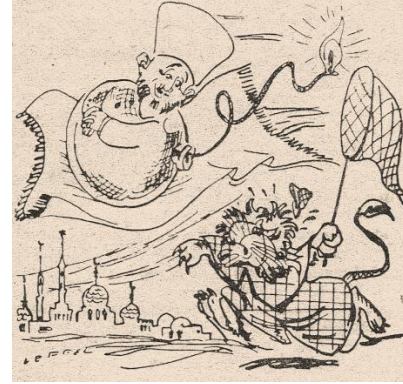




Nazis on the Run

Tripartite Networks in Europe-Mideast-America

Gerald Steinacher, a historian from the Austrian town of Innsbruck, is known for his research on the federal state of Tyrol under the Third Reich. His 2008 book traces how Nazis fled from Europe via Italy to South America after the end of World War II. This topic got a recent touch of import: on March 4, 2019, Pope Francis announced that the Vatican would open its archives on the reign of Pius XII, 1939-58, within two years. There will begin a “Vatican Phase” for historians too. Much can be gleaned on the post-war axis of Islamists and Nazis. A reason to briefly revisit Steinacher’s book.



Simon Wiesenthal 1946 – On the hunt for Eichmann and the Grand Mufti, Sketch “Weltecho”, in Wiesenthal 1947, p. 63

The author claims that his research proves that stories about a secret organization of former SS members are nothing but a myth. According to this thesis, **ODESSA**, the **Organisation Der Ehemaligen SS Angehörigen** (Organization of Former SS Members), did not exist, although hundreds of CIA/ODESSA reports show the contrary (see here a 1965 text on page 4). Before dealing with this finding in the context of the Mideast, an overview of the book is due. Steinacher discusses the southern escape route via Rome to Genoa and other Italian towns. He then explores the mechanism of obtaining a new identity by Red Cross papers, and details how Vatican circles helped. The reader learns a lot on the “Rat Run” from Germany through Italy and finally to the safe haven of Argentina. Italy, the author notes, was Europe’s back-yard. True, but it was also, like Spain and Portugal, the Middle East’s front yard.

Three major organizations helped Nazis escape. The Catholic Church believed this effort would contribute to the “re-Christianization” of Europe and feared the threat to Europe of paganism and communism. In the pursuit of its political and spiritual interests, this Church was all too quick to forgive Nazi war criminals.

The CIA, in the context of the Cold War, was eager to do business and assist former Nazis, such as Nikolaus Klaus Barbie (1913-1991). He became known as the “Butcher of Lyon” for having personally tortured French Gestapo prisoners while stationed in Lyon, France. After the war, United States intelligence services employed him for his anti-Marxist efforts and helped him escape to Bolivia. In 1983 he was extradited to France, where he was convicted of crimes against humanity. He died of cancer in 1991. In addition, the International Red Cross demonstrated great sympathy for war criminals and issued some twenty-five thousand identity papers, also for Adolf Eichmann (here on page 6). Steinacher deals with this, but some earlier organizations for helping Nazi fugitives are missing such as *Edelweiss*, *Spinne*, and *Sechsgestirn*.

Steinacher underlines three Nazi groups, those who: committed suicide at the war's end or later; were indicted or punished; or fled overseas, mostly to Argentina. Solid numbers are not available. The author estimates that 180 leading Nazis went to that place. Others say three hundred to eight hundred made their way there. Uki Goni reported that Argentina still protected about 49 files of Nazi immigrants in 2003.¹ Recently, the independent German researcher Volker Koop estimated that about six hundred Nazis emigrated, often those with some expert knowledge.²



For Muslim soldiers only: Nazi booklet *Islam and Jewry* containing the Grand Mufti's 1937 call to all Muslims to cleanse their lands of Jews that was also against Hitler's Haavara deal to yearly allow 10,000 go to Palestine

Europe-Mideast-America

Information for the Middle East, which is not a main topic of Steinacher's study, is hard to find. We know of three dozen cases of Nazi immigrants—in North Africa (Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia); in Arab neighbors of Israel; Saudi Arabia; Iran; and Afghanistan and Pakistan. From 1964 onward, estimates of the number of Nazis living in Arab countries climb beyond three thousand with Egypt as their main destination. In other words, to the Mideast escaped far more ex-Nazis than to all other world regions combined. This is valid if one includes professional experts and advisers, technicians, and physicians, such as Aribert F. Heim alias Tariq Farid Husain (1914-1992) who died in Cairo but made news only in 2008. He served at the Mauthausen concentration camp, killing and torturing inmates. In 1962, according to his son, Rüdiger Heim, he drove through France and Spain onward to Morocco, moving finally to Egypt via Libya. Besides the above-named categories, that is those who

- (1) committed suicide at the war's end or later,
- (2) were indicted, punished and jailed, or
- (3) fled overseas, mostly to Argentina, later also Bolivia, Chile and Ecuador,

there were in addition for the Middle East some other categories of former Nazis such as:

- (4) combatants who fought in wars of 1947-1949, 1956, or 1964 in Palestine/Israel, Egypt, and Algeria, see Boualem Sansal's 2008 book *Le village de l'allemand ou Le journal des frères Schiller*;
- (5) bureaucratic "shadow warriors" in security, prison management & propaganda;
- (6) military experts;
- (7) those who interacted with secret services of all sides like Otto Skorzeny, and
- (8) diplomats and envoys, connecting to the Arab League and UN organizations.

For lack of archival access, and because many changed their names when converting to Islam, the "shadow warriors" of category (5) and others of (6) and (7) were difficult to trace.

Clerical Collaborators

The author similarly describes "de-Nazification through conversion" to Catholicism as a means of obtaining assistance. He notes the role of the pro-Nazi bishop Alois Karl Hudal (1885-1963) and of the monastery escape route. Hudal tried to build bridges between the Nazi ideology and the Church.³

In 1937, Hudal sent his book *The Foundations of National Socialism* to Hitler. The Grand Mufti of Jerusalem sought a similar ideological convergence; as early as 1937 al-Hajj Amin al-Husaini appealed to all Muslims to cleanse their lands of Jews.⁴ The Nazis made a booklet of his appeal, added a section on *Islam and Bolshevism*, and translated it for their Muslim soldiers.⁵ However, there was a difference between clerical collaborators with the Nazis. Whereas Hudal said that fighting Jews as a race was anti-Christian, al-Husaini aspired to fight them as a “race.” According to Hudal’s ideological reasoning, a conflict could be settled if ideologies became compatible. Following al-Husaini’s **racist** line, the conflict was existential and could only end by the “annihilation of the other side, which could never change its race.”⁶

As for Nazi military experts (category 6), Cairo employed two units as advisers from 1949 to 1956. Ex-general Wilhelm Fahrmbacher led a group of military experts called “Armed Forces” with thirty-one men, and Wilhelm Voss of the Nazis’ wartime Škoda factories (he was not one of Hitler’s adjutants as Steinacher claimed on p. 290) led the unit called “Research Center for Explosives and Weapons” with fifteen men in 1953.⁷

Their numbers grew, but their contracts were not renewed, as the Egyptians became aware that Israel had forged links with some of them via spies such as Meir Max Bineth (1917-1954). These developments were intertwined with Israel’s Lavon Affair, which involved espionage actions in Egypt and led to Defense Minister Pinhas Lavon’s resignation in 1954. This gave Abd an-Nasir a pretext to overthrow and succeed President Muhammad Najib.⁸

President Muhammad Najib hired German advisors 1949-1956
his heir Abd an-Nasir wanted **East Germans** after 1961 & 1965

1975 Cover of Najib's Memoirs



However, Argentina hoped to attract up to half a million Germans right after the war, and President Juan Perón’s former Nazi experts built the country’s first jet fighter, the Pulqui II, in 1951. Argentina provided an example for Arabs. President Abd an-Nasir hired the aircraft designer and manufacturer Willy Messerschmitt and the missile expert Wolfgang Pilz, who in 1964 got Egypt’s first jet fighter, the Hulwan 300, airborne. Since Messerschmitt’s company also maintained a presence in Spain, Nazi circles there connected with Cairo as well. When the project ran short of money, India ultimately took over key parts for its Marut 24 jet.

As for the category of **former** Nazi **diplomats** (8), this is usually disregarded though it is a missing dimension at least for the Mideast. Some rebuilt old networks where family clans played a major role. In war time Berlin, al-Husaini used family members as aides like Salim, Safwa, Musa and Hamdi. For his part, Chancellor Konrad Adenauer insisted on re-employing so called indispensable experts despite their Nazi backgrounds. Too many became envoys of the Bonn Republic; this caused outrage with long-term results. In 1947, West Germans drew up a list of 576 names as candidates for future **Foreign Service**. Most of them staffed the service in 1952.

Of these, 195 had been Nazi Party **members**, 158 were even from the old Foreign Ministry, and fifty-seven had had an involvement with the Middle East.⁹ More research on these **diplomats**’ ties with ex-Nazis and their Islamist partners is required to substantiate the **long-lasting** “**brown-green**” **relationships** where some family clans played a major role.

ODESSA

New evidence has emerged on how these individuals overtly and covertly interacted. Steinacher mentions the 1974 movie *The Odessa File* based on the book by Frederick Forsyth that appeared two years before. Steinacher warns against falling for a myth that there was one organization under this cover name (7, 16, 296). So far, this is the author's main thesis.

But here is the problem: Beginning in the late 1940s and for the Middle East in the mid-1950s, American agents reported on ODESSA and pointed also at *tripartite circles* of ex-Nazis in the Americas (North and South), the Middle East, and Europe. After the fall of Perón's regime, the Argentine haven became less hospitable, some ex-Nazis took jobs in the Mideast often with Amin al-Husaini's support.

~~ATTACHMENT A10~~ RANDOM NOTES
DEM

ODESSA's latest planned escape was for HANS WALTER ZECH-NENTWICH, Ex-Capt. SS. This man was up for trail for the mass murder of 5,200 Polish Jews at PINSK. His escape to Egypt from BRUNSWICK PRISON.

ODESSA - its initials are for Organization DER ENEMALIGEN S. S. ANGEHÖRIGEN (organization of former members of the SS.

This Organization is also known as the "Spider's Web".

Head of ODESSA in Spain is former SS Colonel Otto "Scar-face" SKORZENY of resc (?) Mussoline fame.

Of the 2,000 odd ex-members of Hitler's SS Gestapo & SD members I list some of the most important on the wanted list and also active members of ODESSA: at present in Lima is OMAR AMIN VON LEERS who is Johann (or Johannes) von Leers - has made contact with Federico Schwend for the buying of queer dollar bills. The amount to be bought will be that of the equivalent of \$100,000 real monies. The price set is at 47 on the dollar - the plates made for "Operation Berhardt" of \$10, \$20, \$50 and \$100 are now in Sao Paulo, Brazil.

This queer monies are said to be sent to Cuba and then to find its way to the US. The \$100,000 in this writing is being given by the Egyptian Government.

One of ODESSA's main contact here is Baron Von Sothen at present second to the German Ambassador in Peru. At present he is now in Rio de Janeiro apparently on a month's vacation with wife and children - it is known the Baron von Sothen is still an ardent NAZI.

A 1965 report by the CIA on ODESSA activities in South America and the Middle East. It illuminates the "tripartite networks" of the *Spider's Web* in Europe, in the Middle East and the Americas. Obvious becomes here the escape of a wanted SS man from the United States to Egypt as well. This report mentions Umar Amin von Leers. Source: endnote 11.

For example the odious Nazi agitator Johann von Leers (1902-1965) moved from Buenos Aires to Cairo—in 1956 al-Husaini converted him to Islam, then called Umar Amin von Leers—to work in anti-Israeli campaigns sponsored by Abd an-Nasir's circles and the Arab League.¹⁰ He met men of the former Third Reich such as Anwar as-Sadat who spied for the Nazis, and was therefore expelled from the Egyptian army in 1942, and members of the above mentioned units (categories 4 to 8), including many "shadow warriors" (5) in Mideastern bureaucracies. The following CIA report illuminates a special Mideastern web.

has never been officially received by UAR President Jamal 'Abd-al-Nasir, but is persona grata with the following officials:

- (a) Ali Sabri, Minister of State for Presidential Affairs, UAR, who has granted him several interviews.
- (b) Anwar al-Sadat, president of the Afro-Asian Solidarity Council.
- (c) Muhammad 'Abd-al-Khalik Hassuna, secretary-general of the Arab League.
- (d) Former Grand Mufti of Jerusalem, Haj Amin-al-Husayni, through whom von Leers was initiated into Islam¹ and with whom he wants to make a pilgrimage to Mecca.
- (e) Brigadier General 'Abd-al-Hadi Haggada Pasha, Director of General Investigations Department of UAR Ministry of Interior.
- (f) Sayed Hafez 'Abd-al-Karim, secretary-general of Ministry of Economy and Commerce, UAR (Egyptian Region).

Von Leers assumes that he is under observation by the West German government. Knowing that the UAR values the maintenance of good relations with Bonn, particularly in the economic field, von Leers now limits his calls at government offices and occasionally sends instead his daughter, Gesine, or his wife to make them for him.

To lessen the possibility of surveillance by phone-tapping, von Leers planned to move on 1 October 1958 from his former address (#21 rue 83, Cairo-Ma'adi) to a larger house at #52 rue 11 in the same suburb, where he could have a direct telephone line². The Arab League will pay the costs of this move. For his services to the League he receives between 80 and 100 Egyptian pounds per month.

1958 report on Johann von Leers' network in Cairo. For the source see endnote 10.

American intelligence services monitored Nazi organizations that spanned those three regions. They mentioned for instance "List 1" of two thousand ex-members of the SS and the Gestapo, of which the most important ODESSA members were also on their "Most Wanted" list. Intelligence reports since 1964 often named ODESSA networks. Leers was said to be the new regional leader of the *Spider's Web* network, as it was also known, in Cairo, and former SS colonel Otto Skorzeny (1908-1975) was said to be its leader in Spain. In Cairo, Amin al-Husaini met with him in early 1953 to work out [weapons deals](#).¹¹

Outstanding Contribution

Three conclusions emerge. First, ODESSA was very much a reality and an operational term for American intelligence since 1947 when it appeared for the first time in US reports. To what degree Simon Wiesenthal contributed by his related reports to the [Americans](#) remains an open question.¹²

Although Steinacher is correct in including all the regional networks in his purview, he is not right to claim that ODESSA was nothing but a myth. To maintain this thesis, one needs to prove hundreds of American intelligence reports, often headlined ODESSA, to be wrong, or one has to allege that those reports were inventions by agents. I think Steinacher has dropped the claim that ODESSA was just a myth or did not exist. ODESSA was at least an umbrella network or common operational platform of cooperating individuals or groups just as he defines the networks (259). He mentioned Heinz Schnepfen's book on ODESSA but does not discuss his main arguments in detail, although Schnepfen offered examples of early texts on ODESSA like the U.S. intelligence report of 26 February 1948.¹³

Second, for the Middle East we need to include the Mideastern brown-green webs of ex-Nazi diplomats and their Islamist counterparts. It was not just the Americans who utilized ex-Nazis for intelligence and anticommunist purposes. Some Muslim leaders did the same, but they also wanted those ex-Nazis’ “anti-Jewish know-how” to fight against Israel. In the Mideast, the Nazis’ influence, and the camaraderie with them, never ceased. It was also “diplomatically rebuilt” by many former Nazi diplomats serving in Bonn again (category 8) and passed down through generations and clans. In this way some networks were rebuilt by ensuing circles.

Since 2015, especially in Germany, with a massive uncontrolled influx of Islamists to Europe, there grow again brown-green networks and red-green ones. They became much more complex. The difference: now it plays out not so much between far away regions like America-Mideast-Europe after 1945 but right in heartlands of democracies that often show themselves unable to find strong protections on borders and at home.

As Gerald Steinacher shows in an example of interactions, former SS colonel Walther Rauff (1906-1984), hidden by Bishop Giuseppe Siri (1906-1986) of Genoa, fled to Damascus in 1947. He helped to establish a secret service. In late 1949 he used a Red Cross document (like Adolf Eichmann did) and the fake name Bauermeister to flee from Genoa to Ecuador. There he worked for the Bayer Corporation and became a “rat runner.”

In 1960, Rauff visited Germany even under his real name. During the war, if General Erwin Rommel had been victorious, Rauff would have led an SS unit with the purpose of rounding up the Jews of Cairo and later of Palestine (on 30 November 1941, two days after Hitler had received the Grand Mufti al-Husaini in Berlin, “the Fuehrer” told the Italian Foreign Minister Ciano that he wanted (via the Caucasus) to invade Iran, Iraq, Syria and Palestine, “probably a war deciding move,” see here, pp. 881 and 902). Rauff invented the mobile gas vans that killed thousands of Jews, and after the 1961 Eichmann trial he was indicted for crimes against humanity,¹⁴ prompting him to flee to Chile. Governments there protected him from further prosecution, and in 1984 he died peacefully in Santiago. His funeral became a gathering of old Nazis who greeted each other with “Heil Hitler!”

Finally, in another representative case, Steinacher notes that Skorzeny introduced the Dutch Willem A.M. Sassen (1918-2002), a war reporter and wanted SS man, to Eichmann in Argentina in 1954 (248). Eichmann had arrived there on 14 July 1950 (296) as “Ricardo Klement, technician,” see picture above, carrying the Red Cross papers. Hudal’s circles had assisted him in his escape route. Thus, all the above-named groups contributed.

There are indications that Simon Wiesenthal discovered Eichmann’s whereabouts in 1953 and proposed capturing him in Argentina a year later. Why this took place six years later is another matter. Steinacher’s fine book provides much insight and the possibility to draw comparisons with developments in the Mideast and elsewhere. There are parallels and common characteristics between the functioning of al-Qaida clans and networks of Old Comrades. The author shows how the southern escape route worked, also the role of its unrepentant operators. *Nazis on the Run* is a solid academic contribution, and surely other academics will deal with related Mideastern matters.

Adolf Eichmann’s Passport w/ Red Cross Stamp CICR



Wolfgang G. Schwanitz

Gerald Steinacher: *Nazis auf der Flucht*. Wie Kriegsverbrecher über Italien nach Übersee entkamen (Nazis on the Run: How War Criminals Escaped Overseas via Italy), Studien Verlag, 2008, 380 pp., see also 2010.

This review first appeared in [Jewish Political Studies Review](#), 22(2010)1-2, 116-22. Updated, some links were added.

Endnotes

- 1 Uki Goni, *ODESSA* (Berlin: Assoziation A 2006), 9-10.
- 2 Volker Koop, *Hitlers Fünfte Kolonne. Die Auslandsorganisation der NSDAP* (Hitler's Fifth's Column: The Foreign Organization of the NSDAP) (Berlin: Bebra, 2009), 260. [German]
- 3 Alois Hudal, *Die Grundlagen des Nationalsozialismus* (The Foundations of National Socialism) (Leipzig: Günther, 1937). [German]
- 4 Muhammad Sabri, *Islam-Judentum-Bolschewismus* (Berlin: Juncker-Dünnhaupt, 1938), 5-21 [German], therein also the chapter Amin al-Husaini, *Islam-Judentum* (Berlin: Juncker-Dünnhaupt, 1938), 22-32: "Aufruf des Großmuftis an die islamische Welt" (Appeal of the Grand Mufti to the Islamic World. [1937, German]
- 5 For instance, for [Bosniaks](#) in SS units: *Veliki Muftija Jeruzalimski: Islam i Židovstvo* (The Grand Mufti of Jerusalem: Islam and Jewry) (Zagreb: Croat Printing, 1943). [Serbian]
- 6 Jeffrey Herf, *Hitlers Jihad*, in *Vierteljahreshefte für Zeitgeschichte* (2010)2, 280-81: Al-Husaini in an Arabic broadcast from Berlin to the Mideast: Arabs and Jews are in a struggle of races which ends only when one of the sides is finished.
- 7 Wolfgang G. Schwanitz, *Deutsche in Nahost 1946-1965* (Germans in the Middle East 1946-1965) (Munich: Haensel-Hohenhausen, 1998), Vol. 1, 208: "List of experts in both units, Cairo 04/30/53." [German]
- 8 For more, see reviews by Wolfgang G. Schwanitz on Shabtai Teveth, *Ben-Gurion's Spy: The Story of the Political Scandal That Shaped Modern Israel*, in *Orient*, 38 (1997): 3, 567-570, and of Khalid Muhi ad-Din, *Wa-al-An Atakallamu* (And Now I Am Talking), in *Der Islam*, 73 (1996): 2, 360-363.
- 9 See my review of the [biographical handbook](#) of the [German Foreign Service](#) [German]; Wolfgang G. Schwanitz, "'Doppelte': deutsche Gesandte in Kairo 1953-1963," in Wajih Atiq, Wolfgang G. Schwanitz, eds., *Misr wa Almaniya fi al-Qirmain at-Tasi'a Ashara wa al-'Ishrin fi dhau al-Watha'iq* (Egypt and Germany in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries as Reflected in Archives) (Cairo: Dar ath-Thaqafa, 1998), [Part 2](#), 212: "NSDAP Member List of 10/20/52;" [German] See also Kurt P. Tauber, *Beyond Eagle and Swastika*. German Nationalism since 1945 (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press 1967), 229-243.
- 10 US National Archives II, RG263, CIA Name/Subject Files, B12, Report on Leers, Cairo 09/19/56, 1; Propaganda Activities of Dr. Johann von Leers against Israel and West Germany [08/28-09/09/58], Secret, Cairo 03/12/59, 3 pp.
- 11 Ibid., Regional Security Officer, Memorandum on Cesar Ugarte, ODESSA, Nazis, Lists, Cairo 04/29/65, 1-8; Amin al-Husaini, *Mudhakkirat al-Hajj Muhammad Amin al-Husaini* (The Memoirs of al-Hajj Muhammad Amin al-Husaini), ed. Abd al-Karim al-Umar (Damascus: Al-Ahali, 1999), 177. [Arabic] For a variation of the CIA information in connection with Federico Schwend see also Guido Knopp: *Die SS. Eine Warnung an die Geschichte* (Munich: Bertelsmann 2002), 343 [German].
- 12 Simon Wiesenthal, *Ich jagte Eichmann* (I Haunted Eichmann) (Gütersloh: Mohn 1961) [German]
- 13 Heinz Schnepfen, *ODESSA und das Vierte Reich* (ODESSA And The Fourth Reich) (Berlin: Metropol 2007), 19: Counter Intelligence Corps, Alleged Member Of ODESSA Group, German Source, 02/19/48 [German].
- 14 Ibid., Ambassador Report, in 05/05/42 Rauff wanted "to discuss the liquidation of the Jews in Cairo following the capture of that city by the German forces. Rommel was disgusted and sent him home." [Cairo 06/01/45, 2.] For more see also Barry M. Rubin, Wolfgang G. Schwanitz, *Nazis, Islamists and the Making of the Modern Middle East* (Yale UP: 2014).