

5. Argentina: Why so much theater? What was the purpose of U.S. government with the Eichmann operation?

The coordinator of the Holocaust felt resentful in Argentina and he gave interviews. It was only a question of time until a journalist would ring at his door. Adolf Eichmann had become a danger, for his former employer, Standard Oil, for Israel, for others. The question is unavoidable itself: If one wanted to silence Eichmann, why then not simply shoot him or make him "disappear"? This would be cheaper and more practical than to lure him, as it appears, to Uruguay, to organize an aircraft, to engage pilots, to arrest, interrogate and deliver him in a top secret action to Israel?

For what purpose such theater? In addition, for the young Israeli state it brought diplomatic problems with the Argentine government which was humiliated publicly by the supposed violation of its sovereignty. And there were possible complications also for Uruguay, if one day everything came out...

It seems that one party profited that very same day from this theater: the U.S. government, which is probably the reason why U.S. citizens and a U.S. aircraft played a central role in the execution of the action. Why did the U.S choose to humiliate Argentina before the whole world?

The answer to this question can be found on the 15th floor of the Foreign Ministry in Buenos Aires. There the bilateral contracts are kept. And in the file "Argentina USA" one can look for a date. In May, 1960, the month of the Eichmann-transfer, I find only one sheet, a letter from the Argentinean Assistant Secretary Miguel Angel Centeno, directed to the US ambassador. Where the date should be, it says only "... May, 1960 ", it is as if the author of this letter would have been sure that the Argentine government would sign this document one future day in May, 1960.

The day on which the document finally was signed was the 23rd of May - as the receipt stamp attests. On that day, Ben Gurion had announced the arrest of Eichmann in the Knesset. The war criminal had been captured from his "Nazi sanctuary". And the Argentine government had to count on other, such embarrassing actions. So, Mr. Centeno submitted immediately to the diplomatic pressure of the US. Quotation from his letter (receipt stamp 23 May, 1960):

"Referring to the offer of the US government from the 9th September (1959), to supply us atomic equipment and research devices, it is an honor for me to inform your Excellency, that the Argentine government will accept your conditions implemented in the document".

In September, 1959 an agreement about the co-operation in the nuclear area had been concluded between Argentina and the U.S. Argentina had to submit to the controls demanded by the U.S. and it had to promise to use the nuclear technology exclusively for civilian purposes.

But the Argentines hesitated. Since the end of the World War II they had promoted the development of a national weapons industry. For this reason, they hired German technical engineers, first of all rocket specialists, aircraft manufacturers and nuclear

scientists. In Córdoba, Kurt Tank built an aircraft factory; nearby, in Carmen del Falda, rockets were tested and in Bariloche Ronald Richter worked on a nuclear laboratory.

Many of these technical engineers, former Nazis, left Argentina after the putsch against Perón, in 1955. Most went back in the Federal Republic of Germany, which had just created its own national armed forces (Bundeswehr). Many also followed the call of Wernher von Braun, who had been hired by the U.S. Space Administration, NASA. Ronald Richter had repeatedly asked the U.S. Air Force (USAF) for a job but had been rejected for lacking qualification, "not interested ", said a confidential note from the 21 November 1956 of the USAF Headquarter.

The US exercised forceful pressure on the government in Buenos Aires to end the co-operation with Nazi technical engineers and presented themselves as new partners. In July 1955 the bilateral contract was signed in Washington, which became valid for five years. In article II the USA promised to supply Argentina six kilos of enriched uranium, but only for "peaceful purposes ".

This contract ran out in July 1960 and had to be extended. But the Argentines did not want to be limited to the " peaceful purposes " and they also wanted a much larger amount of uranium. Since September of 1959 the prolongation of the treaty was ready for signature, but the Argentines vacillated. They vacillated until the 23rd of May, 1960. On this day it became known worldwide that the top-ranking national socialist living in exile had been kidnapped from his Nazi sanctuary, Argentina. And that same day, Mr. Centeno submitted unconditionally to the demands of Washington. Two weeks later, the treaty about the civilian use of atomic energy was signed.

Another victory for the U.S., from 2 August, 1960, was the "agreement about co-operation and technical instruction by U.S. officers ". Within this agreement, the Argentine government promised to pay for the U.S. military instructors first class airline tickets and, in article XIII, grants immunity to them in the Argentine courts. This guarantee of the immunity was already at that time unusual, which also helps explain why that Treaty was not discussed in the public. And today the majority of the Latin American states, also Argentina, reject the immunity for U.S. soldiers.

It is remarkable that Argentina was not more humiliated at that time for being a "Nazi sanctuary". Historians estimate that after World War II about 50,000 Nazis had set off to Argentina, among them war criminals such as Eichmann and Mengele. In Argentina, this dark chapter of history surfaced publicly only in the nineties, and in Germany it remains still today a taboo. Also in the protocol and during the process in Israel, Eichmann was asked nothing about the structure of the Nazi exile in Argentina, and neither the judges, investigators nor the world press insisted.

These are the facts. And from the facts, one can form an opinion: One could consider that the theater was brilliant with a successful end! Obviously, it is a success that the chapter of Nazi scientists in Argentina was closed. Argentina is a nuclear-weapon-free area and this is certainly positive. But it would be desirable that the whole planet is nuclear-weapon-free. Why isn't it?

Reasons enough, so that the US government and the Argentine government, finally, should release all documents as relates to these matters.

