

How Nazi war criminal Josef Mengele cheated justice for 34 years

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Josef Mengele was the infamous Angel of Death at the Nazi concentration camp in Auschwitz, Poland. As a doctor with Hitler's dreaded SS seeking to unlock a genetic basis for a superior race, he conducted macabre experiments, primarily on twin inmates, using them like laboratory animals. He also became known as the Great Selector for his role of deciding which of the prisoners were to be summarily killed as they were brought in by the carloads. For more than 34 years after World War II, he eluded his pursuers, and although he died in 1979, the world did not learn of his death until 1985, when the discovery of documents in Bavaria led to his grave in Brazil. A new book, based on Mengele's diaries and correspondence and the recollections of his surviving friends and family members, details how Mengele escaped from the Allies--and from every other attempt to capture him and bring him to justice. Here is the account by the authors:

Josef Mengele had a 10-day head start on the Red Army when he joined the growing exodus of German soldiers heading west. By the time the first Russian scouts entered the gates of Auschwitz and Birkenau at 3 p.m. on January 27, 1945--and discovered corpses of the 650 prisoners killed by looting SS men--Mengele had arrived at another concentration camp 200 miles to the northwest. This was Gross Rosen, in Silesia, where bacteriological-warfare experiments on Soviet prisoners had been conducted since the beginning of 1942. [Mengele had been officially transferred to Gross Rosen together with several other Auschwitz doctors. Even during the final spasms of the war, the SS attempted to keep its killing machines operating and fully staffed.] But Mengele's stay was short-lived. By February 18 he was on the run again to avoid the advancing Russians, who liberated the camp eight days later.

As Mengele fled Gross Rosen, the man who had secured his posting to Auschwitz moved quickly to cover his own tracks. Professor Otmar Freiherr von Verschuer, the geneticist who became both mentor and friend when Mengele joined his staff in 1937, shipped out two truckloads of documents from his research institute in Berlin, taking care to destroy all of his correspondence with Mengele.

Mengele fled westward, where he joined a retreating unit of Wehrmacht [regular army] soldiers. He stayed with them for the next two months, exchanging his SS uniform for a Wehrmacht officer's. Mengele and his newfound unit remained in central Czechoslovakia, hoping that the tide might turn against the Russians. But the Red Army was unstoppable. They advanced at such a pace that once more Mengele and his unit began moving farther west. By May 2, Mengele had advanced to Saaz, in the Sudetenland, where he found a motorized German field hospital, *Kriegslazarett 2/591*. To his surprise, Mengele discovered that one of the chief medical officers there was a prewar friend, Dr. Hans Otto Kahler.

Kahler had been involved with Mengele in legitimate research on twins before the war at von Verschuer's institute in Frankfurt. Kahler, one-eighth Jewish, was not a Nazi Party member. Von Verschuer so respected his work that he resisted considerable pressure from the Nazi hierarchy in order to keep "Jewish-tainted" Kahler on his staff. It was at von Verschuer's institute that Mengele and Kahler had forged their close friendship, one that now became a key factor in Mengele's escape from the Allies. Although Kahler immediately recognized Mengele and knew he was in the SS, he did not comment on his Wehrmacht officer's uniform. Kahler places Mengele's arrival at the field hospital as the same day that Hitler's suicide was announced on the radio: May 2, 1945. He remembers the event clearly because "Mengele made quite a fuss, refusing to

believe the report that Hitler was dead." That evening Mengele approached Kahler and asked him if he could join the field hospital, pleading that he could be useful in the unit's specialty, internal medicine.

While stationed with his new unit, Mengele struck up an intimate relationship with a young German nurse. Her name is not known, and Mengele does not provide it in his autobiography. He trusted her so completely that when the unit started to move west once again and Mengele feared capture by the Allies, he gave her custody of his precious research notes from Auschwitz. He feared that if he were taken prisoner of war, the notes would immediately identify him as a concentration camp doctor. After several days, the unit began to move farther northwest, by way of Carlsbad, to stay ahead of the advancing Russians. On the night of May 8, 1945, the date Field Marshall Wilhelm Keitel signed Germany's unconditional surrender, Mengele crossed the frontier from Czechoslovakia into Saxony, in what is now East Germany. Mengele and his unit had moved into the narrow strip in central Europe that the Americans and Russians both informally agreed not to enter. Less than 25 miles separated the two Allied powers. In between the Russian and American pincer, some 15,000 German soldiers had become trapped. In the confusion of moving from Czechoslovakia into the no man's land, Mengele's motorized hospital unit split into several sections. When he finally settled in the surrounding forest, Mengele realized he was separated from his friend Dr. Kahler.

In this new section, without the support of Kahler, Mengele feared his SS identity would be discovered. One senior physician in the unit, Col. Fritz Ulmann, suspected that Mengele was an SS man in disguise. Ulmann, who would later become a key to Mengele's postwar freedom, found his behavior in the no man's land to be almost comical. Ulmann recalls that every day at morning roll call Mengele gave a different name: "He evidently couldn't remember the name he had given the day before, so he must have used four or five additional names. He was secretive, and I knew he had to be SS."

Somehow Mengele sustained the charade for six weeks while his unit was stuck in the forest. On June 15 American forces entered the area and took some 10,000 German prisoners. Mengele was not among 12 of them; together with his unit, he had made a run for freedom. Mengele remembered the breakout in his autobiography: "In the end there was less and less food, and the rumors that the Russians would occupy this area became more numerous. So then we decided to act. With several vehicles and a sanitation unit we formed a column, and with some trickery we succeeded in passing through the Americans. We passed their subsequent roadblocks and reached Bavarian territory."

His freedom was short-lived. American forces were all over the area, and within days, according to Mengele's own account, his unit was captured near Hof. When he was checked into the first American camp, Mengele was reunited with Kahler, who had been captured in the same area the same day. And just as he had hoped, Mengele's nurse friend, also captured by the Americans, was released within hours, his Auschwitz research notes safely in her custody. At this point Dr. Kahler and Dr. Ulmann have different recollections of what name Mengele used to register in the camp. Kahler claims he told Mengele it was dishonorable to use an alias. For whatever reason, Mengele subsequently told the American camp authorities his real name. What is indisputable is that for several days the Americans had Mengele in their custody, listed under his true name.

But though they knew his real name, they did not know he was an SS member. When Mengele joined the SS in 1938, he decided not to follow the usual practice of having his

blood type tattooed on his chest. Without that telltale tattoo, the Americans had no ready means of knowing that Mengele was an SS member and no reason to pay him closer attention.

Mengele had no idea then of how lucky he was. By April, 1945, two months before the Americans got hold of him, he had already been named as a principal war criminal. Those lucky enough to survive his bloody knife had begun making statements to the Poles, French, Yugoslavs, British and Czechs. His name had also been added to the first Central Registry of War Criminals and Security Suspects [CROWCASS] compiled by the Allied High Command in Paris for circulation to detention camps throughout Europe. But the Allied administration was so chaotic that some "wanted" lists did not filter into the detention camps throughout the summer of 1945.

Not realizing how inept the American forces were, Mengele was convinced that it was only a matter of time before he was unmasked as the Auschwitz doctor. He was so worried that he became clinically depressed. His friend Dr. Kahler asked Dr. Ulmann, a neurologist, to examine Mengele and to treat his depression. Ulmann not only kept Mengele's secret but helped obtain a second identification for him, sensing that the Auschwitz doctor would probably need an alias to survive in postwar Germany. This he did by obtaining a second set of release papers in his own name and giving it to Mengele.

Mengele's release in August, 1945--to everlasting freedom, as it turned out--was a lot more fortuitous than even he knew at the time. No sooner had he been dropped off, courtesy of the U.S. Army, than Mengele decided to walk to the nearby town of Donauworth, in the hope of finding sanctuary at the home of a prewar school friend, veterinarian Albert Miller.

Miller's wife remembers the day Mengele knocked at the door. "I answered the door and I saw a soldier standing in front of me. He said, 'Good day; my name is Mengele.' Later my husband came home, and we had dinner. I remember him saying, 'Don't believe everything you hear about me. It's not true.'"

Mengele asked Dr. Miller to contact his family in Gunzburg and his wife in Autenreid to tell them he was safe. Even though he professed his innocence, Mengele told Dr. Miller he could not risk capture by Allied forces. But before he could do anything, Dr. Miller himself was arrested by American troops on the evening that Mengele arrived at his house early in September. As Miller was driven away for questioning about his wartime role in the Nazi Party, Mengele hid in a back room of the house.

Miller's arrest scared Mengele. He left Donauworth in the middle of the night, determined to make the hazardous journey into the Russian zone to locate his nurse friend who was holding his research notes and specimens from Auschwitz. The journey to Gera, now in East Germany, took Mengele more than three weeks. Meanwhile Mrs. Miller contacted Josef Mengele's brother, Karl Jr., in Gunzburg to tell him that the doctor was safe. Karl then told Mengele's wife, Irene, and the rest of the family.

Mengele was fortunate to have chosen the Millers as his first contact in the Gunzburg area. Not only did they inform his family of his safety, but they also kept his return a secret from the American authorities. The Millers' readiness to help reflected an attitude prevalent in the Gunzburg area. This was a town that had driven out its 309 resident Jews after the Nazis came to power. There was a widespread readiness to believe that the allegations against Mengele were false. And broadcasts across Germany by the overseas service of the BBC claiming that the SS had engaged in monstrous acts of carnage, were viewed as Allied victory propaganda.

While the Americans were floundering in their search for Mengele, he was returning from the Russian zone, having retrieved his treasured Auschwitz specimens and research notes. This time he went to Munich, to the apartment of trusted friends. During the next several weeks, as Mengele recuperated in the safety of a Munich friend's home, the opportunity for safe haven appeared through Dr. Fritz Ulmann's brother-in-law, whom Mengele code-named "Vieland" in his autobiography. The plan was simple. The agricultural zones of Germany were desperate for farm employees, many families having lost young men during the war. "Vieland" proposed that he accompany Mengele to one such area, south of the city of Rosenheim, and help him find a job as a farmhand on an isolated farm with a quiet and simple family.

As a further precaution, Mengele made a copy of his release papers as Fritz Ulmann and carefully altered the name to "Fritz Hollmann," changing the "U" to an "H," and squeezing an "o" between it and the "l" and another "l" between the original "l" and the "m." Mengele knew that once he moved into a new area, he would have to register his American release card with the local German authorities, and he did not want to register under the name "Ulmann" in case American authorities ever started to check the names of prisoners who had been held with him in detention. The authorities, he thought, would never tie "Hollmann" to Mengele.

The first two farms Mengele approached did not need helpers, but the third, owned by Georg and Maria Fischer, needed another worker. On October 30, 1945, "Fritz Hollmann" sidled on at the Fischer farm for 10 marks a week. The Fischers grew potatoes and wheat and stocked the farm with a dozen milk-producing cows. Mengele slept in a spartan room, 10 by 15 feet, furnished with only a cupboard and a bed. Mengele probably worked harder during his 10 years with the Fischers than at any other time in his life. Maria Fischer remembers the routine: "He had to get up at 6:30 in the morning. First thing was to clean out the stable. At 7 we would always have breakfast together. He was very strong and apt. Only he didn't know how to milk. 'Fritz' also worked a lot in the fields; he would pull out the potatoes, sort them and carry them to the courtyard. He also worked in our forests, sawing and cutting the trees and cleaning the trunks. He also cut and loaded hay -in short, he did everything. He was very obliging, never started a fight and was always in a good mood."

The Fischers may have been simple country folk, but they soon guessed that their lodger had a past to hide. Nothing could disguise the educated Bavarian accent, the smooth hands, totally unused to hard labor. Alois Fischer, Georg's brother, guessed that the hired helper was really a wanted Nazi: "He was only looking for a place to hide after the war. He had dirt to hide. He must have been a Nazi, and we thought he must have been high brass." But "Fritz's" past was of no real concern to the Fischers. The Great Selector of Auschwitz had been reduced to selecting potatoes. Although degrading for the high-minded Mengele, this low profile helped him to stay free. Throughout this time, Mengele's morale was sustained by visits to his doctor friend, "Vieland," who lived in nearby Riedering. And Mengele's family, convinced of his innocence, made trips to Rosenheim to bolster his morale. Irene Mengele realized that the trips to Rosenheim were fraught with danger--since her husband was a wanted fugitive, she might be tailed--but she weighed the risks in favor of the visits.

By the end of 1946 Mengele was convinced the Americans had forgotten him, and he became so brazen that he made two one-week trips to Autenreid to visit Irene and his 2-year-old son, Rolf. "Vieland" was furious with Mengele for using the "Fritz Ulmann" identity card on the two trips to Autenreid. "Vieland" thought it was too great a gamble and reprimanded Mengele, "You are being very risky with my brother-in-law's

identification." Mengele exploded into a rage. He took the "Ulmann" papers out of his pocket and tipped them up in front of "Vieland." "There, are you satisfied? I do not need them," yelled Mengele. But that outburst cost Mengele dearly. Without a set of genuine release papers, he was forced to rely on the forged set for the remainder of his time in Germany.

Although Mengele attempted to justify the imprisonment of Jews and the conditions in the camps, other members of the Mengele family were realists, and they knew that his capture would mean certain execution. Faced with the prospect of Josef joining his Auschwitz colleagues on the gallows, his father and his wife, among others, tried to dupe the American authorities into believing that Josef Mengele was dead. Their efforts, combined with a lack of initiative and a general inefficiency on the part of the American occupation forces, ensured Mengele's freedom in postwar Germany.

During his years on the Fischer farm, the closest authorities came to finding Mengele was not the result of American efforts but rather a chance inspection by two German policemen in 1946. In his autobiography, [in which he always referred to himself in the third person with the code name "Andreas"], Mengele recalled the moment he had his first face-to-face confrontation with authorities since his release from the American detention camp: "Two German police came to the farm on a motor-bike and a sidecar and asked to talk to the released prisoner of war. Andreas said, 'I'm the ex-POW,' and was ordered to produce his American release card. Andreas retrieved his card from his room and gave it to one of the control policemen. As they reviewed it, Andreas' alarm abated. After a short look the policemen handed back the card. Again one thought how at that time any German official had the greatest respect for any document that was written in English and stamped by the U.S. Army."

By the fall of 1948, Mengele had made up his mind to leave Germany and build a life elsewhere. Argentina was the preferred choice of sanctuary. There was a groundswell of Nazi sympathy in Argentina. And his father, Karl Sr., who owned a firm that manufactured agricultural equipment, thought that though his company had no branches in Argentina, he had made several business connections there that Josef might develop.

According to Rolf Mengele, his father returned to the Gunzburg area toward the end of 1948 and stayed in the nearby forests until the spring of 1949. Mengele told Irene that he expected her and Rolf to follow once he had established himself in Buenos Aires. But Irene would not agree to go with him. Mengele's flight was arranged and paid for by his family through former SS contacts in the Gunzburg area. The escape across the Alps involved plenty of cloak-and-dagger but very little of the clockwork precision that legend has ascribed to the brotherhood of postwar Nazi escape groups.

The journey began by train to Innsbruck. Mengele was questioned on the way by Austrian customs officers, who asked him where he was from. "Brixen, in Germany," he replied, which seemed to satisfy them. They did not ask to see his identity papers and did not question him again. From Innsbruck he traveled to an inn at Steinach, at the foot of the Brenner Pass, arriving on Easter Sunday, April 17. There he spent the night, 400 yards from the Italian border, and met the first of five mystery men who helped him at various stages of his journey and whom Mengele identifies in his diary only by code names.

The following morning Mengele rose in the early hours to be led by a guide across the Brenner Pass. The crossing took Mengele only an hour. Once on the Italian side, he went to the railway station, waited in the only restaurant and caught the first workers' train to Vipiteno at 5:45 a.m.

The network providing the escape service had booked Mengele at the Golden Cross Inn under the name listed on his forged set of American release papers, "Fritz Hollmann." There he was approached by an Italian called "Nino," who said the code word "rosemary" and handed him a German identity card after Mengele had given him a passport-sized photograph. At the Golden Cross Mengele met a second man whom he called "Erwin" and whom his son, Rolf, now assumes was Hans Sedlmeier, a school friend of his father and the family firm's sales manager since 1944. "Erwin" brought Mengele greetings from his father and cash in dollars for the long journey ahead. He also brought him "a small suitcase filled with scientific specimens" from his Auschwitz experiments.

Mengele had a month at the Golden Cross to memorize the travel plan that "Erwin" had given him. From Vipiteno he went on to Bosen, where he arrived by train at the beginning of June. There he met "Kurt," who was in charge of the final phase of getting Mengele out of Europe. "Kurt" told Mengele that passage to Buenos Aires had been booked for him on the North King, which was scheduled to leave Genoa in two weeks. There was one outstanding matter to resolve--an International Red Cross passport, which "Kurt" confidently said he could acquire from the Swiss consul. [The International Red Cross file on Josef Mengele was shrouded in secrecy for 40 years after the war. Only after one of the authors, Gerald Posner, testified before the U.S. Senate that the International Red Cross in Geneva refused to release the file did the United States decide to act. Based upon a written request from Secretary of State George Shultz, the Red Cross finally made the Mengele file public, and the information it contained helped to fill in some of the details of Mengele's final efforts to escape Europe.] "We can get that done today," he said. "Tomorrow we'll take care of the formalities at the Argentine consulate."

Mengele met no resistance at the Swiss consulate, where his application was processed by a woman he described as being "of riper years." The following day, using the alias "Gregor," Mengele went to the Argentine consulate, where he made his application. He met their demand for a 14-day-old vaccination certificate with a phony predated one supplied by a Croatian doctor.

But there was yet one more obstacle to overcome. Mengele needed an Italian exit visa, and the corrupt official in the immigration department who usually helped "Kurt" was on holiday. "You'll just have to manage by yourself, Kurt" told Mengele, advising him to try to bribe the official in charge with a 20,000 lira note [1949 value: about \$32] tucked between his papers.

The North King was due to sail in three days, on May 25. Mengele was getting desperate. Taking his guide's advice, he made the approach to the official by clipping the 20,000-lira note to the folder containing his forged papers. The official glanced inside the file, peeled off the note, returned the file and then ominously exchanged glances with another official. At first Mengele thought the money was "just not enough of a bribe." Then he was ordered up three flights of stairs, led into a room, and the questioning began.

Mengele was taken to a cell and ordered to turn out his pockets. "Forty-five dollars are the most interesting pan of the contents to the Italian police," Mengele observed. Then he was "locked in an iron-barred cage in the hallway."

After spending three weeks in jail, Mengele lost all hope of escaping. The immigration department knew that his papers were false. They began to question him about "Kurt," who he was, where he could be found and how much Mengele had paid for his help. A 4-a.m. call to the Croatian doctor who had given Mengele his false vaccination certificate seemed to sea/ his fate. Sleepless, Mengele "sank into a state of depressed

lethargy.." The game, it seemed, was up. Then, as was to happen so often over the next 30 years, Mengele's fortunes changed dramatically. Kurt's corrupt immigration official returned from holiday and straightened matters out. Finally Mengele was freed and granted his exit permit. And to his great relief, the North King was still at the dock. In mid-July, 1949, the North King finally sailed for Buenos Aires. Mengele's concern about his Auschwitz past becoming public knowledge was just one of the strains that weighed upon him during his early months in Buenos Aires. The trauma of fugitive life in a strange city, 6,000 miles from home must have been severe. Since his arrival in South America, he had begun to keep a daily diary, reflecting in his writings the many crises he faced.

In his early letters Mengele, although bothered by his fugitive existence, expressed surprise at the ease with which he was settling into Buenos Aires life. By selecting Argentina as his country of exile, Mengele had unwittingly chosen a nation advanced enough that any culture shock was greatly reduced. By the end of the 1940s Argentina had become the technological leader of South America, boasting more than half of the continent's telephones, televisions and railway lines. Mengele also discovered a parochial and elitist attitude amongst Argentinians that was reminiscent of that held by the most fervent German Nazis. Argentinians, who held the "primitives" of Paraguay and Peru in contempt, often said they were "traveling to South America" when visiting Brazil or Chile.

But despite its progress, Argentina in 1949 was also a country stricken with serious problems. Just beyond the Parisian-style facades could be seen the *villas miserias*---the shantytowns, crammed with half a million people enduring the most squalid and degrading conditions. The gulf between rich and poor was vast. Economic conditions were deteriorating. The budget deficit was enormous, unemployment substantial, government salaries in arrears and tax collections haphazardly enforced. The black market was rampant, and for fugitives like Mengele, the scope for bribes was unlimited. Somewhere along the line, a former Luftwaffe [German air force] colonel named Hans Rudel convinced Mengele that a lucrative market in farm machinery was waiting to be cornered in Paraguay.

During a trip to Paraguay in 1954 Mengele met another key contact, Alejandro von Eckstein. He was then a captain in the Paraguayan army, and he cosponsored Mengele's bid for Paraguayan citizenship in 1959.

Alfredo Stroessner had just taken over Paraguay, ruling with the absolute power derived from the 1940 constitution, which allowed him to declare a state of emergency and suspend habeas corpus. [This situation exists to the present day, Stroessner having declared himself president for life.] Von Eckstein and the 44-year-old dictator were close friends, both being of German descent and having fought side by side in the 1930s in the Chaco way against the Bolivians.

According to von Eckstein, it was on one of Mengele's visits shortly after they met that he introduced him to President Stroessner at a function with several others present. "The president didn't know who he was. and all they did was shake hands," said von Eckstein. "But I remember Rudel telling Mengele that Paraguay under Stroessner was as fine a friend to expatriate Germans as Argentina under [Juan] Peron."

Meanwhile, far away from Mengele's bachelor existence. his estranged wife, Irene, was preparing to marry another man, Alfons Hackenjos, who owned a shoe-store business in Freiburg. Karl Sr. informed his son, by letter, that Irene wanted a divorce, and Mengele did not stand in her way. He signed and notarized a power of attorney so that a local attorney in Gunzburg could represent him and process the divorce by proxy. On

March 25, 1954, their petition was approved by a court in Dusseldorf. Mengele was not especially heartbroken, nor was the Mengele family sorry to lose Irene.

At about this time, Mengele struck up an extraordinary relationship with a German Jewish refugee, who has asked to remain anonymous, fearing the relationship would be misunderstood. The man, now in his 70s, ran a prosperous textile business in Buenos Aires, where he had come before the war to escape Hitler's persecution of the Jews. In the early 1950s he met a German girl who had been a wartime nurse. Like so many German youngsters, she had been a member of the Hitler Youth Movement. The businessman nonetheless was greatly attracted to the girl. She had settled in Buenos Aires with her parents, who happened to know Mengele.

On one of the businessman's visits to the girl's house, he found Mengele there, and the girl introduced them to each other. Neither the girl nor the businessman had any idea of Mengele's true identity. The two men soon found they were competing for the girl's charms. a contest that Mengele, known to them as "Gregor." eventually won. However, the girl was not the only interest that "Gregor" shared with the Jewish businessman: "Gregor" wanted to go into partnership with him. They had several discussions about the possibility of a joint venture, but nothing came of it.

Karl Sr. wanted to see Josef married again. The woman he had in mind was Martha Mengele, widow of his youngest son, Karl Jr., who had died when he was only 37 years old, in December, 1949. Martha was a handsome woman, "actually, ravishingly beautiful," as Rolf described his aunt. She had fallen in love with Karl Jr. while still married to a businessman named William Ensmann. In 1944 she gave birth to a son, Karl Heinz, whose paternity was disputed in the local courts after Martha divorced Ensmann in 1948. After considering all the evidence in intimate detail, the regional court in Memmingen ruled that the boy was in fact Karl Jr.'s son.

According to Rolf, Karl Sr. arranged a meeting between Martha and Josef in the Swiss Alps, having deliberately sabotaged an affair that she was having with another Gunzburg man. Rolf, then age 11, was to be brought along as well to meet his long-lost "Uncle Fritz." Behind Karl Sr.'s matchmaking lay a calculated plan to keep control of the Gunzburg firm totally in the hands of the Mengele family. Karl Sr. feared that if Martha remarried someone outside the family, her voting rights, inherited from Karl Jr., could be influenced by that outsider. But if she married Josef, all key decisions would be made securely within the family.

The travel plans for Mengele's reunion with Martha were laid months in advance. In April, 1955, he applied to the Argentine federal police for a special passport for non-Argentine citizens. But first he had to satisfy the police that he had been a resident of "good conduct." On September 1, the police granted Mengele a "good conduct" pass, which allowed him to apply to the courts for the passport. Unfortunately for Mengele, his arrangements were interrupted by a coup against President Juan Peron.

In the midst of governmental reshuffling the Argentine Court of First Instance finally issued Mengele a 120-day passport. In March, 1956, Mengele flew to Switzerland with a two-hour stopover in New York. There to meet him at the Geneva airport was the ever-faithful Hans Sedlmeier, who drove him to Engelberg, where he checked into the Hotel Engel, the best in town. Waiting for him at the hotel were Martha; her son, Karl Heinz; and Mengele's own son, Rolf, then 12 years old.

Over the next 10 days "Uncle Fritz," as he was introduced to the two Mengele boys, regaled them with adventure stories about South American gauchos and his supposed experiences fighting partisans in the Second World War. Rolf was impressed with his dashing "uncle," who dressed formally for dinner, had such exciting tales to tell and gave him pocket money. Rolf also noticed how physically attentive "Uncle Fritz" was to

his Auntie Martha, although he thought at the time that it was merely ordinary family affection. At the end of the holiday, Mengele traveled to Gunzburg to tie up the legal arrangements that his father had prepared. Mengele visited his family for nearly a week, his first open visit to Gunzburg since he had come home on leave from Auschwitz in November, 1944.

Back in Argentina later in 1956, Mengele saw no sign yet of a warrant being issued for his arrest and so felt confident enough to publicly relaunch himself under his true identity. Besides, living under a false name had made everyday life too complicated for him, and he had plans to take out a mortgage on a house so that he and Martha could enjoy a proper family life.

Proving his real identity required a great deal of paperwork and the approval of the West German embassy, which the Argentine police required to certify that "Helmut Gregor" -- the name he was registered under--and Josef Mengele were one and the same man. Mengele therefore had to explain to the embassy that he had lived under an alias for the last seven years. He gave them his correct name, date of birth, date of his divorce from Irene and his addresses in Buenos Aires and Gunzburg. On Sept. 11, 1956, after checking with Bonn, the embassy issued Mengele a certificate stating that his real name was Josef Mengele and that he was from Gunzburg, and later a new identity card and a West German passport.

In October, 1956, Martha and her son moved to Argentina to join Mengele. For the next four years Mengele was effectively Karl Heinz's father, a tie that was to form the basis of a relationship that became closer than that with his own son, Rolf.

Mengele's life had now established itself into the comfortable and secure routine of a family man in a 9-to-5 job with good prospects. After 13 years on the run, he felt the worst was over. Yet the worst was yet to come. Somehow he had attracted the attention of the Buenos Aires police on the suspicion that he might have been practicing as a doctor without a license. Exactly what triggered their interest is not known. Police files confirm that Mengele was held for questioning and freed after three days. At the same time, back in Germany a determined effort to bring Mengele to trial had just begun. Hermann Langbein, who had worked in the chief physician's office while a prisoner at Auschwitz, had made it a personal crusade to bring Mengele to justice. Through detective work, Langbein uncovered Mengele's divorce from Irene and through the divorce records, Mengele's presence, though not his exact address, in Buenos Aires. How much news, if any, of Langbein's efforts filtered through to Mengele is not known. But by March, 1959, Mengele had decided that he would be safer living in Paraguay. In May, 1959, Mengele fled to Paraguay, still under his own name, to begin a new life. He moved into the southeast, in a region close to the Parana River, which borders Argentina. Mengele lodged at the home of one of the most diehard Nazis in Nueva Bavaria, Alban Krug, a farmer and the head of the local farmers' cooperative. They were introduced to each other by Hans Rudel. For the next 15 months Krug's farmhouse in the hamlet of Hohenau, 40 miles north of the border town of Encarnacion, was Mengele's home.

About that time, a warrant was circulated to German police stations and passed to the foreign office in Bonn to begin proceedings to extradite Mengele from Argentina, where Langbein believed the fugitive was still living. Despite Langbein's request that the proceedings be conducted in the utmost secrecy, an informant with the Gunzburg police, according to Rolf Mengele, tipped off the Mengele family that the warrant had been issued. But by the time the family was able to inform Mengele by correspondence of the gathering storm clouds back home, he had already made his initial application for Paraguayan citizenship, applying as "Josef Mengele." Paraguayan citizenship would

afford him additional protection should the West Germans seek his extradition; no formal extradition agreement existed between the two countries.

By mid-November, 1959, both the Paraguayan interior ministry's naturalization section and the Paraguayan police knew that an extradition request was under way for Josef Mengele on charges of war crimes. But no one thought the circumstances warranted postponing Mengele's application for citizenship, and it was approved on November 27. On the other side of the word, meanwhile, another government had been taking an interest in the case of Josef Mengele and causing him grave concern as he lay low in Alban Krug's farmhouse in southern Paraguay. The former Iron Cross hero was now stricken with panic as his worst fears were confirmed by Premier David Ben-Gurion's announcement to the Israeli parliament of a hunt for Mengele.

Mengele's decision to make a permanent move to Paraguay clearly dismayed his wife, Martha, who argued that he would still be safe in Buenos Aires. But Mengele had no intention of returning there because Israeli agents had kidnapped in Buenos Aires in May, 1960, the notorious Adolf Eichmann, the SS officer responsible for the deaths of nearly six million people.

Contrary to popular belief, Mengele did not have a network of armed guards and the protection of President Stroessner. Indeed, the Paraguayan interior minister, Edgar Insfran, was the only senior member of the government who had any idea about Mengele's wartime background. The truth was that the only protection Mengele could rely on was that of Alban Krug. And though Krug was a muscular man, his armory consisted of precisely one pistol.

While Mengele was living in fear for his life in Paraguay, in Buenos Aires the bureaucratic hunt triggered by West Germany's extradition request was progressing at a slow pace. Since Martha was still living in Buenos Aires, the West Germans believed that Mengele would return there. But the arrest warrant took so long to process that by the time it had legal status in Argentina, Mengele was already hiding at Krug's farmhouse in Paraguay.

Finally, on June 30, 1960, one year and 23 days after extradition proceedings were begun, the case was assigned to Argentina's Judge Jorge Luque of District Court No 3. Only then could the police begin their search for Mengele. The question of extradition, if Mengele were caught, was to be decided by the court.

News of the West German extradition request broke in the last week of June, while Argentine President Arturo Frondizi was on a state visit to Bonn. Frondizi told a press conference that his country had "no intention of sheltering criminals from the justice they deserve." But, he said, the West Germans would have to provide proof of Mengele's crimes before he was sent back for trial. Smarting from the Eichmann kidnapping of just two months before, the president said, "Some form of reparations would be sought from the Israeli government [for the Eichmann abduction]."

But on the west coast of the U.S, one former friend of Mengele's was stunned. Opening his morning newspaper, the Jewish textile executive from Buenos Aires saw a picture of the man with whom he had nearly gone into partnership several years before. "I simply did not believe it," he said. "I immediately telephoned the girl who had introduced us and I said to her, 'To think he'd been our friend.' She said they had just got the newspapers, too, and all they had done was look at the picture in disbelief."

At about this time, a typist in the West German embassy in Asuncion, Paraguay, came face to face with Mengele when she dislocated her ankle while she was visiting the

German colony of Colonia Independencia. On her return to Asuncion she told the embassy staff that a German doctor named Mengele had attended to her injury.. Not knowing that he was a wanted Nazi, she asked why the embassy had no record of a German doctor of that name living in the area. This led the charge d'affaires, Peter Bensch, to go to southern Paraguay to investigate: "I made some inquiries, and it was dear to me that Mengele had been there under his own name. He was not practicing as a doctor full time but on an occasional basis, I thought, because he depended on the good will of the local people. There was no secret about his name. But I personally never found him. I met Alban Krug. He did not admit that he had helped Mengele, although it was clear that he had helped several Nazis coming over the border from Argentina."

The incident raises important questions about how coordinated and determined the West German effort was to find Mengele. Despite Bensch's breakthrough in Paraguay, his colleagues in the Buenos Aires embassy less than a thousand miles away were pressing sedately on with their extradition request to the Argentinians. There appears to have been no attempt by the foreign office in Bonn to resolve the conflicting clues to Mengele's exact location by sending out their own agents. The West Germans were hunting Mengele with pieces of paper, inquiries from embassies, hunches, but never with men actually in the field.

The actual search was left to the redoubtable Judge Jorge Luque, to whom the case had been entrusted by the Argentine foreign office. Although he set about his task with vigor, he did not know that Mengele had long since permanently fled Argentina. Having drawn a blank in the province of Buenos Aires, Judge Luque asked the Argentine police to conduct a countrywide search.

To Mengele, however, the confusion surrounding the Argentine effort was not of much comfort. News of the haphazard searches was brought to him by Martha and Karl Heinz, who still managed an occasional visit to his Paraguayan hideout on Krug's farm. But it was not the Argentinians or the West Germans that Mengele feared; it was the Israelis.

In September, 1960, Mengele decided that capture by the Israelis was inevitable as long as he stayed at the Krug farm. He resolved to get out of Paraguay and begin a new life elsewhere. The choice was Brazil. "The strong change in my surroundings will definitely be mirrored in my writings," he wrote. For a month there were no diary entries. "So much happened in this time," Mengele later wrote. "For a certain reason that I cannot explain, I cannot write about it." By Oct. 24, Mengele had left Krug's farm. The "new surroundings" that he now referred to were certainly a populous place, most likely Sao Paulo.

The reason Mengele hurriedly departed from Paraguay within months of the Eichmann kidnapping was that he did not feel he could rely on the complete protection of the Paraguayan government.

The man who gave Mengele his lifeline to Brazil was a 36-year-old Nazi and former Hitler Youth chief in Austria, Wolfgang Gerhard. He had arrived in Brazil in 1948, leaving Europe because he could no longer tolerate "the oppressive Allied occupation," even though he disliked Brazil because it was filled with "half-monkeys, people of a sick and secondary race." The link between Mengele and Gerhard was a fellow Nazi who knew both men--Hans Rudel. Rudel and Gerhard were friends, and both knew the family that Gerhard earmarked as a refuge for Mengele in Brazil.

From this point on, Mengele's life fundamentally changed. First, he and Martha agreed to separate, Martha having decided that being a fugitive's wife was no life for herself or her 16-year-old son.

Next, Rolf, then also 16, was struggling hard to come to terms with who his real father was. His mother, Irene, had recently allowed his stepfather, Alfons Hackenjos, to tell him the identity of the man he had called "Uncle Fritz" during that skiing holiday in the Swiss Alps in 1956. Rolf remembers the event and how it affected him at the time: "I was always told that my father had been missing in Russia. My father had always been Dr. Mengele, who spoke Greek and Latin and who had been so brave. It was about 1960 when Hacki [Hackenjos] told me that Uncle Fritz was the same man as my father. Now that I was told the truth, I would have preferred another father."

In 1959 Gerhard had met Geza Stammer and his wife, Gitta, at a special evening for Austrian-Hungarian expatriates. "You could say that we were firm anti-Communists," said Gitta, "but we weren't Nazis." Even so, the Stammers shared with Gerhard some unpalatable revisionist views. "I think some things about the Holocaust may have been invented," Gitta said. "It's hard for people to believe all these things are really true." According to the Stammers, Gerhard introduced Mengele to them--as "Peter Hochbichler," a Swiss--as a suitable manager for a 37-acre farm in which they were planning to invest. It produced coffee, rice, fruit and dairy cattle in a remote German community near Nova Europa, 200 miles northwest of Sao Paulo.

Gerhard told the Stammers that not only was "Hochbichler" an experienced cattle breeder but had also recently inherited some money that he wanted to invest in Brazilian real estate. To the Stammers it was an attractive proposition, particularly since an extra pair of hands would fill the gap left by Geza when his job as a surveyor took him away for several weeks at a time.

Eventually agreement with the Stammers was reached, and "Peter" moved in with them to manage the farm at Nova Europa. But he declined any payment. According to Gitta Stammer, Mengele arrived at the farm looking thin and pale: "... he seemed to be ill... Gerhard said he suffered from a certain disease and his stay with us would help him recover. He showed us a document, a simple paper with no photo, graph, that had allowed him to cross the border from Austria to Italy. This was the only identification document I saw with this name. But we were not suspicious about him. He seemed simple enough, as he wanted just his food and laundry."

In their attempt to convince skeptics that they were just innocent dupes, the Stammers insist that at first there was nothing suspicious about "Peter Hochbichler" or his refusal to take-a salary. Nor did his parcels of letters and newspapers from Germany strike them as strange. But the farmhands who suddenly found themselves in Mengele's charge realized something was amiss. They noted that "Peter" read philosophy and history and loved classical music, especially Mozart. They also found that their new boss had a sharp temper, which exploded as he struggled to make his orders understood in Portuguese. "I didn't like him but I couldn't do anything about it," said Francisco de Souza, who was working for the Stammers when Mengele arrived. "He loved giving orders and kept saying that we should work more and harder. The worst of it was that he didn't seem to understand much about farming or heavy work."

Unbeknownst to the Stammers and the farmhands, the reason Mengele was ill at ease initially was that he did not like the farm or his work. In this first phase of his Brazilian exile, Mengele found it hard to come to terms with his new lowly status. And despite his greater security at remote Nova Europa, his fear of capture by the Israelis plagued him.

Mengele's fear of an Israeli strike was well grounded. Since the beginning of 1961, following a failed kidnap attempt in Buenos Aires, a formidable task force of Mossad [Israeli intelligence] agents had been assembled to track him down. Indeed, many members of the new Mengele task force had also been on Operation Eichmann. The team was headed by Zvi Aharoni, the agent who had provided the crucial confirmation that Eichmann was living in Buenos Aires under the name Klement, pinpointed his house and interrogated him after his abduction.

The Mossad's starting point was Paraguay, and their strategy was to try to establish links with those who knew Mengele well in order to have ready access to reliable information on his location at any given time. Only when that was accomplished could the Israelis give serious thought to actually kidnapping Mengele.

Even to this day Mossad agents disagree about exactly how close they got to Mengele in Paraguay and about how much protection he received. Isser Harel, then head of Mossad, said his men became convinced in 1961 that Mengele was in Paraguay and was being sheltered by Alban Krug. "By the end of the year we knew that he was moving between Paraguay and Brazil," said Harel. "He was completely panicked by the Eichmann abduction."

The conflicting statements about Mengele's movements in the early 1960s reflects the soul-searching that surfaced within Israel's intelligence community after Mengele's death was disclosed. The discovery in June, 1985, that Mengele had lived in Brazil for most of his fugitive life raised questions as to why the Israelis had never found him, much less apprehended him.

Meanwhile, the more sedentary West German hunt was now progressing on three fronts. In February, 1965, Bonn extended its extradition request from Argentina to Brazil. The CIA reported that Mengele was "rumored to have gone to Matto Grosso, Brazil." In Asuncion Peter Bensch, the charge d'affaires at the West German embassy, also continued to make inquiries: "My own view was that Mengele was moving between Paraguay and Brazil at this time, but we had no precise information on him. The supreme court did tell me that if he was found in Paraguay, it would not be possible to extradite a Paraguayan citizen."

Amidst the confusion over exactly where Mengele was, only one country knew for certain, and that was Israel. According to a senior Mossad man, they had received reports that Mengele was in Brazil. But the Mossad kept this information to itself. The Six Day War in 1967 had confirmed the view of Gen. Meir Amir, chief of the Mossad, that resources had to be concentrated on meeting the Arab threat. There appeared to be no justification for funding a special task force to review the leads on Mengele developed by Harel's agents in the early 1960s. In the wake of the war Israel also underwent a major shift in foreign policy. Israel decided to open an embassy in Asuncion. It would have been an ideal base from which to pursue the Mengele hunt clandestinely, but Benjamin Weiser Varon, the Israeli ambassador from 1968 to 1972, had a much more straightforward mission. "I was sent there to create friends and influence people," he said.

The decision to open an embassy in Asuncion was made soon after Jan. 1, 1968, when tiny Paraguay assumed disproportionate power on the world diplomatic stage by becoming one of two Latin American countries in the UN Security Council. In Varon's view the council had been a "kangaroo court against Israel for far too long." His special task was to persuade Paraguay to "join a small minority that occasionally still cast a vote for Israel." Hardly a week passed without Varon asking the Paraguayan foreign minister, Dr. Raul Sapena Pastor, for a vote in Israel's favor at the UN. Raising the

subject of Mengele was not likely to assist that goal. On his appointment Varon was thus "not given any instructions by the foreign office on Mengele of any kind. It wasn't even mentioned."

Nor was Varon told that the Mossad had had teams in Paraguay and Brazil from 1960 to 1962, or that Harel had considered a commando raid on a Brazilian farmhouse. Indeed, Varon heard of this only after he left office, when Britain's Granada television screened a special program on Mengele in November, 1978: "It was strange that I had to learn all this from the script of the program. It proved that it had not been deemed wise to burden me with that knowledge when I set out on my mission in Paraguay. It also proved that Israel's secret service acts in complete independence of the foreign ministry."

Although Varon was not privy to the policy of Gen. Amir's Mossad, he did experience firsthand one of the reasons the Mossad had placed other priorities over hunting Nazis. On May 2, 1970, two PLO gunmen charged into his embassy and began shooting wildly. Four Israeli officials were wounded, and one was killed. When the terrorists finally reached the ambassador's office, they kicked open the door and aimed at Varon's head. Mercifully for him, all he heard was the click of the gun. Both gunmen had exhausted their bullets. Before they could reload, the Paraguayan police arrived and arrested them. Embarrassed that a diplomatic mission, especially one so newly established, should have been violated on its own soil, Paraguay sentenced the PLO men to 15 years at hard labor.

In the absence of a "Mengele policy," Varon developed a standard answer to the tips that came in to the embassy about the fugitive's latest hideout: the Israeli government was not searching for Mengele; the Federal Republic of Germany was. "I must confess I was not so eager to find Mengele," Varon said. "He presented a dilemma. Israel had less of a claim for his extradition than Germany. He was, after all, a German citizen who had committed his crimes in the name of the Third Reich. None of his victims was Israeli--Israel came into existence only several years later."

Mengele bought a one-half interest in the Stammers' farm with the money he made from his business ventures, and over the 13 years they spent together, the Stammers prospered enough to sell the farm and buy a large new house in the state of Sao Paulo, but their relationship with the dictatorial Mengele disintegrated.

The "new," confident Mengele had also become a man of property. He now owned a \$7,000 apartment in a high-rise building in the center of Sao Paulo, which he rented out. As he tried to develop some financial independence, a further boost to Mengele's confidence came in 1971 when he inherited a priceless Brazilian identity card. It belonged to Wolfgang Gerhard.

With the help of Wolfram Bossert, a competent amateur photographer, Mengele accomplished a tolerable forgery. Bossert took dozens of passport-size photos of Mengele and then selected the one that best fit Gerhard's description. The laminated identity card was sliced open, a picture of the mustachioed Mengele, his hair neatly combed, was stuck over the photograph of his Nazi friend, and the card was relaminated. All the other details remained Gerhard's, including his thumb print and his date of birth, which transformed Mengele, then 60, into a very old-looking 46-year-old, the age listed on the card.

In July, 1972, Mengele fell ill. Over the years he had lived in such a state of tension and anxiety that he had developed a nervous habit of biting the end of his walrus mustache. Eventually he swallowed so much hair that it developed into a ball that blocked his

intestines. His condition became so painful and dangerous that he took the risk of admitting himself to a hospital in Sao Paulo. For the first time his new identity card was put to the test, and it nearly failed. A puzzled doctor treating Mengele told Bossert that his patient seemed physically very old for a 47-year-old man. Bossert told the doctor that the date of birth was incorrectly entered on the identity card, and that the Brazilian government had promised to correct it with a new card. The doctor accepted the barely credible explanation.

This early period of the 1970s, when Mengele was integrating himself into modern-day life, also marked the start of a period of prolific correspondence with his family, particularly his son, Rolf, and his childhood friend Hans Sedlmeier.

Mengele's private correspondence highlighted how much closer he was to Karl Heinz than to his own son, Rolf; he had corresponded regularly with Karl Heinz and Martha since they left South America in 1961. He tried to compensate for this by making overtures to Rolf, with whom he had no relationship worth speaking of. Always there was the question from strangers: "Rolf Mengele? Not the son of Josef Mengele?" Awkwardly, Rolf would make light of the situation by saying, "Oh, yes, and I'm also Adolf Eichmann's nephew."

When Mengele tried to open a dialogue with his grown-up son in the early 1970s, his barely repressed dislike for Rolf soon came to the surface. In almost every letter Mengele extended fatherly affection to his son in one sentence, only to take it back with hurtful chiding in the next. He treated Rolf in a cold and distant manner, much as his own father had treated him. A letter congratulating Rolf on his first marriage is a good example: "From the photographs one can deduce that you are happy. And why shouldn't such a good looking young man and his pretty and lovable wife not be that? I think I have already shown too much fatherly pride in my newly acquired daughter. Unfortunately I hardly know her, or rather I only know her as much as the few photographs reveal. But do I know the son better?... The description accompanying the photos--you really could have tried a little harder. I myself would have realized that these were your friends and not your enemies ,that accompany you to the registry office!"

The Stammers decided to make the final break with Mengele by selling their farm and moving to Sao Paulo and not taking Mengele with them. When they moved to their new home in December, Mengele stayed at their house in Caieiras, 25 miles outside Sao Paulo, until February, 1975.

Mengele grew anxious about where he would live next. "Now it is naturally much more difficult for me to find suitable housing," he wrote in his diary. He did not want to move into his center-city apartment because he needed the monthly income from renting it out. He did not ask the Bosserts if he could move in with them because they and their two children lived in a small two-bedroom house that had no room for a boarder. But before the end of January, 1975, Mengele's housing worries were solved. The Stammers, who had given him a Christmas promise to help him, used \$25,000 of the proceeds from the sale of their Caieiras farm to buy a small bungalow, which they then decided to rent out to him. It was little more than a shack, a yellow stucco bungalow with one gloomy bedroom, an antiquated bathroom and a tiny kitchen. It was in one of the poorer parts of town, at 5555 Alvarenga Rd. in the Eldorado suburb of Sao Paulo. It was only a few miles from the Bosserts, the only people he could depend upon for regular visits and support.

Mengele's main companion for the first year of his new solitary life was a 16-year-old neighborhood gardener, Luis Rodrigues, who liked watching "The Wonderful World of Disney" and soap operas on TV. Mengele was so lonely that sometimes he asked him

to stay the night. Rodrigues recalled how Mengele loved music and how he sometimes whirled clumsily around the room to a waltz.

Toward the end of that year Mengele bought a \$150 24-inch Telefunken black-and-white television set. He told the boy that he wanted the set to watch the Winter Olympics. He also confided to Hans Sedlmeier he thought the set might persuade "my new housemate to stay."

But Mengele's television did little to relieve the pain of his loneliness. It did not persuade the boy to spend more time with him. And Mengele reported home that although it was a "break in my monotonous life," he got no enjoyment from the set because "the channels hardly come through and the repeated interruptions by commercials really do disturb me."

Deep depression and anxiety had now set in. He ended 1975 with a letter to Sedlmeier, noting that "nothing can improve my mood." Mengele's spirits and health were sinking fast. He talked about suicide, saying it would be a blessed relief from his aches and pains and a world that cared nothing for him.

The beginning of the end came sooner than he thought. It began one Sunday night after an afternoon outing with the Stammers' elder son, Miki, and a friend, Norberto Glawe. When they dropped him off at the gate to his bungalow, Mengele felt quite dizzy and ill. Inside the house a "sudden pain" hit him in the right side of his head. In Mengele's own words, "fluttering visions, vertigo, tingling sensations in the left half of my face and my left arm [like ants running.], and difficulties with my speech and increasing pain in my head were the major symptoms. Later, this barbaric pain in my head was accompanied by nausea."

As a doctor Mengele knew from the symptoms that he had suffered a stroke. "I couldn't use either my left arm or my left leg [paralyzing]," he wrote. Norberto Glawe went to a nearby clinic for advice about "Don Pedro," and was told to take him immediately to the hospital.

Just as Gerhard had not confided Mengele's secret to the Stammers when Mengele first went to live with them, so did he keep Glawe and his parents--his father, Ernesto Glawe, was an Argentinian industrialist of German descent--in the dark when he asked them to take care of the stricken old man, saying he had to return to Europe to care for his son Adolf, who was suffering from bone cancer. Gerhard's wife had died of cancer in 1975, but despite this family crisis, he had taken the trouble to visit Mengele for a very special reason, son.

At Mengele's expense, Gerhard flew back to Sao Paulo to renew Mengele's forged Brazilian identity card, which was about to expire. The plastic card was opened up again, Mengele's picture was withdrawn to reveal Gerhard's picture underneath, and the card was then relaminated in a local shop so that Gerhard could present it for renewal. The new renewed card was then slit open and relaminated after Mengele's photograph was repositioned over Gerhard's. Mengele himself noted that the new card, or "dumbman," as he called it, was far from perfect. The differences between the real Gerhard -14 years younger and 6 inches taller--and the "Gerhard" of the photo were glaring.

It was precisely these anomalies that alerted one already suspicious person to the fact that "Don Pedro" was hiding a murky past. As young Norberto Glawe accompanied "Don Pedro" to the Santa Marta Hospital on May 17, 1976, he noticed that he was using the identity card of Wolfgang Gerhard, the "unbalanced" Nazi who had introduced them

earlier that year. He also noticed that "Don Pedro" had paid his hospital admission fee with a crisp \$100 bill.

After two weeks in the hospital, "Don Pedro" was released. Norberto Glawe agreed to move in with him at his bungalow while he convalesced. Cooped up together in such a confined space, "Don Pedro" began to get on the boy's nerves.

By now the Glawes had a strong suspicion of who this opinionated and self-righteous old man really was. "I found a catalogue from a company for agricultural machinery," said Ernesto Glawe. "It had the name 'Mengele' on it. I put two and two together." But like the Stammers, the Glawes did not act on their suspicions. "My problem was that I wasn't positive and I was frightened," Ernesto Glawe told the Sao Paulo police in June, 1985. He also told the police that they had no further contact with "Don Pedro" after Norberto Glawe left the bungalow in the summer of 1976.

That was patently untrue. In his diary Mengele gave the Glawes a code name, as he did for all the key conspirators who helped him. He called them the "Santiagos," and his diary makes several references to meeting and exchanging gifts with them after the summer of 1976. It was clear that they were not the closest of friends, but neither were they enemies.

After the disclosure of their relationship with Mengele, the Glawes tried to put some distance between themselves and Mengele. In June, 1985, Ernesto Glawe told ABC News: "Personally I never wanted to be an intimate friend of his. I have never avoided having Jewish friends and I have never been a Nazi. In fact, I have two employees who are Jewish. I consider this idea of neo-Nazism totally passé. I feel very badly about it [giving assistance to Mengele] now because I helped someone who really did not deserve my assistance."

But in his act of public contrition, Ernesto Glawe made one important omission. He failed to mention that the Glawes had received hush money from Mengele. By the summer of 1976 they knew precisely who Mengele was, clued by the false identity card, the "Mengele" catalogue, the conflicting war stories. Mengele then felt obliged, though with great reluctance, to pay the Glawes for their silence, a fact revealed in a letter from Sedlmeier to Mengele: "In connection with the Santiago affair, you mentioned that you were disgusted that one had to pay friends for their services. Don't we do the same with the tall man [Wolfgang Gerhard]? If we had considered this necessity with G + G [Gitta and Geza Stammer], you might still be together."

Mengele's fees to "the tall man," which had risen since he acquired his identity card, were proving to be a considerable drain on his private funds. Marianne Huber, the Gerhard's landlady in Graz, Austria, said that one of the children told her that Gerhard had sold his ID card for \$7,000, though in what currency, she did not know. To raise extra cash, Mengele also had to sell the Sao Paulo apartment he had bought in the Stammers' name.

Mengele's instructions for his son's secret visit resembled a set of military orders. From the moment he first suggested the idea in 1973, Mengele insisted that Rolf travel on a false passport and lay a series of false trails. In May, 1977, he wrote to Sedlmeier imploring him to ensure that Rolf use a false passport, or "dumbman," and gave detailed instructions for his arrival in Sao Paulo.

Mengele need hardly have worried because the West Germans were not giving the slightest importance to following any members of his family. But since Mengele did not know that, his elaborate instructions to Rolf continued, with an echo from the past. "Use

the subway in an inconspicuous manner," he urged his son, advising him how to merge with the crowd on the platform just as he had done on his escape by train through Italy in 1949. He also told Rolf how to get to the Bosserts' house. From there, Wolfram Bossert would lead him to the ramshackle bungalow on Alvarenga Street.

Rolf departed for Rio de Janeiro from Frankfurt with a \$600 charter ticket on Varig Airlines. He traveled on a passport he had stolen from a friend, Wilfried Busse, when they were on holiday earlier in that year. '

As his father had instructed, Rolf brought with him gifts for the Bosserts and, for Mengele himself, a Latin-English dictionary, an attachment for his electric razor and \$5,000 in cash from Karl Heinz. An hour or so into the flight, Rolf began to have last-minute doubts: "I remember thinking to myself, 'Should I really be going? It won't change anything.' But these misgivings were just nerves. I knew that I wouldn't turn back once I got to Brazil. It was something I had to do. I'd been thinking about it for too long."

It had been 21 years since Rolf last saw his father, in the Swiss Alps. During those years his father had been revealed as a monster. The man standing at the gate now was a shadow of his old self. The pride had gone. And the self-assurance. There was a 'pathetically eager look about him as he raised his arms for an awkward embrace with his son. "The man who stood before me," said Rolf, "was a broken man, a scared creature."

Josef Mengele was trembling with excitement. There were actually tears in his eyes. Rolf felt as if he were in the presence of a stranger. "That's when I made a few gestures to overcome the unfamiliarity and the emotion," he said, and he responded to his father's offer of an embrace.

The bungalow his father was living in was small and simple. During his visit, Rolf had the bed; his father slept on the brick floor. There was a lot of questioning, cautiously at first, with Rolf affecting a conciliatory approach.

"I told my father I was interested in hearing about his time in Auschwitz. What was Auschwitz according to his version of events? What did he do there? Did he have a role in the things he was charged with? For tactical and psychological reasons I very cautiously touched upon this subject, trying to analyze it and separate out the more obscure and complex arguments my father was trying to inject."

Night after night the inquisition went on. Mengele's answers were so full of philosophical and pseudo-scientific verbiage that Rolf began to fear "my mind would be overrun." His father kept straying off the essential points, justifying his racist views, falling back at one point on a detailed critique of prehistoric evolution. When Mengele had finally exhausted his hand, Rolf launched his counteroffensive.

Why, Rolf asked him, if he felt so sure of his ground, had he not turned himself in? "My father replied, 'There are no judges, only avengers,'" said Rolf. How could his father explain that many crippled and deformed people still had brilliant minds? "My father could not give me a proper answer to that. He just waffled on and on."

What precisely was Mengele's evidence for asserting that some races were superior to others? "Here most of his arguments were sociological, historical and political," said Rolf. "They were quite unscientific."

Wasn't such an attempt to categorize races in any case immoral and deeply 'inhuman? "My father knew that this was my route into Auschwitz and what he did there," said Rolf. "He saw my approach and knew that I hadn't accepted what he'd been saying."

In the 14 days and nights that Rolf spent with his father, he learned a lot about the old man's moods, his suicidal tendencies, his depression, his temper. He learned nothing about what his father did in the war. In a philosophical way Mengele tried to justify what he had done without saying exactly what it was. Never once did he admit any guilt. In the end, said Rolf, it was impossible to discuss the concepts of evil or guilt because his father felt no guilt: "I tried. These allegations, these facts left me speechless: I tried to tell him that his presence in Auschwitz alone was unacceptable to me. I was hoping he'd say: 'I tried to get a transfer to the front. I did this, I did that.' Unfortunately I realized that he would never express any remorse or feeling of guilt in my presence."

By Christmas, 1978, Mengele had lost the will to live. He walked around in an absentminded daze, not seeming to care what might happen to him. Once he nearly fell down a well in the back yard. Another time he was almost killed when he ventured outside. Neighbors, startled by the screech of brakes, saw a bus straddling the road and amid the swirling dust, Mengele, grazed and shuffling away as if oblivious to his brush with death.

It was in this distracted frame of mind that Mengele left his bungalow for the last time. He seemed to know that he might never return. After agonizing for several days, he finally accepted an invitation from the Bosserts to stay at their rented beach house at Bertioga, 25 miles south of Sao Paulo. It was the height of a sweltering Brazilian summer.

Alone, he took the two-hour bus ride to Bertioga, arriving there on Feb. 5, 1979. Liselotte Bossert remembers that "he started letting off steam right away. He seemed to be very irritated by something." For most of the next two days, Mengele stayed inside the tiny two-bedroom beach house.

At 3 p.m. on February 7, Mengele finally came outdoors. "We thought a walk would soothe his mind, as he would see nature, the beach and the water," said Liselotte. It was another hot day, the sunshine blazing down. He and Wolfram Bossert, walked along the beach and then sat in the sun for a while. Bossert recalls that Mengele was heartsick for Germany: "I am convinced that he was longing to return to Germany. That was clear toward the end; on the last day he made it clear. I don't know whether he knew death was coming, but he was sitting on a large rock by the sea, all by himself, looking out across the sea to the east. And he said: 'Over there is my country... I would like to spend the last days of my life in my native town of Gunzburg, somewhere at the top of a mountain, in a little house, and to write the history of my native town.' That was what he really wanted... At the time I didn't think anything of it, but knowing now what happened that day, I can remember it quite clearly."

About 4:30 in the afternoon, to cool off from the burning sun, Mengele decided to chance the gentle Atlantic waves. Ten minutes later he was fighting for his life. Young Andreas Bossert saw him first and shouted, "Uncle, come out, the current is too strong." Alerted by his son, Wolfram Bossert looked up and saw a thrashing movement in the sea. He called out and asked Mengele if he was all right. A grimace of pain was the only response. Plunging into the water, Bossert swam as fast as he could to rescue his friend. By the time he reached him, there was scarcely any movement left. Paralysis had seized his body. Young Andreas Bossert remembers a lifeless body lying lopsided on the water, bobbing up and down with the swell of the sea. Mengele had died of a second stroke.

Why did it take six years for the secret of Mengele's Brazilian exile and his death and burial to emerge? Aside from a small circle of unrepentant Nazis like Hans Rudel, there were by now more than 30 close friends and family who knew but never said a word. On Aug. 5, 1979, Paraguayan Interior Minister Montonaro held a press conference and laid the groundwork for the revocation of Mengele's citizenship. He denied that Mengele was in the country and said that he had left Paraguay "a long time ago." On Aug. 8, Montonaro directed the Paraguayan attorney general to ask the supreme court to revoke Mengele's citizenship, which it did that same day. The court stated that it had reached its decision because Mengele had been "absent from the country since 1960." When Mengele's citizenship was revoked, U.S. Ambassador Robert White assumed Mengele must have died. "I must say that up until that time I always believed that he was actually in Paraguay," he said. The ambassador was right, of course, about Mengele's death, though he did not know what had happened in Brazil. The question is, did President Stroessner know?

It is inconceivable that Montonaro would have revoked Mengele's citizenship without the President's authority, since he regards Paraguayan citizenship to be sacrosanct. "I don't think that Stroessner would ever have permitted the cancellation of something he considered so valuable," said Ambassador White. If he is right, it suggests that Stroessner was privy to Mengele's death in Brazil but nonetheless allowed the world to go on guessing for another six years.

There's no doubt this is the kind of game that Stroessner would have enjoyed, if only to avenge the false accusations that his country had harbored Mengele for 20 years. Yet it is almost certain he did not know of Mengele's death.

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

Excerpted from "Mengele: The Complete Story" by Gerald L. Posner and John Ware.

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