



*This report was issued by TGS Buenos Aires, with inputs from Isaac & Hudson. It covers the period from the mid 1940s to now*

### I. HIGHLIGHTS/KEY PRIORITIES

- Following the end of World War II and the end of fascism in Europe, Approximately 9,000 Nazi workers fled to South America in escape routes known as ‘ratlines.’
- The Dictatorship under General Juan Perón was welcoming to these people, even taking illegal measures to aid them.
- German investigators set out to find ‘living fugitives’ to prosecute for their actions in the Holocaust.
- Evidence, leading to actual people in few cases, has led towards certainty of Nazi existence in Argentina

### II. Situation Overview

In 1945, World War II came to an end, when the fascist governments of Europe were finally defeated. As a new government took power in Germany, the Nazis, their past rulers, became targets for persecution because of their accountability for the Holocaust. A vast majority of these Nazis fled immediately, with the help of the Vatican, and found hospitality in South American nations such as Argentina, Brazil, Uruguay, Paraguay, Bolivia, and Chile. Among these runaways were famous Nazi officials Adolf Eichmann, a major organizer of the Holocaust, and Franz Stangl, commanding officer of the Treblinka concentration camp. Argentina’s new president General Juan Perón, who took power in 1946, welcomed these new immigrants. He ignored the law to accommodate them. He first dismissed their lack of travel documents. They were given new identities, supported by Argentine citizenship and passports. Germany, finding the evils of Nazism inexcusable, desired to obtain and prosecute as many fugitives as possible. Eventually, most of them would be traced to South America.

### III. Humanitarian Needs and Response

#### What happened in Argentina after WWII?

General Juan Perón became President of Argentina on June 4, 1996, the year after the end of World War II. Striving to gain popularity, both inside and outside of the country, the Perónist government supported other governments. In return, they wanted support from them. **Perón was accepting of similar Socialist governments, such as the Nazis. However, the Nazi regime was overthrown at the same time. In their time of need, Perón was there for their aid and security.** The issue with accepting the Nazis into Argentina was that Juan Perón created greater conflicts with other countries. Although it was something he believed in, it negatively affected his international relationships.

### **Why was this place a safe-haven for Nazi war criminals?**

After World War II and the fall of Nazi Socialism in 1945, Nazis and other fascists sought refuge in South America to escape punishment for the crimes they had committed. The Vatican helped the Catholic Nazis escape by setting up routes, referred to as 'ratlines,' which led to South American countries, mainly Argentina. **The Argentine government, under Juan Perón, opened its doors to these men. They ignored their lack of documents, and responded by giving them new, fake identities.** Adolf Eichmann, one of the main organizers of the Holocaust, became Ricardo Klement, a citizen of Buenos Aires, Argentina. It has been discovered that "President General Juan Perón sold 10,000 blank Argentine passports to Odessa - the notorious organization set up to protect former SS men in event of defeat." The issue at hand for the escaped Nazis was that their safety in Argentina did not ensure their safety from the rest of the world. Germany had its eyes set on prosecuting those responsible for the Holocaust. Seeing as though the fugitives had simply disappeared, they began a worldwide search for Nazi contributors. The transformed Nazis could not be completely sure that their new identities could be successful in hiding them forever.

### **How did this change the world's view of Argentina?**

**Once it was discovered that Argentina provided a safe-haven for Nazis, most of the world, in shock, lost respect for the Perónist government. They did not agree with Argentina for keeping these criminals safe. It was common that many countries wanted to prosecute all of the hiding Nazis for their involvement in the Holocaust.** There was a sense of uneasiness throughout them from knowing the Nazis were living a safe, normal life in Argentina after all they had done. Countries like Germany and Israel wanted to commence a search in Buenos Aires to capture the fugitives. The Israeli forces set out to seize high-ranking Nazi officials in Argentina, disregarding the fact that this "was a violation of international law." Adolf Eichmann, lieutenant colonel and notable organizer of the Holocaust, was captured in Buenos Aires, where he was recognized as *Ricardo Klement*, in 1960 and put on trial. Because the Nazi criminals were given false identities, some became untraceable. An attempt to arrest Josef Mengele failed, for the death camp doctor escaped to Paraguay, where there was no documentation of him. Other fugitives could have also died. In addition, international law could restrain countries from arresting the Nazis. Argentina's international relationships diminished.

## IV. Contacts

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