



"Our job is to hold up the mirror, to tell and show the public what has happened; and then it is the job of the public whether they have faith in their leaders or government. We are faithful to our profession in telling the truth. That's the only faith to which journalists need adhere."

-Walter Cronkite

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The Brunswickan—in its 119th year, is Canada's oldest official student publication. The Brunswickan is published weekly by the UNB Student Union. The Brunswickan office is located in Room 35, Student Union Building, University of New Brunswick, P.O. Box 4400, Fredericton, N.B., E3B 5A3.

The Brunswickan is printed at Henley Publishing, Woodstock, N.B. Subscriptions are \$15.00 per year. National and local advertising rates are available at (506) 453-4974. General phone 453-4983. News line 453-4973.

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In search of Mengele

By KITTY MCKINSEY
Courtesy the Detroit Free Press

PARIS—Josef Mengele, the 'Angel of Death' at Auschwitz, is the world's most wanted fugitive. A price exceeding \$1 million is on his head.

Jewish Nazi-hunters have put a global spotlight on the missing Mengele in this 40th year since Soviet troops, as part of the Allied force fighting Hitler's regime, freed the Polish death camp from the grip of Nazi sadists.

The image of Mengele as a smiling, handsome doctor who dispensed death at Auschwitz with the flick of a wrist, and the mystique of an unrepenting Nazi hiding in the jungle under the protection of a South American dictator, have captured the imagination of novelists and film-makers.

The most relentless Nazi-hunters, including those who tracked down Adolph Eichmann and Klaus Barbie, think that Mengele is alive—though perhaps not well—in Paraguay, protected by the military of the right-wing president of that South American country.

Mengele could be brought to justice if the governments of the United States, West Germany and Israel would order their intelligence services to find him, these Nazi-hunters assert.

But even the best information in the world compiled about Mengele by dedicated Nazi-hunters often seems like wisps of smoke.

This week, declassified CIA documents made public by two U.S. senators, indicated that Mengele was involved in drug trafficking while he moved among South American countries during the 1970s.

Stomach cut open

Included among the heavily-censored documents was a report that in 1973, 'Israel terrorists' beat to death a former German soldier in Paraguay in the mistaken belief he was Mengele. The man's wife 'lost portions of one of her ears and her stomach was cut open' in the attack.

The documents also included an allegation that Mengele in 1968 lived with Martin Bormann, another wanted Nazi.

In recent years, numerous reports told of sightings of Mengele moving from country to country in South America, even travelling to Portugal.

Despite the terror and romance fixed to the Nazi doctor by novelists, movie-makers and the news media, none of Mengele's pursuers know for certain that he is alive. If he is, Mengele would be 74 years old next month.



Several Nazi doctors were executed for crimes less heinous than those of Mengele.

From the mass of reports compiled about Mengele since the Second World War, it appears that Mengele lived a relatively public life in Germany and South America until about 1970.

That is when 'he vanished,' said Beate Klarsfeld, who with her husband Serge tracked down Klaus Barbie, the Nazi known as the 'butcher of Lyon.'

The West German government has tracked Mengele's movements since he left the Auschwitz death camp shortly before its capture by the Red Army in January 1945. Other information has been added by the Klarsfelds and Simon Wiesenthal, who runs the Jewish Documentation Center in Vienna and hunted down Eichmann.

At the end of the war, Mengele apparently returned to his Bavarian hometown of Huenzburg, where he owned a prosperous farm machine factory, Karl Mengele and Sons. For at least four years he lived there under his own name.

During this time, his name came up at the Nuremberg war crimes trials. Mention was made of his role in selecting prisoners for the gas chambers and of his use of Auschwitz prisoners as guinea pigs in bizarre biological experiments. But, inexplicably, no attempt was made to arrest him.

In either 1949 or 1952, according to conflicting accounts, Mengele left Bavaria for Argentina. He obtained Argentine citizenship in 1954 under the name Helmut Gregor, but in 1956 registered with the West German embassy in Buenos Aires under his own name.

He also resumed practising medicine in Argentina under the names Freidrich Edler von Breitenbach and Helmut Gregory, according to information gathered by the Yad Vashem Holocaust Museum in Jerusalem.

Influential friends

In 1958 he moved to Paraguay, where two influential friends of right-wing President Gen. Alfredo Stroessner falsely swore that he had lived in the country for five years. With their help, Mengele was granted citizenship in 1959.

That same year, West Germany requested his extradition, citing 17 grounds for his arrest and prosecution. The charges include throwing a newborn baby into an oven in front of its mother, slashing open the skull of a 14-year-old girl with a sword and killing numerous twins and gypsies in the name of medical research.

(A 1985 report by the West German Regional Court of Frankfurt-Main adds that Mengele was responsible for an untold number of deaths of prisoners he consigned to the gas chambers. Wiesenthal places the number of deaths Mengele was responsible for at 400,000.)

Mossad, the Israeli intelligence agency, just missed capturing Mengele in Argentina in the 1960 raid that netted Eichmann, former Mossad chief Isser Harel related in his autobiography.

After Mossad has imprisoned Eichmann in a house — with a plane waiting nearby to fly him to Israel — the secret agents turned their attention to Mengele. They determined he

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