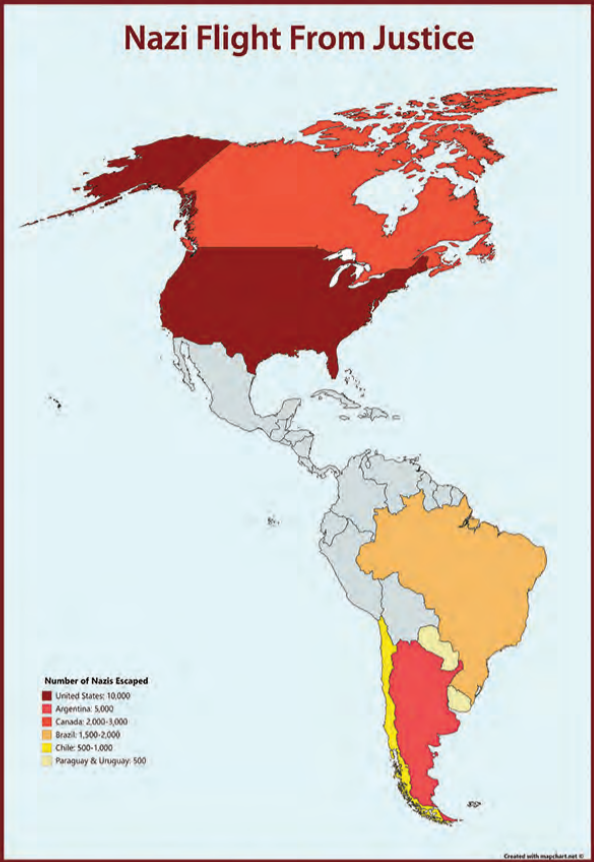


Seeking Justice: The Real Nazi Hunters

Nuremberg Trials

In the aftermath of the Second World War, the Nuremberg Trials prosecuted captured Nazis for war crimes, but the focus was not on Holocaust victims or survivors. Some Nazis escaped justice due to expertise in certain fields, such as rocket science. They were recruited by the United States and USSR to bolster their space and defense programs. Thousands of Nazis with close ties to Germany fled to South America after the war, often receiving help from foreign countries. Argentinian President Juan Pedro aided Nazis by creating smuggling routes known as "ratlines" from Southern European ports to Argentina.



Karl Brandt on trial, 20 August 1947

Some Were Convicted at Nuremberg



After World War II many German soldiers discarded Nazi items they acquired during their military service.



Nazi pilot dagger.
Daggers like this one were used by the German Deutscher Luftsportverband (DLV) Glider Pilots and the Nationalsozialistisches Fliegerkorps (NSFK). It is unclear which organization this dagger belonged to.



Nazi era German Wound Badge.
This decoration was awarded to soldiers who sustained wounds in combat.



Nazi Observer's Badge (Beobachterabzeichen).
This German military decoration was awarded to members of the German Air Force (Luftwaffe) after completing two months of qualifying service and five operational flights in the role of observer, navigator or bombardier.



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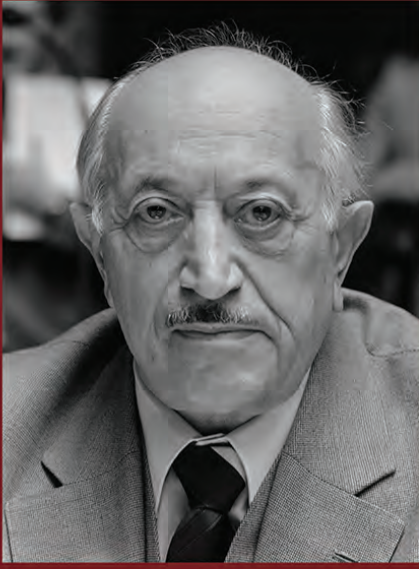
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The Search for Fugitives

Simon Wiesenthal, the most famous Nazi hunter and survivor of five concentration camps, knew the importance of bringing Nazis to justice. After liberation, he worked with the War Crimes division of the United States Army. He opened the Jewish Historical Documentation Center in Austria in 1947 to bring attention back to the prosecution of Nazis and their crimes. Wiesenthal continued his work, providing information that led to the capture of many former Nazis including Adolf Eichmann, the infamous "Architect of the Holocaust." The work of Wiesenthal and other Nazi hunters brought to Holocaust survivors and their families a sense of justice that they did not receive after the war.

Simon Wiesenthal
Photo from the National Archives of the Netherlands



Serge & Beate Klarsfeld
Mr. & Mrs. Klarsfeld are best known for their investigation and documentation of Nazi war crimes, enabling the prosecution of numerous war criminals. Most notably the Klarsfelds helped to indict Nicolas "Klaus" Barbie, the so-called Butcher of Lyon, for his torture of Jews and French Resistance fighters.



Efraim Zuroff
Efraim Zuroff served as a researcher for the U. S. Justice Department. His efforts assisted in the preparation of cases against Nazi war criminals living in the United States. In 2002 Zuroff founded Operation Last Chance, an organization which offers rewards for information leading to the arrest of Nazi war criminals still in hiding.



Tuviah Friedman
While working for the Documentation Center in Vienna, Tuviah Friedman hunted down numerous Nazis. He later played a role in the capture of Adolf Eichmann. Most of Friedman's Nazi hunting activities took place in Poland in the years immediately following WWII. Nevertheless, Friedman worked throughout his life to publicize the ongoing fight to locate and prosecute Nazi criminals.

Local Nazi Hunters

Government agents joined the search, many undercover, gathering evidence and tracking down leads to find Nazis in hiding.

Nathan Haendel was one such government agent. Born in Poland, Haendel moved to France at the beginning of World War II in order to join the French Resistance.



Nathan Haendel, on the right, while in the French Resistance
Photo from Varda Ratner



Nathan Haendel, circa 1955
Photo from Varda Ratner


Following the war, Haendel moved to Palestine and later worked for the Israeli governments. In the 1950's he worked as a Mossad agent in Brazil, looking for Nazi fugitives while undercover as a Hebrew School principal. His cover was blown in 1959, forcing him and his family to flee the country. They eventually found a home here in San Antonio.



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Eichmann Brought to Justice

Adolf Eichmann, the “Architect of the Holocaust,” was an elite SS Nazi officer with many responsibilities, most notably the design and execution of the “Final Solution.” Imprisoned by U.S. troops after the war, he escaped and fled to Argentina under a false I.D. in 1950. Ten years later, with information from Simon Wiesenthal, Israeli Mossad agents deployed to Argentina on a mission to capture Eichmann. Due to Argentina’s ties with Germany, extradition was unlikely.

Fearing that someone in President Pedro’s regime may alert Eichmann to a possible extradition request, Israeli agents abducted Eichmann and smuggled him out of the country. Eichmann was put on trial for crimes against humanity in Jerusalem. In response to his crimes, he argued to the judge that he was merely “following orders.” The judge disagreed and found Eichmann guilty, sentencing him to death in 1962. During the televised trial, more than 100 Holocaust survivors were called as witnesses against Eichmann. For many watching the trial, this was the first-time they had heard about the horrors experienced by Holocaust survivors.



Adolf Eichmann on trial in Jerusalem 1961.
Image from the Israel National Photo Collection



The Red Cross identity document Adolf Eichmann used to enter Argentina under the alias Ricard Klement in 1950, issued by the Italian delegation of the Red Cross in Genoa, Italy.

Image from Fundación Memoria del Holocausto



The album “6 Million Accuse,” produced by United Artists, is an audio recording.

Holocaust Memorial Museum of San Antonio collection



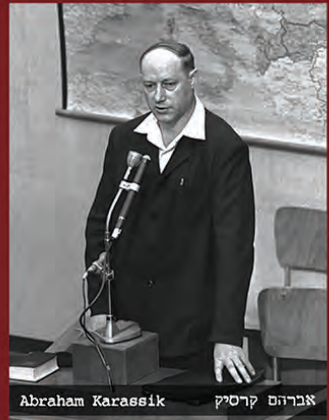
Rivka Kupper

רבקה קופר

More than 100 witnesses were called during the trial. Some testified about specific acts committed by Eichmann, but most gave more general testimonies about their experiences of Nazi brutality during the Holocaust. Many witnesses broke down during their testimonies and some collapsed while testifying and had to be hospitalized.

Rivka Kupper and Abraham Karassik testifying.

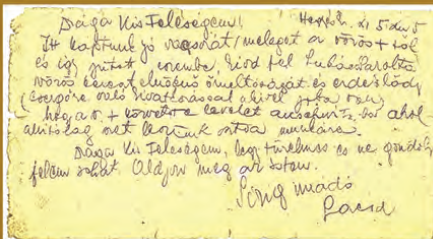
Images from Yad Vashem



Abraham Karassik

אברהם קרסיק

Handwritten postcard from HMMSA collection. This postcard was sent by Laszlo Mermelstein to his wife after he was extradited to the custody of the Hungarian Gendarmerie (police). During World War II, the Gendarmerie was supposed to destroy any opponents of the Hungarian regime and was responsible for carrying out the regime’s anti-Jewish policies.



Translation from donor:

My Precious Little Wife!
Hegyesh. November 5, 5PM
Here we received a good hot dinner from the Red+ and it reminded me that you should call Her Excellence Red Cross President Sarolta Lukacs (referring to Csergo, who is on good terms with her) and find out if the R+ forwards letters to Auschwitz, where allegedly we'll be assigned to work groups. My Precious Little Wife, be patient and don't think much about me. May God bless you.
Your Laci, adoring You 'till the grave.



If I would not come back, M. (unintelligible name) will stand with you like a brother.

T. Mermelstein Laszlo
Budapest
VIL Bethlen Ter 2.



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The Search Continues

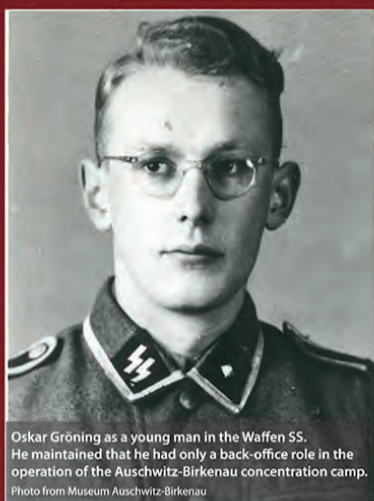
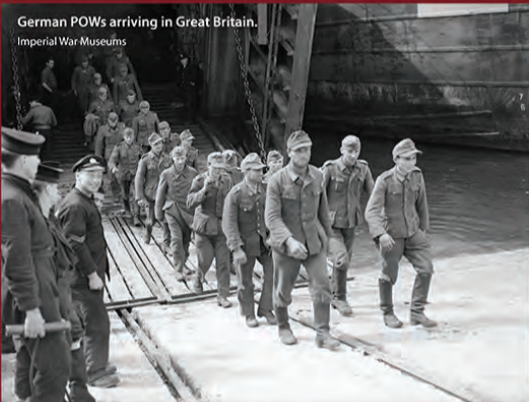
Even more than 75 years after the liberation of Auschwitz, the search for Nazi war criminals continues. In 2011, a court in Munich convicted John Demjanjuk for his role as a guard at the Sobibor killing center. In 2015, Oskar Gröning, who served as a guard at Auschwitz, was also convicted. In 2016, former SS guard Reinhold Hanning was convicted, and even more recently, in July of 2020 Bruno Dey was convicted for his role as a camp guard at Stutthof. Demjanjuk had been living in the United States and working in the auto industry since 1952 and became a US citizen in 1958. Gröning and Hanning were both held as prisoners of war in Great Britain for several years before returning to Germany.

John Demjanjuk at Sobibor, front row center 1943
US Holocaust Memorial Museum



John Demjanjuk at his first trial in 1987.
Israel Government Press Office.

German POWs arriving in Great Britain.
Imperial War Museums



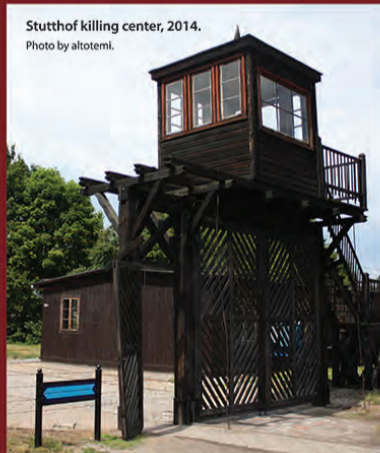
Oskar Gröning as a young man in the Waffen SS. He maintained that he had only a back-office role in the operation of the Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp.
Photo from Museum Auschwitz-Birkenau

With each Nazi war criminal discovered and brought to trial around the world, the headlines read that “this is likely the last,” but new cases continue to emerge. In February 2021, a 95-year-old woman who worked at the Stutthof killing center and a 100-year-old man who was an SS guard at the Sachsenhausen concentration camp were charged in Germany as war criminals. Despite the ongoing efforts to bring all Nazi war criminals to justice, the time to catch the remaining fugitives is running short as both the criminals and the remaining witnesses to their crimes grow ever older and more frail. The world may never know what happened to all of the Nazis who committed these horrible crimes against humanity.

Sachsenhausen concentration camp.
Photos from Stiftung Brandenburgische Gedenkstätten



Stutthof killing center, 2014.
Photo by altotemi.



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