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Peron, Argentina and the Nazis

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Perón, Argentina and the Nazis

With the fall of the Third Reich imminent in April 1945, many members of the Nazi party sought to escape the advancing allied forces in Europe. Options for the Nazis became limited as allied troops closed in on Berlin. One option for former Nazis was to stay in Europe but this meant living in constant fear of being arrested and facing trial. Another option was to flee Europe and find a country that was willing to offer asylum. Fleeing Europe became more desirable as Allied governments began looking to acquire the research and personnel behind the Nazi war machine.

As early as 1944, the United States, Great Britain, and the Soviet Union began offering jobs, asylum, and the complete whitewashing of pasts, in exchange for the research, technology and science that Germany developed during the war. In the context of this postwar occupation, the government of Argentina began secretly facilitating the transport of former Nazis with technical and military acumen out of Europe and into this South American country. Juan Perón's efforts to bring technical and military specialists from defeated Nazi Germany were part of a larger economic plan to industrialize, and ultimately promote Argentina's emergence as a world power.¹ However, rather than getting specialists, Perón largely received lower level assistants without the qualifications or the experience to bring about the economic

¹ Argentina was not the only South American country that received Nazis from Europe. Brazil, Chile and Bolivia also received Nazis and provided safe havens.

transition Perón desired. Furthermore, Peron's Argentina was significantly behind in industrialization, which became too much to overcome for the Nazi technicians.

Juan Perón and the Argentinean government were responsible for secretly importing, employing and protecting Nazi war criminals in effort to gain scientific and technological intelligence Nazi Germany had developed. This research paper argues that Perón was inspired by Fascist governments and had sympathy for their citizens following the end of World War II. Furthermore, Perón saw an opportunity to help Argentina. Specialists and technicians were the original targets of Perón's clandestine operations. However, Perón and his government could not compete with the job offers from the United States, Soviet Union or Great Britain. The truly elite minds in Hitler's Third Reich were not available to Perón and Argentina. Instead, Perón got common soldiers and non-specialists who worked closely with the science and technology coming out of Germany during the war but not the specialists themselves. The knowledge Perón was able to get out of Germany was very limited and did not work out as he had hoped.

Argentina was in political turmoil as World War II was ending. From 1943 to 1946, alone, Argentina saw three coup-d'états. In 1946, Juan Perón was finally elected as President of Argentina and brought stability to the country. Perón had developed an obsession with Fascism and idealized the Fascist work ethic while on a tour of Italy. Perón especially like the role unions played in the Italian-Fascist state.² Perón sympathized with former Nazis and felt it was unfair to prosecute men who were just obeying orders. Perón described the Nuremberg trials as "an infamy,

² Joseph A. Page, *Peron: A Biography*. (New York, New York: Random House, 1983), 36

unworthy of the conquerors”.³ Being a military man, the trials unnerved Perón. The Nazis had knowledge that Perón coveted and Perón sought to bring some of this Nazi intelligence into Argentina. In exchange for protection and asylum, he wanted the former Nazis to use their knowledge to help boost Argentina’s struggling economy and bring technology to the country and raise Argentina to the status of world power along with the United States and the Soviet Union.

Argentina had been a country of immigration since its unification as a nation in 1853. In the 1853 Constitution, article 25 describes “encouraging European immigration” and not taxing those that come to work the land.⁴ The idea of bringing large numbers of Germans to Argentina was not new, but creating secret networks for Nazis to get there, however, would be.

Secret networks were designed by former Nazis as way to protect themselves and their friends from allied troops. These secret networks have been the subjects of research by scholars. The studies often focused on individual infamous Nazi members and their escape routes. Uki Goñi, an Argentine writer, researched the secret networks, and those responsible for the organizations that were set-up. In his book, *The Real Odessa*, he uncovers the shameful past of Argentina.⁵ Goñi studied the role of the Vatican, Swiss authorities and the Argentine government to organize a network for getting Nazi war criminals out of Europe and into Argentina. President Juan Perón harbored and provided asylum to Nazi war criminals that

³ Page, *Peron: A Biography*, 88

⁴ The Constitute Project, “Argentina’s Constitution of 1853, Reinstated in 1983, with Amendments through 1994.” Accessed February 27, 2016, https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Argentina_1994.pdf?lang=en

⁵ Uki Goñi, *The Real Odessa*. (New York, New York: Granta Books, 2002)

allowed for these men to live a protected and prosperous life with only a small chance of facing a jury for their crimes. The most ardent Nazis and those who committed war crimes knew that they would be hunted for the rest of their lives. The book outlines the web of connections that start in Madrid and spread out to Scandinavia, France, Italy and Buenos Aires.

The primary sources used for this research comes from United States records that were highly classified during the Cold War. In 1998, the United States Congress passed the Nazi War Crimes Disclosure Act. This act, a part of the Freedom of Information Act, released 8.5 million pages of confidential and classified paperwork related to the Nazi war criminals.⁶ These documents include correspondences between American military leaders discussing the whereabouts of known Nazi criminals, documents discussing and detailing alleged ratlines⁷ and memos between United States intelligence operatives with alleged conspirator names received through extensive interrogation. The documents are dated from 1945 to 1955. Thousands of documents are available in the archive but the trouble lies in finding the useful ones that contain fact and not inference or hearsay. Other limitations to research include not having access to documents that are only available within archives in Washington D.C. and Buenos Aires and not being able to read Spanish, German or Latin. Other Scholars have benefited from being able to access

⁶ Central Intelligence Agency, "Nazi War Crimes Disclosure Act," Freedom of Information Act, accessed March 14, 2016, <http://www.foia.cia.gov/collection/nazi-war-crimes-disclosure-act>

⁷ "Ratlines" comes from the escape routes soldiers would take if stranded behind enemy lines. They would follow these routes to certain checkpoints that guaranteed their safety until they could get back into friendly territory. When World War II ended, the term was repurposed to describe the routes war criminals would take to avoid being apprehended and prosecuted.

documents that were not in print or on the internet but rather archived in Belgium, Argentina, Spain and the Vatican.

This paper will focus on the escape routes taken to Argentina, which often included secretly transporting Nazis across the European continent to different checkpoints before they could escape to the Americas. The paper will also examine the contacts that Perón maintained in Europe to assist him, as well as the Nazis, Perón himself targeted for their expertise. Finally, this paper will examine Perón's motives and whether they were selfish or if they were to benefit Argentina. Secondary sources alluded to ultra-secret organizations established during World War II that are credited with getting Nazi war criminals out of Europe and into foreign countries as well as providing jobs for them. Perón and the Argentinean government were responsible for secretly importing, employing and protecting Nazi war criminals in effort to gain the scientific and technological intelligence.

PERÓN'S ODESSA

The existence and validity of an underground Nazi organization called ODESSA that helped former Nazis escape Europe is debated amongst historians. ODESSA stands for "The Organization of Former SS Members".⁸ ODESSA was an organization purportedly set up and financed by former SS officers seeking asylum towards the end of World War II. Simon Wiesenthal, an Austrian-Jewish Holocaust survivor who dedicated his life to hunting Nazis following the war, coined the name and alleged that ODESSA was a European-wide network setup to aid the Nazis

⁸ The acronym for ODESSA comes from the German translation, which is Organisation der ehemaligen SS-Angehörigen.

escape to South America.⁹ Uki Goñi agrees with Wiesenthal's terminology, even naming his book *The Real ODESSA*.¹⁰ However, Goñi argues that ODESSA was much larger than Wiesenthal originally asserted. Goñi described ODESSA as a worldwide conspiracy that "consisted instead of layered rings on non-Nazi factions: Vatican institutions, Allied intelligence agencies and secret Argentine organizations that overlapped at strategic points with French-speaking war criminals, with Croatian Fascists and even with the SS men of Wiesenthal's ODESSA."¹¹ The large and complicated reach of Goñi's idea of ODESSA should have been enough to dissuade him of ODESSA's actual existence. That large of a network surely would have cost an unreasonable amount of capital, not to mention its many contact points, members and moving parts. Maintaining secret communication between the members would be an impossible task. Smaller organizations did exist and were successful, and they benefited from their small nature.

Gitta Sereny, a historian and research journalist, attributes ODESSA to the intersection of popular culture and conspiracy theories. The secretive nature surrounding the Cold War era made these theories popular. Especially since there was little evidence of its existence, it became highly believable. A conspiracy theory was a convenient way to provide an explanation for how Nazis were able to immigrate to South America with little resistance. Through her research she was unable to prove that ODESSA existed. She wrote in her book *Into That Darkness*:

⁹ Simon Wiesenthal, *The Murders Among Us*, ed. Joseph Wechsberg (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1967)

¹⁰ Uki Goñi, *The Real ODESSA*

¹¹ Uki Goñi, forward to *The Real ODESSA*, ix-xxx

I have spent a great deal of time seeking documentary evidence which would support or contradict the Stangls' story of how they, and others like them, escaped from Europe; and the real facts, it turns out, are neither dramatic nor unequivocal; they are complex, ambiguous and merely prove again that in the final analysis, history is not made by organizations, but by individual men, with individual failings, and individual responsibilities.¹²

According to Sereny, there was no large umbrella organization that funded and provided structure for the escape routes, instead it was born out of the desire to not be captured by individuals who no longer had a support system.

The personalized and individualized nature of Nazi escape organizations is summarized in oral interview with Vagnar Kristensen, an SS officer in the Third Reich.¹³ In his interview, Kristensen, states that after 1945, he "helped get people out of Germany by way of Denmark."¹⁴ The places of destination that he lists are Argentina, Egypt, Tonga and Morocco.¹⁵ In the interview Kristensen talks about showing his SS tattoo at a pub in Egypt.¹⁶ When asked about this organization he described it as, "When I was in jail up in Denmark, we all agreed that when we got out we would try and help our friends who were still in English or American prisoner of war camps, so that they could get across the border, and then if they wanted to get further away we could get them to Sweden, they went through Sweden mostly..."¹⁷

¹² Gitta Sereny, *Into That Darkness*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1974), 274

¹³ Transcript, Vagnar Kristensen Oral History Interview I, May 26, 2004, by Alexander von Plato, Trans. Avery Morrison, United States Holocaust Museum, 1-19

¹⁴ Vagnar Kristensen, Oral History, 14

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid., 15

He continues to describe the organization as “unofficial” and that “nothing was official”; and that the only way to know about it was through “word of mouth.”¹⁸ There was not a worldwide conspiracy to further the Third Reich’s plans. Instead it was the individual men looking out for their brothers-in-arms. Such escape routes were pulled off by necessity and the reality of the situation, not because of a sinister singular organization founded during the war. Like Sereny, historian Gerald Steinacher believes ODESSA was coined by Wiesenthal and made into a media fueled conspiracy theory that was heavily influenced by the secret nature of the Cold War years.¹⁹ “The ODESSA File”, a book and film published in 1972, was a work of fiction whose key points were eventually adopted as fact in support of the existence of ODESSA.²⁰

This research suggests that ODESSA is a fictional organization whose idea grew because of its secretive nature and lack of credible evidence. Escape organizations on an incredible scale existed all over Europe following the war but there was not a singular organization founded and financed by SS agents early in the war. Instead, small groups of individuals created networks out of necessity because they found themselves suddenly on the wrong side of history. Their motivations were to help themselves and their fellow Nazis find a way to continue their lives without fear and without having to answer for their crimes. Argentina became this beacon of hope. It could provide stability and comfort that other countries could not. Not all Nazis were specialists or excelled in their fields. Most were foot soldiers

¹⁸ Vagnar Kristensen, *Oral History*, 14

¹⁹ Gerald Steinacher, forward to *Nazis on the Run*, (New York, Oxford University Press, 2011), XVI

²⁰ *The ODESSA File*, directed by Ronald Neame, October 18th, 1974 (West Germany, Columbia Pictures, 1974) and Frederick Forsyth, *The ODESSA File* (London, Hutchinson, 1972)

obeying orders that made them suddenly war criminals as Allied Powers began the process of denazification throughout Europe. ODESSA did not exist; rather many networks were started with different motivations and destinations, concocted out of necessity.

A largely under-industrialized country on the southern tip of South America, Argentina was an interesting choice of destination for Nazis fleeing Europe following the war. Argentina became the choice nation of immigration of Nazis because of a nuanced combination of factors. Argentina had a rich tradition of encouraging European immigrants since its unification in 1871 and large communities of German immigrants had already been established. Furthermore, Juan Perón and the Argentinian government made immigration easy for former Nazis by passing laws that specifically targeted the Europeans. Lastly, Perón and Argentina would take all the risk in creating networks and providing official documents to get the former Nazis out of Europe and into Argentina where they would be protected from extradition.

ARGENTINA AND IMMIGRATION

Argentina has had a long tradition of accepting immigrants, especially from Europe. Between 1871 and 1917, there were nearly 6 million immigrants living in Argentina.²¹ Many were of German or Jewish heritage. German immigrants in Argentina flourished. They established themselves in local politics and established social-reform organizations to help with their transition into Argentinian society. Benjamin Bryce, a historian at the University of British Columbia, has focused his

²¹ Daniel K. Lewis, *The History of Argentina*. (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 2001), 55

research on the social history of immigration from Germany to Argentina. In one of his articles he discusses the role of German immigrants working within the government of Argentina to create a safe haven for immigrants to prosper within their own unique communities.²² He argues that wealthy German immigrants were actively involved in the political sector and therefore gave large groups of German migrants a voice in politics. Along with immigrant women working in these social welfare organizations, German immigrants had created little communities that were almost entirely autonomous within Argentina.²³ Furthermore, German immigrant participation in politics allowed for large German communities to have an active role in how their community looked and acted. These social welfare organizations helped find employment for German-speaking immigrants who were fresh on Argentinian soil. These communities of German immigrants helped ease and expedite the transition of assimilation that immigrants from other countries experienced.

When Hitler assumed power in 1933, there was another large immigration of Germans to Argentina. Some 30,000 to 40,000 Germans arrived. Of these immigrants, most were Jews fleeing persecution in Germany.²⁴ When the new German immigrants arrived in 1933, they were able to assimilate quickly due to these established communities. When intense nationalism became the rallying cry for the Third Reich, most Germans in Argentina answered the call and supported their mother nation by flying Nazi flags and being proud of Germany despite being

²² Benjamin Bryce, "Paternal Communities: Social Welfare and Immigration to Argentina, 1880-1930." *Journal of Social History* (2015): 132

²³ *Ibid.*, 133

²⁴ Steinacher. *Nazis on the Run*, 213

half a world away.²⁵ When Nazis began to secretly immigrate following the end of the war, Argentina's large autonomous communities welcomed these men. They were able to offer quick assimilation, jobs and a sense of national community.

Large groups of Jewish peoples had immigrated to Argentina around the turn of the 19th century. Anti-Semitism towards the Jews in Argentina was a held by many Argentines. Historians Kessel Schwartz and Carl Solberg each examined the literature that that was written in Argentina around the turn of the 19th century. Schwartz's article, published in 1978, analyzed anti-Semitism in Argentinian fiction at the turn of the 19th century. Solberg's book, published in 1970, dedicated a chapter to the examination of literature and anti-Semitism. Schwartz and Solberg's works overlap when they discuss the Argentinian book *La Bolsa* in their respective works.²⁶ Both agree that *La Bolsa*, written by Julian Martel in 1890, painted the Jews in a negative light, giving credence to the notion that some Argentinians held anti-Semitic beliefs.

The danger of *La Bolsa*, argues Solberg, is that it became popular.²⁷ The popular novel, set in Argentina, tells the story of the fictional financial crisis in which the Jews were solely responsible. Schwartz states that Martel, "attributes to the Jews a set of repulsive characteristics."²⁸ Schwartz does not list what characteristics, but does go on to say that the characteristics "made it credible to

²⁵ I say "most Germans" here because there is no way of knowing if all German-Argentines supported the Nazi ideology or not.

²⁶ Jose Maria Miro, *La Bolsa* (Buenos Aires, 1905).

²⁷ Carl Solberg, *Immigration and Nationalism: Argentina and Chile, 1890-1914*. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1970), 88

²⁸ Kessel Schwartz, "Anti-Semitism in Modern Argentine Fiction." *Jewish Social Studies* 40, no 2 (Spring 1978): 132.

blame the financial crisis on the Jews.”²⁹ Solberg’s analysis includes much of the same. Solberg agrees with Schwartz and surmises that, “the Jewish characters who appear in *La Bolsa* are all sinister and amoral.”³⁰ *La Bolsa*’s popularity in Argentina shows a society that harbored anti-Semitic thoughts. Uneasy with the Jewish migration of 1880, native Argentinians were unhappy with the economic success of immigrants.

Both Solberg and Schwartz attribute the embracement of *La Bolsa* as illustrative of how Argentinian society viewed the Jew. Native Argentinians were harboring anti-Semitic thoughts that were reinforced by *La Bolsa*. Solberg even writes that, “Newspapers later published *La Bolsa* in serial form and later was regarded as an accurate picture of Argentina in 1890.”³¹ Schwartz’s article does not reference Solberg’s book, but both authors come to the same conclusion seven years apart. *La Bolsa* alludes to the harbored feelings of anti-Semitism held by many native Argentinians towards the Jewish immigrant.

Argentina’s large German population never forgot their home country. When Adolf Hitler rose to power riding a wave of extreme nationalism, the Argentina-Germans followed their motherland in supporting the cause. Naturally, when the war ended, sympathies ran high for their brother-in-arms that lost the war. Bringing the former Nazis in from Europe and protecting them from prison or the gallows was an easy choice, no matter the difficulty.

²⁹ Schwartz, “Antisemitism in Modern Argentine Fiction, 132

³⁰ Solberg, *Immigration and Nationalism*, 88

³¹ *Ibid.*

Argentina's open immigration policy already had produced a large German population estimated at about 240,000 between World War I and II. When Hitler rose to power in Germany, another 30,000 to 40,000 Germans fled for political or racial reasons to Argentina³². Naturally, Nazism became popular amongst the Germans in Argentina, turning parts of Argentina into small Nazi colonies. Perón always admired the German refugees, stating what he liked about them; "their proverbial honesty, their tireless devotion to work, and their pacific character"³³. Even after declaring war on Germany, Perón vowed to not give up on the German community.

LAYING THE FOUNDATION

Juan Perón wanted to bring Nazi officials into Argentina for a number of reasons. He wanted what Germany had; a large Army, the pomp of parading through the capital, the colorful banners, and the scientists and technicians to improve a struggling industry. Perón wanted it all and did not try to hide it either. In his memoirs Perón said, "What better bargain could the Argentine Republic have made, than to bring these scientists and technicians here? All we paid for was their plane tickets, whereas Germany had invested millions of marks in their training."³⁴ Germany's human capital of scientists, technicians and military specialists appealed to Perón's efforts to move Argentina forward under his leadership.

Perón's fascination with Fascism began seven years before he was elected president. In 1939, Juan Perón was a Lieutenant Colonel in the Argentinian army,

³² Steinacher, *Nazis on the Run*, 213.

³³ Guy Walters, *Hunting Evil* (London, Random House, 2009), 109.

³⁴ Raanan Rein, *Argentina, Israel and the Jews: Perón, The Eichmann Capture and after*, (Bethesda, Maryland: University Press of Maryland 2003), 168.

when the minister of war sent him to Europe to train with Italian armed forces. Perón's own dossier accounted an eleven-month period in which he trained with Italian troops in the Alps learning mountain warfare.³⁵ This period influenced Perón in numerous ways. The mobilization and organization of the German and Italian peoples, mass spectacle as a political tool and the anticommunist movement that was "providing much of the intellectual and emotional impetus behind the Fascist and Nazi movements."³⁶ While in Europe, Perón witnessed Benito Mussolini's speech urging Italy to follow Germany into war.³⁷ Although Perón said he met with Mussolini, no known evidence exists to corroborate those statements.³⁸ According to Page's biography of Perón, he became enamored with the Fascist way of life. He saw ways that Fascism could improve Argentina.³⁹ Italy and Germany both being driven by the strength of their military appealed to Perón's military background. Perón wanted what Italy and Germany had; a robust economy, trains that kept to a schedule, military parades, and the complete mobilization of its work force. Perón saw first-hand the how a Fascist army worked and trained.⁴⁰ Perón brought this fascination back to Argentina with him.

When the Argentine military seized power in 1943, the colonels, including Perón, began actively pursuing a secret alliance with Hitler and Germany. After Colonel Arturo Rawson appointed himself president, and was abruptly replaced,

³⁵ Page, *Peron: A Biography*, 36

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 35.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 36.

³⁹ *Ibid.* 35

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 36

lasting only three days, Pedro Pablo Ramírez was sworn in.⁴¹ Ramírez lasted less than a year, but in that time he kept diplomatic relations with Nazi Germany open. A number of anti-Semitic groups started in Argentina, as well. The Alianza Libertadora Nacionalista (Nationalist Liberation Alliance) began attacking Jews and their institutions in the capital and in some provincial towns.⁴² Furthermore, authorities did nothing to neither prevent the attacks nor stop them once started. Keeping these links open with Germany made Argentina uniquely hospitable and to fugitives as well as open to the capital and expertise that the Nazis could bring.⁴³ Any exchange of goods between Germany and Argentina were alleged until English military arrested Ernesto Hoppe in Gibraltar.

Ernesto Hoppe was a German-Argentine who revealed the larger scope of what Germany and Argentina were trying to accomplish as allies.⁴⁴ Hoppe was arrested in England in October of 1943. While being interrogated, Hoppe allegedly revealed the relationship of Germany and Argentina. Germany was getting set to send U-boats (German submarines) to Buenos Aires loaded with documents, jewels, gold, cash and bonds, all of which was worth more than ten million Reich marks.⁴⁵ This large sum of valuables were to have been used to invest in property, businesses, and industries promoting Nazism in Argentina. It was also meant to buy an escape destination, should Germany lose the war.

⁴¹ Lewis, *The History of Argentina*, 93-95

⁴² Rein, *Argentina, Israel, and the Jews*, 117.

⁴³ Walters, *Hunting Evil*, 105.

⁴⁴ Hoppe's records are sealed from researchers in England. Most accounts of his role were taken from interviews with others who were involved.

⁴⁵ Walters, *Hunting Evil*, 106.

Upon returning to Argentina, Juan Perón's military and political career soared. He was promoted to full Colonel before Argentina went through significant political turmoil between 1943 and 1946. Each time a new president took office, Perón was promoted. At first he was named the head of the Department of Labor. In this position, Perón passed numerous social welfare laws that reflect his time in Europe. These laws affected labor unions in an attempt to empower them against the communist movements. Perón said in a speech in August of 1944, "it is necessary to know how to give up 30 percent rather than lose everything."⁴⁶ The head of the Department of Labor was converted into a Cabinet position, the Secretariat of Labor. In 1945, he was appointed vice-president. Finally in 1946, Juan Perón was democratically elected President of Argentina. His ideology, however, was more Fascist than democratic.

Upon being elected President, Perón had to figure out a way to secretly immigrate Nazis to Argentina. Getting the Nazis into Argentina was not as simple as handing out passports. German immigration from Europe ceased in the months after World War II ended.⁴⁷ Allied forces wanted to contain the Nazi leadership as much as possible during this time, so that they could properly vet, arrest, and prosecute war criminals. If Juan Perón were to get the Nazis he desired, he was going to have to get creative in his methods. Perón was aware that the United States, England and the Soviet Union were engaged in offering Nazi specialists large contracts in an attempt to gain their knowledge and keep them away from the enemies. Perón did

⁴⁶ Page, Peron, 70

⁴⁷ Steinacher, *Nazis on the Run*, 213.

not operate as openly as the Allied forces when recruiting former Nazi specialists.⁴⁸ He acted more clandestinely for various reasons. The first, the poorly kept secret of a Nazi German-Argentine treaty. Argentina was supposed to be the bottom tip of the Third Reich triangle that included Germany and Japan as the other points. Secondly, Argentina remained neutral through most of the war, only declaring support for the Allies once Axis defeat was imminent and because of mounting pressure from the United States.

The pressure from the United States began in early 1946 while Perón was serving as Vice-President to Edelmiro Farrell.⁴⁹ Perón was already an expert manipulator of Argentine politics. He recommended Farrell declare war against the Axis powers to ease these tensions with the United States who were convinced that the Argentine government was pro-Nazi.⁵⁰ Perón was aware that the victors of World War II would dominate world politics for the foreseeable future. Perón's recommendation of a declaration of war on Germany was a calculated risk, one that he presented to Germany and one that would help Argentina in the future. It was a false declaration of war. Uki Goñi summarizes Perón's thoughts and feelings in *The Real ODESSA*:

This false declaration of war had a clear purpose: 'We hadn't lost contact with Germany, despite the break in diplomatic relations,' Perón would say in 1967. 'Things being so we received an unusual request. Even though it may seem contradictory at first, Germany benefits from our declaration of war: if Argentina becomes a belligerent country, it has the right to enter Germany when the end arrives; this means that our planes and ships would be in a

⁴⁸ Allied forces did not act as openly as this suggests but the United States, Great Britain and Soviet Union were all aware of each other's actions during this period. Peron would have to act even more secret as to not alert the allied governments.

⁴⁹ Page, *Peron*, 61.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 76.

position to render a great service. At that point we had the commercial planes of the FAMA line [Argentine Merchant Air Fleet] and the ships we had bought from Italy during the war. That is how a great number of people were able to come to Argentina. We preferred to make the imperialist powers of the day believe we had finally given in to their belligerent requests. By then we were better off showing some good behavior, especially to win time,' Perón said. 'There was, of course, a group of idiots who accused of weakness. Those sorry souls who never understand anything of what's going on.'⁵¹

Argentina would not have had access to Germany at all if it remained neutral and were already facing economic sanctions by the United States for refusing to declare war on Germany in 1944.⁵² These sanctions caused Perón to reevaluate Argentina's position in world politics and to assess ways in which he could remain loyal to Germany without crippling Argentina's economic future.

During World War II, Argentina's economy moved away from its agriculture base and into the modern industrial age. Troubles between Buenos Aires and Washington forced Argentina to move away from importing goods and towards producing their own and their exports of agriculture products had produced a favorable trade balance.⁵³ Postwar Europe would need Argentina's meats and grain to feed its citizens. However, Argentina would need the machinery to manufacture these goods and importing them from abroad would be the only way. Great Britain was Argentina's only hope for these machines but they were in a financial crisis and could not afford to send any machinery. Perón had to look elsewhere for the technology that could boost Argentina into the modern age. With importing and trade leading to a dead end, Perón decided to import the knowledge behind the machines and not the machines themselves.

⁵¹Goñi, *The Real ODESSA*, 24.

⁵² Page, *Peron*, 76.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 169

Perón's first step was to reevaluate Argentina's immigration policy. Perón's fascination with Germany and Italy led him to make decrees that favored the immigration of persons from Fascist countries. Perón introduced forty guidelines for immigration during the presentation of his first five-year plan in 1947. Gerald Steinacher sums up Perón's new immigration policy in his book, *Nazis on the Run*. He states:

Immigration was to be specific and selective. Certain groups of people, particular specialists, and those from a list of preferred countries of origin were given preferential treatment. In additions, immigrants were targeted who came from a particular cultural and linguistic background which would make them easily integrated into society.⁵⁴

Perón's new laws essentially stated that Argentina was targeting Nazis and members of the Italian-Fascist regime without actually saying it. Perón was easing the transition and was expediting the process of immigrants from "targeted backgrounds." Former Nazis were able to easily assimilate to Argentinian society from the moment they arrived.

Perón received his Nazis but not in the fashion he envisioned. The end of the war coincided perfectly with Perón's ascent to president. Had Perón been elected president during the war, he very well might have given his support to Germany. However, his presidency in 1946 came at a time where there was a mad scramble in Europe for former Nazi personnel. Because he was elected after the Axis lost, it meant that if he was to get Nazis, they likely were not the ones he wanted. Argentina simply could not compete with the other Allied nations in offering competitive

⁵⁴ Steinacher, *Nazis on the Run*, 215.

contracts. Furthermore, it was much more difficult to get them to Argentina with the Allied forces actively hunting them for possible prosecution.

Juan Carlos Goyeneche became Perón's advisor whose job was to make connections with high-ranking officials of the Third Reich.⁵⁵ Goyeneche came from an affluent, political family. He worked closely with the Ausland-SD, an intelligence branch of the SS⁵⁶. The Ausland-SD was a global espionage group who worked to spread the Nazi ideology around the globe.⁵⁷ Their main headquarters was located in Argentina. Goyeneche also had close ties to the Argentine foreign minister. While on a trip to Rome, Goyeneche met Perón who was on his military training trip with the Italian army. Perón and Goyeneche established a professional relationship based on the mutual appreciation of Fascism. Goyeneche had already established alliances with Germany and Italy. When Perón began sending Argentines to Europe to establish contacts with potential Nazi immigrants, Goyeneche was originally supposed to act alone in secret.

Perón wasted no time setting up contacts in Europe to begin the process of locating and recruiting Nazis. Classified United States documents show that Argentinian secret networks were known to exist as early as 1946, which is the year Perón was elected president.⁵⁸ Along with Perón changing the immigration policy to

⁵⁵ Goni, *The Real ODESSA*, 2.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁵⁷ Hugo Fernandez Artucio, *The Nazi Octopus in South America* (London, England: Robert Hale Limited, 1943), 23-4

⁵⁸ Central Intelligence Agency (hereafter CIA), "Illegal immigration of Germans to Argentina Document", http://www.foia.cia.gov/sites/default/files/document_conversions/1705143/NAZI%20ESCAPE%20ROUTES%20TO%20ARGENTINA_0001.pdf, 2

target Germans specifically, its clear that Perón knew he had to act quickly if he was going to get the Nazis he thought could help Argentina the most.

Ratlines

The secretive nature surrounding the escape networks in Europe made research difficult when attempting to cross check names and routes for verification. These escape routes are known as ratlines. The purpose of ratlines was to establish a secret and organized network of contacts to make contact, house, protect and facilitate the movement of former Nazis through Europe and into countries that granted asylum, without alerting Allied Forces. Throughout the research for this paper, hundreds of names have come up as having been involved in the ratlines. Very few names come up in multiple sources and there can be little doubt that some men changed their names or used aliases for protection. This was the case for Adolf Eichmann who used the alias Ricardo Klemment according to his Italian identity card.⁵⁹ Names do not often appear between primary and secondary sources. Most names appear in many texts while few others appear once but are given a large significance in the overall picture, as in the case of Goyeneche. Goyeneche's name is mentioned throughout Uki Goni's research but does not appear in Steinacher's nor Weisenthal's. This shows that although sufficient research has been done on ratlines, a lot of research and analysis remains. With the clandestine nature of ratlines, written documentation is scarce.

Once Perón had determined he could get actually get Nazis and positioned Argentina to receive them with his new immigration policies, all that was left was to

⁵⁹ Goñi, *The Real ODESSA*, 299

get the Nazis across the Atlantic Ocean without the United States or the Soviet Union finding out. Juan Perón needed a way to get former Nazis into Argentina without alerting Allied authorities that were in Europe attempting to locate and arrest these men. Most ratlines were designed to move former Nazis to South America. It is unclear exactly when these ratlines began in Europe and there is little evidence that Perón started them while acting as the Minister of Labor, however, a document written in July of 1946 that was retrieved from the United States Freedom of Information Act indicates that Sweden was aware of and trying to shatter these networks as early as July 1946.⁶⁰ Many networks existed and they went by various names. Some networks were designed to target ardent high-ranking Nazi officials; others were aimed at any Nazis who feared for their lives.

Creating these networks clandestinely was important. Allied forces tried to stop these men from escaping to non-extradition countries. In actuality, the Allied forces, more specifically the United States, knew about these ratlines and made little attempts to stop them. The United States viewed these escape routes as “anti-communist movements”. The earliest mention of Nazi ratlines found in the CIA archives is a document between an unnamed USFA⁶¹ agent and the United States Army in 1948. According to the document by 1945, the U.S. already knew that these ratline networks existed. Furthermore, the document states that, “...some high officers held it necessary to organize all these elements in some way, not as a clandestine movement but as a kind of anti-communist legion, ready to fight

⁶⁰ CIA, “Illegal immigration of Germans to Argentina Document”, 2

⁶¹ It is unclear if USFA stands for the United States Fire Association, which would make little sense in this context or if it’s a misprint of USAF, the United States Air Force.

Bolshevism, at the moment by intelligence work, and in the case of another war with arms.”⁶² By the end of 1945, the US Army already knew that these networks existed but allowed them to continue under surveillance because they were viewed as anti-communist movements and not to spread the Nazi ideology. The U.S. was already setting itself up against the Soviet Union and preparing for the Cold War.

The same document discussed the liberation of known Nazi war criminals from Allied prisons in Europe and accuses a Harmut Lauterbacher as being the leader of this operation.⁶³ Most importantly the document states, “Finally the Ambassador of Argentina in Rome offered Harmut Lauterbacher to go for some time to Argentina to look for the possibilities of bringing Germans, ..., and factories to Argentina for work.”⁶⁴ Ratlines to Argentina are confirmed to exist by 1945, although they likely existed before and were not uncovered until 1945.

Many people acted as contacts and facilitators along the ratlines. Depending on where the Nazi member’s final destination was, the contacts were entirely different. Ratlines were responsible for getting former Nazis into Argentina, the Soviet Union, Syria, Egypt, Brazil and even Canada.⁶⁵ In Argentina’s case, there were many contacts in Europe. Perón did not want to leave anything to chance. The routes used for these ratlines varied tremendously. To get into Argentina, these men went through Scandinavia, Spain, Italy, or Turkey. This shows just how many people

⁶²Central Intelligence Agency, “Anti-Communist Covenant in Germany”, http://www.foia.cia.gov/sites/default/files/document_conversions/1705143/STEINER%2C%20FELIX%20MARTIN_0003.pdf, 1

⁶³ Harmut Lauterbacher is the best translation from the heavily faded document in the CIA archives. Another document produced in 1950 refers to Harmut as Hans and labels him a leader of the Hitler Youth.

⁶⁴ CIA, “Anti-Communist Covenant in Germany”, 2

⁶⁵ Kristensen, Oral History, 14

were involved and just how prominent Perón's people were in Europe. The most prominent escape routes ventured through Scandinavia, into Madrid before finally heading to Argentina.

Many former Nazis fled to Sweden and Denmark once it was clear the war was over. Perón sent his people into these countries to make contact and discuss the possibility of employment in Argentina. Perón's number one recruiter was a man named Carlos Schulz. He was tasked with finding Nazi soldiers and Nazi aeronautical experts. This link to Scandinavia was bankrolled by Perón's newly founded aeronautics program, according to Uki Goñi.⁶⁶ Schulz was successful in recruiting men and getting them into Argentina. A letter written sometime after November 1947, between unknown members of the OSS states that Schulz was arrested in connection to passport fraud.⁶⁷ Passport fraud was the preferred way to get Nazis "legally" into Argentina. According to Goñi, Schulz arrived in Denmark carrying a thousand landing permits issued by Perón's immigration office, as well as letters of recommendation to free prisoners of war.⁶⁸ Perón was making a large commitment to former Nazis by sending Schulz with a thousand authorized permits to hand out.

The same document accuses Perón's legations sent to Europe as receiving payments by the Perón government.⁶⁹ Although Perón is not identified by name, legations are part of government delegation and consist of government employees and are therefore on the government payroll. One correspondence from an

⁶⁶ Uki Goñi, *The Real Odessa*, 128.

⁶⁷ CIA, "Illegal Immigration of Nazis from Germany to Argentina", 3

⁶⁸ Goñi, *The Real Odessa*, 128.

⁶⁹ CIA, "Illegal Immigration of Nazis from Germany to Argentina", 4

American Intelligence official states that the Argentine Legation in Denmark, including the counselor and first secretary, were receiving payments for every “body”⁷⁰ that arrived in Argentina.⁷¹ The document makes it sound as if any former member of the Third Reich was being recruited and that the Argentine Legation was performing these duties simply for monetary gain. Denmark accused the Argentine Legation with issuing passports to suitable Germans.⁷² This aligns with Schulz’s admission to Swedish authorities. The legation was asked to leave Denmark. The Argentine legation to Sweden was also accused of participating in the smuggling of Germans to Argentina. Sweden chose not to take any action in fear of jeopardizing business contracts in Argentina.⁷³ An unfortunate outcome of the war in Europe was the destabilization of the European economy. Losing government contracts abroad could affect trade and further hurt the economy.

Spain became a popular destination for Nazis on the run. A secret and heavily redacted information report sent to unknown persons on February 20th, 1948 had the subject: Nazi Aid Organization in Argentina.⁷⁴ The document gives details to two escape organizations in Spain. Spain was a popular destination for Nazi war criminals because of its neutrality during the war and many sources indicate that Spain was usually the last destination for former Nazis before boarding a plane or

⁷⁰ In this instance, body refers to a live person and not a dead body

⁷¹ CIA, “Illegal Immigration of Nazis from Germany to Argentina”, 4

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ CIA, “Illegal Immigration of German to Argentina”, 5

⁷⁴ CIA, “Nazi Aid Organization in Argentina Information Report”,

http://www.foia.cia.gov/sites/default/files/document_conversions/1705143/NAZI%20ESCAPE%20ROUTES%20TO%20ARGENTINA_0005.pdf, 2

boat headed to Argentina.⁷⁵ The information report states that, “a Franco-Spanish religious order is at the bottom of a powerful escape organization...” and that “...the congregation takes escapees into Spain disguised as priests....”⁷⁶ Using priests attire as disguise to move former Nazis through Europe fits with the clandestine nature of the secret networks.

Perón was actively sending personnel into Europe to make contact with potential Nazi refugees in 1947. What started as a small clandestine operation quickly became a coordinated effort to secure as many Nazis as possible before the Soviet Union and the United States could. He made it known what he was attempting by not only sending personal contacts into Europe but also eventually recruiting his legations in Europe to help facilitate. This was a bold strategy that if discovered, immediately incriminated Perón. He was able to act somewhat openly knowing that Allied forces were also active in recruiting Nazis for their own programs.

NAZIS IN ARGENTINA

Providing work for Nazi refugees was an important aspect of convincing the men to immigrate to Argentina. Perón provided work to Nazi exiles. The Compañía Argentina para Proyectos y Realizaciones Industriales or CAPRI,⁷⁷ was the main employer of Nazis in Argentina.⁷⁸ CAPRI was founded by Horst Carlos Fuldner, an ex SS officer who was born in Argentina. Fuldner became Perón’s key recruiter in Europe and was tasked with securing and transferring Nazis through Europe and

⁷⁵ Sources include Raanan Rein’s *Argentina, Israel, and the Jews*, Uki Goñi’s *The Real ODESSA*, Gita Sereny’s, *Into That Darkness*, and Gerald Steinacher’s *Nazis on the Run*.

⁷⁶ CIA, “Nazi Aid Organization in Argentina Information Report”, 1

⁷⁷ The Compañía Argentina para Proyectos y Realizaciones Industriales directly translated to English is Argentine Society for Industrial Projects and their Execution.

⁷⁸ Steinacher, *Nazis on the Run*, 260.

into Argentina.⁷⁹ He returned to Argentina because of fears of being arrested for his transgressions. Along with a generous state contract from Perón, Fuldner started his surveyor business and hired fellow Nazi refugees. Carlos Warner Eduardo Schulz, the same Schulz that was arrested in Sweden on suspicion of passport fraud, was also key in the CAPRI operations. Schulz was the Argentine contact in Scandinavia. Schulz was arrested in 1947 in Sweden and told officers he was in Sweden offering generous contracts to aviation experts to work in South America.⁸⁰ At its peak, CAPRI employed nearly 300 people, most of them being Nazi refugees.⁸¹ CAPRI allowed those German immigrants who lacked science and technology skills, and Spanish speaking capabilities to live and work in close quarters with other German speakers.

CAPRI helped in communications between employees and their families still in Europe and sometimes fronted money needed to bring the families of the Nazis to Argentina.⁸² Perón allegedly visited the CAPRI headquarters in Northern Argentina. The German Magazine, *Bunte*, ran a picture of Perón on a train sitting next to the infamous war criminal Adolf Eichmann in 1960, but it is unknown when the picture was taken.⁸³ Eichmann was considered one of the major organizers of the Holocaust. Eichmann's infamy grew, because he was the most prominent Nazi figure found and captured in South America.

⁷⁹ There is some disconnect between sources when referring to Perón's number one recruiter. Some list Goyeneche while others list Fuldner. Goñi lists Goyeneche while Steinacher lists Fuldner as Perón's number one recruiter in Europe.

⁸⁰ CIA, "Illegal immigration of Nazis from Germany to Argentina", 4

⁸¹ Steinacher, *Nazis on the Run*, 260.

⁸² Walters, *Hunting Evil*, 263.

⁸³ Goñi, *The Real Odessa*, 303.

CAPRI operated as an umbrella company to provide work and pay for Nazi refugees while they planned their next moves. No record exists of any actual work or projects being completed by CAPRI. Some Nazis used their time at CAPRI as a springboard for other jobs and professions. Internationally famous hydrologist Armin Schoklitsch spent time working for CAPRI before finding a home as emeritus professor at the University of Tucuman.⁸⁴ While others, like Fritz Maria Kuper, stayed at CAPRI for many years. Kuper was Hitler's inspector at the transport ministry and engineer at the Nuremburg port and the Reich's expert bridge builder.⁸⁵ Perón funded CAPRI until 1953 when Argentina's economy began to struggle again.

CAPRI serves as an indictment to Perón's insistence on bringing Nazi refugees to Argentina. He was not satisfied with just securing former Nazis in Argentina because he was sympathetic. Perón bankrolled an entire company to employ up 300 former Nazis to provide work and income, even if no actual work was performed.

PERÓN'S NAZIS

Juan Perón was successful in his pursuit, bringing in over 300 former Nazis. While most were just seeking asylum from Allied forces, Perón had specifically targeted a number of former Nazis to improve Argentina scientifically, technologically, and militarily. Some Nazis recruited by Perón produced exactly what they said they would, even if the costs outweighed the benefits, as was the case with the Pulqui II jet that was canceled in the prototype stage. Others oversold their

⁸⁴ Steinacher, *Nazis on the Run*, 261.

⁸⁵ Goñi, *The Real Odessa*, 302.

accomplishments to gain an all expenses paid trip out of Europe and a blank check to continue their research. Others simply fulfilled their obligations and left to find better paying contracts. All in all, Perón's attempts at rapid industrialization, and boosting Argentina's economy failed. The money he spent far outweighed the services received. Argentina was so far behind Germany as far as industrialization goes, that simply getting the Argentina infrastructure caught up to the modern standards of the time period used up all the money Perón made available.

Perón was responsible for bringing Adolf Eichmann to Argentina. Adolf Eichmann was the man in charge of logistics in the mass killing of Jews during the Holocaust. He organized the deportation of Jews to ghettos and extermination camps. Author Uki Goñi describes Eichmann's job as, "Eichmann's office for 'Jewish Affairs' fed the furnaces for the industrial extermination of the Jews by arranging their registration, roundup and deportation to Hitler's concentration camps in German-occupied Europe."⁸⁶ Eichmann's immigration could best be seen as a token gesture of good faith. Perón would import even the most notorious Nazi war criminals.

After Germany fell in 1945, Eichmann went into hiding. Moving around Europe between Germany, Austria and Italy before securing his trip to Argentina. Once in Argentina, Eichmann learned that Buenos Aires had a firmly rooted German community, with its own neighborhoods, private clubs, schools and restaurants⁸⁷. Eichmann, now using the name Ricardo Klemment for security purposes, started working at Perón's CAPRI soon after arriving. Once the government contracts for

⁸⁶ Goñi, *The Real Odessa*, 295

⁸⁷ Neal Bascomb, *Hunting Eichmann* (New York: Houghton Mifflin), 76

CAPRI dried up and they were forced to declare bankruptcy, Eichmann moved to Tucumán, a rural area in Northern Argentina. Eichmann remained there until his capture in 1960.

Eichmann benefited from CAPRI, which offered him a job and the government contracts that helped pay his wages. While with CAPRI, Eichmann's sole job was to monitor and manage a group of surveyors. Perón received little if anything in return for bringing Eichmann to Argentina. No evidence exists of Perón recruiting Eichmann to Argentina, instead according to Goñi; Eichmann initiated the contact to some of Perón's men in Europe to help him.⁸⁸ Perón brought in other Nazi refugees for more useful reasons, although they too were based in fantasy. Ronald Richter was specifically brought to Argentina to help advance the industrialization, militarization and modernization of the country but failed to deliver.

Ronald Richter was a low ranking German physicist who convinced Perón that he had understood the technology of nuclear fission, which he had not. He also convinced Perón that he knew numerous other scientific secrets of Nazi Germany, such as how to create the hydrogen bomb.⁸⁹ Convinced that Richter could push Argentina's nuclear power program forward, Perón offered unlimited capital to reproduce his research. Richter received the money and built a state-of-the-art facility on Huemul Island in the middle of Patagonia. Richter began his experiments in 1950 and by 1951 he wrote Perón announcing his success of nuclear power. Perón assembled the world's media and announced that Argentina had nuclear power and could sell atomic energy in "liter and half-liter bottles for family and

⁸⁸ Goñi, *The Real ODESSA*, 300

⁸⁹ Ronald C. Newton, *The Nazi Menace in Argentina* (Stanford: Stanford Press), 379

industrial use.”⁹⁰ This turned out to be a total farce as Richter was never able to reproduce his results on an industrial scale. Later that year, Perón sent a group of scientist to check on Richter’s research, noting that all he had managed to do was “explode hydrogen in an electrical arc.”⁹¹ Perón shut down the nuclear program in 1951 at a loss of \$62 Million dollars.⁹²

Not all of Perón’s Nazi refugees were failures. Many enjoyed successful careers at institutions, especially the scientists. However, few would make the significant impact that Perón was hoping for when he actively recruited men with checkered pasts.

Kurt Tank was a famous airplane designer in Germany and worked on many designs for the Luftwaffe. During the “brain drain” of post-World War II Germany, Tank had the option to emigrate to the United States, the Soviet Union or Argentina. Tank decided on the latter because of the free hand they offered him.⁹³ In 1947, Tank arrived in Buenos Aires with numerous designs for aircraft that he had taken from his airbase in Germany. Tank quickly convinced Perón that he could improve the Argentine Air Force if he could bring his former colleagues in to work with him. Perón obliged and notified his contacts throughout Europe of the names he was seeking. When his colleagues arrived, Tank began working on the Pulqui II jet fighter.⁹⁴ In 1951, Perón and Tank presented the aircraft to the world media. Perón hoped to prove that Argentina could be a technological leader in the world on the

⁹⁰ Newton, *The Nazi Menace in Argentina*, 379

⁹¹ Walters, *Hunting Evil*, 250.

⁹² Mariscotti, “El Secreto Atomico de Huemul,” *Physics today*, March 2004, 14.

⁹³ Newton, *The Nazi Menace in Argentina*, 376.

⁹⁴ Walters, *Hunting Evil*, 251.

culsp of innovation. The prototype of the Pulqui II jet worked as described. However, Argentina still had a policy of import-substitution industrialization, meaning that parts that should have been expertly made and imported had to be manufactured locally with primitive technology.⁹⁵ Parts that should have been made on special machinery, such as the fuselage, were instead constructed by hand in Argentina. Furthermore, the divide in scientific knowledge between the Nazi scientists and the Argentine scientists was too great to overcome or teach in a timely fashion.⁹⁶ The plane never advanced past the prototype stage as money dried up. Perón's second term was hit with an economic crises and the project had to be canceled.

The success of the Pulqui jet fighter got the attention of Hans-Ulrich Rudel, the most decorated German soldier and pilot in all of World War II.⁹⁷ Rudel understood that he had no future in post-war Europe and elected to immigrate to Argentina. In Argentina Rudel was fascinated by the respect he received. In Steinacher's book, *Nazis on the Run*, he quotes Rudel as saying:

The offer of a job as air force adviser in Argentina led me to cross the Atlantic. Two days after my arrival in Buenos Aires, I was received by the then-aviation minister, Brigadier Major Cesar Ojeda. He extended the President's greetings and welcomed me with a respect and friendliness that made a considerable impression on me after the bitter years of imprisonment and the time that followed, for throughout the whole world, hatred was directed at all things German. Here in the circles of the Argentinian army, we encountered no prejudices. In their eyes, we might have lost the war, but not our honour.⁹⁸

⁹⁵ Jonathon D. Hagood, abstract to "Why Does Technology Transfer Fail? Two Technology Transfer Projects from Peronist Argentina," *Comparative Technology Transfer and Society* 1 (2006).

⁹⁶ Hagood, abstract to "Why Does Technology Transfer Fail?"

⁹⁷ Steinacher, *Nazis on the Run*, 224.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 225.

All Argentinians warmly received Rudel and admired his work in Germany during the war. He had found a place that accepted former Nazis hospitably. Rudel had finally found a home. However, Rudel's time in Argentina was short. Following the ouster of Perón in 1955, Rudel left for other parts of South America to offer his services and find consistent income.

Perón's Nazis were largely failures whose projects routinely ran over budget without producing any results. Perón was unable to compete with the United States, the Soviet Union and Great Britain for the truly remarkable specialists. The Third Reich was on the cutting edge in science, technology, and warfare. Perón's Nazis were never able to recreate their successes because Argentina lacked the infrastructure and industrialization to provide a stable backbone to the research and technology that the Nazis were bringing. Furthermore, most of the Nazis were largely frauds who lied about their knowledge and capabilities to entice Perón to get them out of Europe and set them up with large contracts.

CONCLUSION

Using declassified CIA documents for this research presented a unique perspective. While the U.S. Government, especially the state department, had a bias against Argentina following the war because of Argentina's actions during the war, the CIA documents offer a unique perspective of a world power adjusting its focus from World War II to the Cold War. The United States did little to stop these illegal immigrations despite knowing about them as early as 1945. After the war, holding former Nazis accountable became less of a concern than the spread of communism. According to a 1948 document by a U.S. official, these Nazi immigration networks

were anti-communist movements.⁹⁹ The United States quickly moved on from the Nazis. They continued their own operation to recruit and hire Nazis for work in the United States and seamlessly moved on to the next threat, the spread of communism from the Soviet Union. The CIA documents used in this paper show a “watch and see” approach to these Nazi escape networks. The U.S. was content to monitor the routes and record “who and where” rather than making any attempts to stop the networks from facilitating the illegal immigration of Nazis to Argentina.

Juan Perón knowingly brought Nazi refugees to Argentina in exchange for their science and technology and made sure the infrastructure was in place to provide for and ease their assimilation to Argentinian society. When World War II ended, Nazis fleeing persecution needed a country to grant them asylum and not extradite them back to Europe. Perón wanted to modernize and industrialize Argentina to make it a world power even though it lacked the science and technological acumen to achieve the feat on its own. However, none of this would have been possible unless there was a government official helping pull the strings necessary to help the Nazis flee to Argentina under the careful watch of the Allied powers. In his memoirs, Perón states that he often delivered speeches against the Nuremberg trials, which were an outrage that history will not forgive.¹⁰⁰ In reality, the CIA documents demonstrate that Juan Perón’s motivations were much different. He saw an opportunity for Argentina to get to the cutting edge of science, technology and modern warfare by accelerating the development of it internally. Perón’s Nazis largely failed in their exploits and he was left with a significant number of Nazi war

⁹⁹ CIA, “Anti-Communist Movement in Germany”, 1

¹⁰⁰ Uki Goñi, *The Real ODESSA*, 100

criminals, unfilled contracts, and a struggling economy. Likewise he was under the watch of Allied forces and paid the price of a tainted reputation. The science and technology that Perón received from these men is tainted with the blood of thousands minorities used as slave laborers, live testing subjects and/or as human collateral.

Argentina's long history of European immigration allowed it to become a destination of choice for Nazis fleeing Europe. Argentina's large autonomous German communities allowed Nazi immigrants to assimilate and "disappear" among the other Argentinians of German descent. These communities, as well as Juan Perón's government, offered jobs to these men that allowed them to restart their lives. The jobs offered stability and a way for the illegal immigrants to eventually bring their families to Argentina. Argentina already had the community infrastructure to handle immigrants and assimilate them efficiently.

The decisions Juan Perón made after being elected president regarding the illegal immigration of Nazis into Argentina are directly related to his career in the military. Juan Perón was a military man at heart. He loved the military and he loved Argentina. Seeing nationalism and militarism blend in Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy appealed to his desires as President of Argentina, to move Argentina forward. Perón was not a Nazi nor a Fascist but the fundamentals of these ideologies appealed to him as a military leader. Joseph Page describes Perón's feelings towards Nazism and Fascism, "A fundamental premise guiding Perón held that Mussolini's Italy and Hitler's Germany were developing an alternative to capitalism and communism. World War II, in [Perón's] view, was no more than a concerted effort

by these dominant systems to crush their budding competitors.”¹⁰¹ Germany and Italy were not aggressors to Perón; they were just trying to protect their ideology against the capitalist Americans and communist Soviets. The middle ground appealed to Perón and to Perón, this meant strengthening the state through the working class.¹⁰² Argentina’s economy was most important in modernizing Argentina to the levels of Germany, the United States and Great Britain. When his trade requests fell short, it created a unique intertwining of Perón’s sympathies for former Nazis and his need to modernize Argentina.

¹⁰¹ Page, *Peron*, 89

¹⁰² Robert J. Alexander, *The Peron Era* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1951), 155

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