his past. One of those "reliable" witnesses who had spoken to von Glasenapp was Ladislav Farago, who wrote in an early draft of his book:

In actual fact I was assured by Judge von Glasenapp that my Mengele material proved extremely useful for his own investigation. He told me that the pinpointing of Mengele's place of residence by me, a third party, gave the German authorities an opportunity to raise the issue with President Stroessner of Paraguay during his semi-official visit to Germany in 1973.²¹

For one elderly farmer of German descent living near Pedro Juan Caballero, the cumulative effect of this amateur speculation, confirmed as it seemed to be with official statements from the Poles and West Germans, had the most disastrous result.

Late in November 1973, a group of men burst into the farmer's home during the middle of the night, beat him, and shot him dead. His wife, who tried to intervene, was beaten and suffered internal injuries. Their three children were left unharmed. According to Aldolfino Paralta, the local police chief, the dead man's name was Albert Fredrichi. He had lived on the outskirts of the town for nineteen years and was known as a recluse with eccentric ways. In the wake of the sustained publicity throughout 1973 about Pedro Juan Caballero being Mengele's hiding place, the press speculated that Fredrichi was the Auschwitz butcher. The man's widow, Endentran, described these reports as "absurd" as she packed her bags to leave for good. She said the murderers had not taken any valuables or goods and that they spoke a language she did not understand. She believed he was killed by a group of Jewish avengers.

Delving into Fredrichi's past, newspapers claimed that he had

Irene; her husband, Alfons Hackenjós; their son, Jens, and his wife, Sabine, who was Rolf's secretary; Mengele's nephews, Dieter and Karl Heinz, and their wives; his nieces, Ute and Monika, and their husbands; Mengele's second wife, Martha, and her son, Wolf Ensmann, from her first marriage; Rolf and Almuth's friend, Wilfried Busse; the pharmacist and his wife in Munich, Mengele's friends who had provided him safe shelter in 1945; the Stammers and their two children; the Bosserts and their two children; the Glawes and their son; and of course the dissembling Hans Sedlmeier, his wife, and their two children, one a doctor and the other a lawyer. It is extraordinary that such loyalty to a man so patently evil, and to his family, overrode any consideration of higher morality or public duty—stranger still that from somewhere in the supposedly enlightened ranks of the younger Mengeles not a word was leaked to the authorities, even after his death.

The truth had to be wrested from this arcane and amoral brotherhood, which was divided by bitter jealousies over money and power but united in the common goal of saving their necks and the neck of one of the nastiest men ever known to have inhabited the earth. In the end it was public pressure that forced the authorities to go on the offensive and flush out the facts.

That process began late in 1977, with the very people who had helped create the myth of Mengele's invincibility and his high-level protection in Paraguay—the Nazi-hunters and amateur sleuths. The idea of Paraguay as Mengele's permanent home had long been ingrained in the public consciousness. It was the frustrating lack of progress in confirming this established "fact" that persuaded the United States and Israel to resolve the Mengele mystery once and for all.

In August 1977, a dubious story in a glossy Argentine magazine reported that Josef Mengele had been seen driving a black sedan through the streets of Asunción. Simon Wiesenthal went a step further. In September he told *Time* magazine that Mengele had two posh houses and was always surrounded by armed bodyguards with walkie-talkies. Mengele wore dark glasses, he said, and was an active member of a "surviving network of Nazi bigwigs known as *Die Spinne* [The Spider]." According to Wiesenthal, Mengele was a frequent visitor to the German Club in Asunción, where he often made a spectacle of himself by slamming his pistol on the bar.⁶

Time also reported the claims of a recent visitor to Paraguay,

Profes
in Phil
told hi
close
mentio
best ef
that th
publis
In
the M
pages
inquir
in Jan
Doug
could
for th
the M
States
States
Ju
Asun
(past
comn
follov
Sabin
citize
1961
if you
reco
the I
Meng
in th
had i
T
Parag
came
prob
reco
havin
most

tonaro would have revoked Mengele's citizenship without the president's authority, since he views the status of Paraguayan nationality as sacrosanct. "Stroessner must have been consulted," said Ambassador White. If he is right, it suggests that Stroessner was privy to Mengele's death in Brazil within six months of its occurrence but nonetheless allowed the world to go on guessing for another six years.

No doubt that this is the kind of game that Stroessner would have enjoyed, if only to avenge the false accusations that his country had harbored Mengele for twenty years. But almost certainly Stroessner did not know Mengele had died.

The president's close friend, Hans Rudel, was privy to the secret, although according to Rolf, he did not know exactly where Mengele had been buried. And just as the Mengele family had reached a pact with the Bosserts never to disclose the death, Rudel too was bound by that oath of silence. Had Stroessner known the exact details, no amount of allegiance to Hans Rudel would have prevented him from laying to rest once and for all the Auschwitz ghost that had haunted his country for so long.

The Nazi-hunters were certain that Mengele was still alive and that Stroessner's decision to revoke his citizenship was an elaborate plot to extend him even greater presidential protection. The first of their salvos aimed at exposing this sinister move was fired by Simon Wiesenthal. Scornful of Montonaro and the Paraguayan supreme court's decision, Wiesenthal said it "meant nothing" and offered a new \$50,000 reward for Mengele's capture. He also urged Paraguay to issue another arrest warrant and offered to pay the police \$10,000 for his arrest.

Wiesenthal's skepticism about the Paraguayan action was shared by a group of Jewish industrialists in New York, who with the help of a prominent local Jewish spokesman, actually hatched an elaborate plot to kidnap Mengele. Word reached the group, which included one survivor of Auschwitz, that two Paraguayan intelligence officers were prepared to betray Mengele for \$500,000. After several weeks' negotiations, the Paraguayans agreed to arrest Mengele when he arrived at a bank in Asunción where he was said to come regularly. Mengele would then be taken to the Brazilian border town of Foz de Iguacu. When his identity had been confirmed, he would be handed over to the authorities. On receipt of a telephone call from one of the industrialists, \$500,000 would be trans-

ferred from a Bahamian bank to a special account for the Paraguayans.

Early in November 1979, \$500,000 was deposited in the Bahamian bank. When the Paraguayans were satisfied the money was there, they signaled to the New Yorkers that they were ready to move in. Two American bounty hunters, one a Vietnam veteran, traveled to Foz de Iguacu, where they waited for news of the arrest. On November 22 the Americans were told by the Paraguayans that Mengele would be picked up at the bank the following day. On November 23 there was no sign of Mengele or the Paraguayans. Although their money was safe, the Americans had been the victims of a crude shakedown by two corrupt Paraguayan policemen. The incident showed how seriously reports of Mengele hiding in Paraguay were taken even after his citizenship was revoked. The New York industrialists were not men given to precipitate action.¹⁵

Meanwhile Wiesenthal's claims became more extreme. Mengele was hiding in a special Nazi colony in Chile; he had gone to Bolivia but the police would not cooperate; no, he was in Uruguay; he had heart trouble and was about to give himself up to a West German embassy; he had been seen "five times recently . . . his capture could happen in the next several weeks."

But even Wiesenthal's vivid imagination could not match the best of the stories claiming Mengele was still alive. Early in 1981, the hunt switched to a wealthy suburb in the United States. Billboards advertising Rupert Murdoch's *New York Post* screamed: "Angel of Death in Westchester County." The paper was reporting the *Life* magazine claim that from 1978 to 1979 Mengele had lived in a private house near the Ohel Shmuel Yeshiva on Haines Road in Bedford Hills, about thirty miles north of New York City. "It's the first I've heard of it," was the laconic reaction of Allan Ryan, Jr., chief of the Justice Department's Office of Special Investigations.

He was not the only skeptic. But the *Life* story did contain several genuinely interesting facts about the Mengele family's financial interests in the United States, and this brought the U.S. closer to launching its final hunt. *Life* reported that Mengele's nephew, Dieter, was a part owner in an American corporation, KMN International Farm Equipment, Inc., a distributor of farm machinery. Incorporated in October 1973, the company listed Dieter as its legal representative. KMN stands for three equal partners: "K" is for Bernard Krona GmbH; "M" is for Mengele & Sons; and "N" is for H. Niemayer and Sons. Subsequent inquiries showed outlets

es-
ity
as-
to
out
six

uld
try
nly

se-
ere
rad
del
the
ave
vitz

ind
ate
irst
by
su-
and
ged
the

red
elp
lab-
nich
elli-
fter
len-
l to
or-
ned,
ele-
ans-

by NBC, which had shot several thousand feet of videotape of the old man washing his car, ABC approached Señor Branaa directly and asked, "Are you Dr. Mengele?" The poor man spent the rest of the day trying to convince the reporter that he was not the Auschwitz doctor. After Branaa introduced them to business colleagues and old friends and showed them school records, ABC was satisfied that the forensic scientists had made an enormous blunder.

Nevertheless, it was West German prosecutor Klein's view that prevailed: Mengele was still alive. And reports from Europe seemed to bear this out. Two young British psychologists, Simon Jones and Kirn Rattan, researching a psychological profile of Mengele, thought they had made a breakthrough in contacting the elusive fugitive. Fritz Steinacker, the Frankfurt lawyer who acted for Mengele when he was divorced as well as when he was stripped of his medical and anthropological doctorates, had agreed to forward their written questions through an unidentified intermediary to Mengele. Steinacker promised that in three months they would receive an answer directly from the doctor himself. In hindsight it appears to be Steinacker's perverse way of having some fun with serious Mengele researchers. "You could say that on that basis we believed Mengele was probably alive," said Jones. "Steinacker was Mengele's lawyer, after all."

The U.S. government also believed Mengele was alive. They gave some credence to intelligence reports in 1984 that he had been seen in Paraguay. Slowly but inexorably, the momentum for American involvement in the Mengele hunt was gathering pace. In June 1984, in an uncharacteristically defeatist mood, Simon Wiesenthal complained that perhaps the time had passed for the hunt for Mengele. "After all, when you bring an old man to court, there is natural sympathy for him," he sighed.

But congressional sympathy for that argument still had some distance to run. Two crucial events at the beginning of 1985 persuaded Congress that the Josef Mengele mystery had to be cleared up once and for all. Dead or alive.

The wind he
tling an eeri
before it bat
against the p
disfigured by
their steps o
1985, the fo
troops. It wa
Mengele's e
find Mengel

It was st
errand boy
many times
and thick co
on end," he
colder, I gu

Berkow
grandmothe
a member o
"We know

The eve
week later
macabre gat
hear evider

panel chaired by Gideon Hausner, Israel's chief prosecutor at the Adolf Eichmann trial, Telford Taylor, chief American prosecutor at Nuremberg, and Simon Wiesenthal.

Wiesenthal and some Israeli colleagues had resorted to this well-publicized "trial" in a last desperate attempt to highlight the failure of governments to run Mengele to ground. There had been some last-minute in-fighting between Wiesenthal and the Klarsfelds, who had wanted to be there. According to Serge Klarsfeld, Wiesenthal wanted the Nazi-hunting stage to himself. "He's an egomaniac," said a slighted Klarsfeld.¹

The event was an enormous success. For four consecutive nights, TV screens showed victims—midgets, Jewish women, twins—telling the most gruesome tales, all testifying to Mengele's unspeakable crimes. Altogether 106 known survivors of his grotesque research were ready to take the stand.

The groundwork for this new and final push had been laid the previous month when the Los Angeles-based Simon Wiesenthal Center, in a fanfare of publicity, released declassified American army intelligence documents showing that Mengele may have been in U.S. hands in April 1947.* In fact, the documents had been declassified eighteen months before, but the timing of the release, the pilgrimage to Auschwitz, and the mock trial at Jerusalem was a masterly stroke of public relations planning, especially coming after the buildup of speculative stories the previous summer suggesting that Mengele might have tried to enter the U.S. and indicating the extent of Dieter Mengele's business interests there. Pressure on the U.S. government to act became irresistible.

On February 6, 1985, the day the Jerusalem "trial" drew to a close, U.S. attorney general William French Smith directed the justice department to examine every aspect of the Mengele case—and to find him. As Smith told reporters that day:

The allegations have been such, and the public interest has been such, and the notoriety of the individual has been such, that it seemed appropriate to open the investigation. We intend to be thorough. We also intend to be speedy.²

* Inquiries showed that Mengele was not in U.S. custody in April 1947. But he was in American hands, under his own name, during the summer of 1945. See Chapter 3.

The scope
Trott, chi
partment:

It i
to allo
had wi
entere
how M
and, fi

The depa
Office of
Carter ad
Nazi crim
entry into
there eve
was assign
marshal's
FBI, the
partment
manhunt:

Sham
later that
justice m
of police
up to coc
file on M
Minister
higher pr
chief in

I
shoul
and t
majo
youn,

* The
shady info
employed,
the chief a

Tuma, an
This time
as listed as
street. But
intersected by
Austrian cou-
ers was eas-
post office
a and Gitta

the homes
maintained
resembling
was raided.
ir two chil-
ffects, some
reserved in
is 1979 trip
was a semi-
"Let There
schers' farm
ded *Verbum*
ie *New York*
olution."¹⁵
ssed to the
fe, Almuth,

man officers
the investi-
ow that their
e was Peter

ographical book.
the Bible.
pers at the Bos-
ordings of Men-
at the Bosserts'
to part with this
ne police learned

Hochbichler from Switzerland. The couple was interviewed together by non-German interrogators. Liselotte constantly interrupted her husband in German when she thought he was about to give any compromising answers. But after two hours they ended the charade. The Bosserts told the Brazilian police that Mengele's remains could be found in a hillside cemetery, at Embu, twenty-five miles from São Paulo. "I didn't think you could find us so quickly," admitted Wolfram.

The following day Gitta Stammer was brought in for questioning. Her husband, Geza, was heading for Singapore on board a tanker captained by one of his sons, an officer in the Brazilian merchant marine. Gitta Stammer proved to be much tougher to crack than either of the Bosserts. She claimed total ignorance of Mengele. Tuma's men did not get one truthful word out of her during her day in custody.

Word of the breakthrough had by now leaked out to the German newspaper *Die Welt*. On Thursday, June 6, the paper reported that the body of Mengele had almost certainly been found in Brazil. The Americans and Israelis, who had pledged total cooperation just three weeks earlier in Frankfurt, were furious when they learned of this sensational news from early morning broadcasts reporting the *Die Welt* story. What further angered the Americans was Bonn's relaxed response to the whole affair. Quickly brought up to date by telephone, the Americans urged their German colleagues to interview Gert Luk, the Paraguayan who was the original source of information that the "Uncle" had died. Klein's office said there was no hurry—Luk was due to arrive from Paraguay in four weeks and could be interviewed then.

Neal Sher, the American OSI chief, returned to his Washington office from a Boston awards ceremony, the great fanfare that had launched the U.S. hunt three months earlier still ringing in his ears. "If we were the ones who had made the breakthrough, we would have shared it with the other countries before going public," said a chagrined Sher.¹⁶ It had begun to look as if the West Germans had stolen the show. Senator Alfonse d'Amato who had been so vocal in getting the hunt started certainly felt it looked that way. He asked Sher rhetorically when he was planning to join his German colleagues in Brazil. That night Sher boarded a jet at Kennedy Airport. "We're going with a healthy degree of skepticism," he said. Off the record, his staff was highly skeptical. "Our intelligence

reports suggest he's still alive," said an OSI official. "There's every sign that he was seen recently."¹⁷

Simon Wiesenthal, who coincidentally flew into New York's Kennedy Airport for a lecture tour commencing that Thursday afternoon, said the story was a hoax: "99 percent it's not him" was his seasoned view. It was vintage Wiesenthal:

This is Mengele's seventh death. Only in Paraguay has he been dead three times, always with witnesses who say it is him. On one of these occasions, we found the body of a woman. If Mengele really died, then the whole world would have been informed five minutes after, not five years. His wife, children, relatives, besides friends and sympathizers, would have done everything to announce the death of Mengele, so they could spend the rest of their lives in peace.¹⁸

In hindsight, the statement shows just how little Wiesenthal ever really knew about the inner machinations of the Günzburg clan. But Wiesenthal was by no means alone. Most Mengele experts agreed initially, the authors included. Beate Klarsfeld, who had just returned from Paraguay where only days before she had accused Stroessner of shielding Mengele, said:

Alfredo Stroessner's government had every interest in informing the world of Mengele's death if it was true. This way the country would be free of the image of a sanctuary for Nazis. It's strange that this would come to light when there is a record of \$3.4 million to whoever gives information leading to Mengele's capture. Moreover Stroessner has a trip prepared for July [to West Germany]. It's understandable that he's trying to rid himself of Mengele before this visit.¹⁹

Unknown to Beate Klarsfeld, Stroessner had already canceled his trip. No public explanation was offered. The information was passed on in a confidential diplomatic note to the West German ambassador in Asunción, Konrad Gacher. But it was obvious that as long as the fate of Mengele remained a mystery, any Stroessner trip to West Germany would be transformed from a state visit into a television inquisition about Mengele.

Meanwhile, at the hillside cemetery in Embu, a circus of TV cameras, photographers, onlookers, policemen, and ghouls had gathered. Wolfram and Liselotte Bossert stood stonily by the side

rensic scientists were sent to São Paulo on behalf of the Simon Wiesenthal Center: Dr. John Fitzpatrick, acting chairman of the department of radiology, Cook County Hospital, Chicago; Dr. Leslie Lukash, chief medical examiner, Nassau County, New York; and Dr. Clyde Colling Snow, forensic anthropological consultant, Oklahoma state medical examiner's office, Oklahoma City. Three more were sent on behalf of the department of justice and the U.S. marshal's office: Dr. Ali Hameli, chief medical examiner of the forensic science laboratory, State of Delaware; Dr. Ellis Kerley, department of anthropology, University of Maryland; and Dr. Lowell Levine, forensic odontology consultant, Huntington Station, New York.

Their task was to see how known physical characteristics and verified photographs of Mengele compared with the remains found at Embu. For the skull comparison, a process called "electronic supraposition" was used. It involved the use of two video cameras and a video mixer to superimpose what was left of the skull on a full-scale verified photograph of Mengele's head. The team also managed to find a partial fingerprint and graying hairs from the back of the head from which they hoped to be able to discover the skeleton's blood type. A few clues could also be salvaged from Mengele's medical records in his SS file. He had broken a finger bone in his left hand and also suffered from osteomyelitis as a boy. None of the individual clues would be decisive in itself. Collectively, however, they could be significant.*

For one brief weekend, the skeptics held their ground. A São Paulo dentist, Maria Helena Bueno Viera de Castro, said that according to her records she treated the old man whose photograph appeared in the Brazilian newspapers during March or April 1979—two or three months after Mengele was supposed to have died. Moreover, Arnaldo Santana, the housekeeper who worked at the back of the Bosserts' beach house, said that when he saw the body

* The experts worked on the assumption that Mengele had broken his hip. This information came from Simon Wiesenthal, who said that Mengele had fractured his hip during a motorcycle accident at Auschwitz. His SS record showed he had an accident and that he was injured, but there was no record of a fracture. Coincidentally the scientists did find an old hip fracture that had healed. Rolf Mengele and his mother said Josef Mengele did not break a hip in Auschwitz, and must have broken it after he left Europe in 1949.

on the beach there was no moustache. No one who knew Mengele in São Paulo could remember him ever without a moustache. Then there was the coroner, Dr. Jaime Edson Mendonca, who had signed the death certificate. How could such an experienced man fail to have noticed that the body he examined under the name of "Wolfgang Gerhard" was six inches shorter and much older than the fifty-three years listed on the identity card? Finally a leading plastic surgeon, Roberto Farina, told the Associated Press that the archive shots of Mengele showed "substantial differences" from those that the police had released for publication in the newspapers. There was even a rumor that the gravedigger, Gino Carita, had seen the body in the coffin after all, and he had recognized it as the real Wolfgang Gerhard from his previous visit.

One by one, these arguments were broken down. The dentist was not certain of her facts when questioned by the police. There had been a mixup in her records. Santana was wrong, since moustache hairs were found on the corpse. The coroner, on his own admission, had not given the corpse a very thorough examination. The plastic surgeon had simply made a mistake. The gravedigger was challenged by Liselotte Bossert, who said that her fake crying fit ensured that nobody would open the coffin. She had seen it covered in the grave. Within a week, even Wiesenthal had changed his tune. "I think it's fifty-fifty it's him," he said.

One person in a position to provide proof of Mengele's death was his son, Rolf. But Rolf had no idea of what had been happening. He was on holiday with his wife and child, touring in Spain in a motor home, cut off from newspapers and TV for nearly two weeks. Without a set itinerary, the Mengele family had no way to contact him.

On Friday evening, June 7, Rolf returned to his home in Freiburg, switched on the television, and saw the late news. From the reports coming out of Brazil, he knew that his father's secret was out:

I thought to myself, "This is serious." I thought that Dieter must have leaked the story. We had all had an agreement that none of us would act without consulting the others, so I was a little surprised. The last time we met in March, Dieter had been very anxious to get the story out but without involving the Stammers or the Bosserts or the family at this end. So I thought not only had Dieter leaked it but that it had all gone wrong.²¹

Simon
of the
r. Les-
York;
altant,
Three
e U.S.
of the
erley,
Low-
New

s and
found
tronic
meras
l on a
a also
e back
er the
from
finger
a boy.
ively,

A São
at ac-
graph
079—
died.
at the
body

ip. This
red his
ccident
ally the
mother
after he

A message on Rolf's dining table from the housekeeper said that Dieter had been telephoning repeatedly. A telephone call quickly established that Dieter was not the source of the break. With the story quickly disseminating, the question was how best to repair the damage. A crew from NBC had camped outside Rolf's house, and newspaper reporters were knocking on his door and telephoning his office nonstop. Rolf proposed to Dieter and Karl Heinz that the family make a statement. "I didn't see how we could avoid it anymore," said Rolf. "The Stammers were talking, the Bosserts were talking. It would all come out sooner or later." But Dieter and Karl Heinz refused to make a statement, in a final but vain attempt to conceal their past links with their uncle. "Everyone in Günzburg was just paralyzed. No one had known what to do," said Rolf. "They had been so paralyzed that no one had even telephoned the Bosserts or the Stammers after the raid on Sedlmeier's house to warn them that the police might raid their houses."

For advice on how to handle the press, Rolf turned to a journalist friend of his secretary, Sabine Hackenjos, who had just married his stepbrother, Jens. He was Herbert Bauermeister, a freelance reporter who had known Sabine from her days as a Munich socialite. Bauermeister advised Rolf to clear the air. Rolf agreed that some explanation was needed. But he also saw the chance to make a handsome sum of money. On Sunday, June 9, he telephoned *Stern* magazine, pretending to be his stepbrother, Jens, and offered letters, diaries, and photographs of Mengele. Rolf got nowhere because he was asked to phone several senior editors at home. Since none was there that night, he gave up trying.

Bauermeister then advised Rolf to try *Bunte* magazine in Munich. He knew some of its staff and vouched for their integrity. Bauermeister also advised Mengele to forget about trying to make money. Instead he should donate the material to *Bunte* on condition that profits and magazine rights from their vastly increased circulation would be donated to the victims of concentration camps. That night, Monday, June 10, Rolf met with senior *Bunte* executives in the Black Forest and agreed to terms. The following day he issued a statement admitting that he had gone to Brazil in 1979 to confirm "the circumstances of my father's death," and that he had stayed silent until then "out of consideration for the people who were in contact with my father for the last thirty years."²²

Rolf's decision to disclose details of the family's contact with

Me
mo
hea

Th
me
co

Or
In
all

af
to
pe
ar
pe
re
th