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Nazis Who Are Alive and Well May Finally Be Living in Fear

By RALPH BLUMENTHAL

Over the years, he has been reported in a lot of places, including Paraguay, Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Bolivia, Peru, West Germany, Austria, Portugal, Miami and even Mount Kisco, N.Y. As the 40th anniversary of V-E day nears, Josef Mengele, the notorious Auschwitz death camp doctor, is presumably alive at the age of 73, and, with a \$1.4 million price on his head, is the center of a growing international clamor that erupted anew in Congress last week.

The whereabouts of Dr. Mengele is overshadowed by even more troubling questions. For years, long after their names became symbols for evil, he and other long-time fugitive Nazi war criminals like Adolf Eichmann and Klaus Barbie lived not underground but openly and unmolested in cities and towns where they were well known to the police and populace, including members of the Jewish community.

From 1945, when he fled Auschwitz, until 1949, Dr. Mengele is believed to have lived in his home town of Günzburg in Bavaria, where his family operated the Mengele farm machinery factory. For a time in the 1950's, according to Serge Klarsfeld, a French lawyer and Holocaust archivist, Dr. Mengele lived under his own name in Buenos Aires, a city with a large, if nervous, Jewish community. In Paraguay in the 1970's, reports that Dr. Mengele was heavily involved in illegal narcotics trafficking reached the attention of the Central Intelligence Agency, according to censored agency documents released last week by two Republican Senators, Alfonse M. D'Amato of New York and Arlen Specter of

Pennsylvania.

Similarly, Adolf Eichmann, before his 1960 seizure and subsequent execution by the Israelis for masterminding the "final solution" for the Jews, lived openly in Argentina, barely concealing the identity of his child at school as "Klement-Eichmann," Mr. Klarsfeld said.

Klaus Barbie, for at least 10 years until his extradition from Bolivia to France in 1982, was a prominent Government confidant and frequenter of the cafes of La Paz. He is scheduled to stand trial later this year in Lyons for crimes against humanity, though not for one he is widely accused of: the torture-murder of France's greatest resistance hero, Jean Moulin.

Alois Brunner, an Eichmann deputy who arranged the deportation deaths of Jews from Salonika, Vienna and Berlin, continues to live today as "George Fischer" in Damascus, according to Mr. Klarsfeld, who has been pressing for his extradition to West Germany.

And Andrija Artukovic, former Interior Minister of the Nazi puppet state of Croatia, has lived in Seal Beach near Los Angeles since 1948 when he entered the country illegally under a false name. A court is hearing an extradition request by Yugoslavia for his involvement in the killing of up to 750,000 Jews, Serbs and gypsies.

For political and other reasons, the climate has clearly shifted. In Washington last week, the release of the C.I.A. documents on Dr. Mengele drew considerable press attention, as did a hearing the week before by Senator Specter's subcommittee on juvenile justice, which exercised jurisdiction apparently because of the Nazi doctor's experiments on young twins.

Outgoing Attorney General William French Smith also recently directed the Justice Department's Office of

Special Investigations to study any possible involvement by the United States in Dr. Mengele's flight from justice, an inquiry similar to one it conducted into the Barbie case in 1983. The Army announced its own inquiry.

A former member of the special investigations office, John J. Loftus, a Boston lawyer, released declassified Army documents that he said showed American intelligence efforts to join forces with a group of Byelorussian Nazi collaborators let into the United States after World War II. And the General Accounting Office is preparing a report for Congress on the Government's handling of cases involving suspected war criminals who entered the country illegally after the war.

Substantially the same information on German war criminals has been available for decades. Why the upsurge of interest?

According to Allan A. Ryan, Jr., former director of the special investigations office and a Washington lawyer who has written a book on war criminals in America, the 1970's marked the end of a long period of reluctance to deal with issues of the Holocaust, the killing of six million Jews by the Germans and their collaborators.

"There was a reawakening of interest — some would call it a reawakening of conscience — in the Holocaust,"

he wrote last year in his book, "Quiet Neighbors: Prosecuting Nazi War Criminals in America." "A quarter century after the war ended," he continued, "a curtain of silence lifted, not least in America. No single event was responsible. It was the coming of age of a new generation, a generation that had not lived through the war and had pressing questions for those who had."

In Paris, Mr. Klarsfeld had a similar explanation. "When the Jews came back, they were ashamed to say they had been deported," he said. "Today, to have been a hero is less important than to have been witness to this phenomenon. With the passing of time the importance of the Holocaust is growing, and questions of the fate of these Nazi criminals are growing with it."

To some extent, Mr. Klarsfeld said, the reawakening is a response to efforts by neo-Nazis and historical revisionists to dismiss the Holocaust as a Jewish myth. As such, he said, their charges have served to stimulate counterefforts to document every aspect of the genocide. He is working on a large book on every aspect of the construction of the gas chambers.

"In a century, children may ask, 'What exactly were the gas chambers?' " he said. "Thanks to our enemies, we will be able to tell them."