

The Man Who Captured Eichmann Tells:

"How We Hunted Down The



Tuvia Friedmann

In this exclusive interview from Israel, a veteran undercover agent reveals the dramatic 15-year man hunt for Hitler's Gestapo chief who murdered six million Jews

By LEO HEIMAN

Millions of persons who still recall with horror the crimes which Nazi Germany committed against humanity during World War II were electrified recently when the Gestapo officer charged with directing the extermination of six million Jews was captured in Argentina. His name is Adolf Eichmann, and his arrest climaxed a 15-year search for personal vengeance by Tuvia Friedmann, a Polish Jew whose family was killed by the Nazis, and who now is director of the Nazi War Crimes Documentation Center in Israel. In this exclusive Family Weekly interview with an Israeli newsman, Friedmann tells for the first time the full story of Eichmann's capture.

HAIFA, ISRAEL—

Mr. Friedmann, how did you discover that Eichmann was in Argentina?

A couple of former Nazis released from prison in Germany drank too much in a Munich beer hall and complained that Eichmann was enjoying freedom while they had to serve time for carrying out his orders. Their complaints reached Israeli operatives, and for money Eichmann's former comrades turned informers.

All they could say was that their former chief was "somewhere in South America." But at least our search was narrowed down to a certain geographical location.

Then there was the matter of Eichmann's wife Veronica. She tried to renew her Austrian passport, but Israeli agents were tipped off. They learned she was in Buenos Aires illegally. Agents converged on Buenos Aires but decided to make Eichmann feel safe by spreading the story that he was in Kuwait in the Middle East.

Then I received a letter from another German resident of Buenos Aires informing us: "I heard that you are looking for Adolf Eichmann in Kuwait. Well, let me tell you he is not in Kuwait; he is here, and for \$10,000 I'll tell you where."

A week later, an Israeli operative carrying my reply knocked at the door of the letter writer, and two weeks later a volunteer commando group was on its way to Buenos Aires.

Why didn't Israel go through Argentine legal channels to get Eichmann?

Our operators decided that Argentina would not turn him over to us. Eichmann had many influential friends in the Argentine administration who would have tipped him off that an extradition request had been filed. He would have escaped and gone underground again. It was decided that moral right and historical justice overrode legal and political considerations.

What is Eichmann's present situation?

He is under guard in a maximum-security prison in northern Israel. He is eager to talk and implicate his former Nazi friends. But whenever he goes off on a tangent to whitewash himself, eye-witnesses are brought in to refresh his memory.

In return for his cooperation, Eichmann gets the best kosher food from the officers' kitchen; he has air conditioning in his cell, fresh linens, a soft mattress, and even perfumed shaving cream.

What were the experiences you had during World War II which made you swear vengeance against Eichmann and other Nazi war criminals?

In September, 1939, Nazi troops overran my home town of Radom, Poland. My parents and brothers were killed in Nazi concentration camps under Adolf Eichmann. I was 16 and strong, so they let me live, doing slave labor work until I became exhausted with the starvation diet.

What did your captors do then?

One day a guard took me behind the camp administration office and showed me packaging materials. They ordered me to wrap parcels to be sent by the camp officers to their families in Germany.

Like most Nazis, our guards were not only torturers but thieves as well. They stole everything not nailed down and mailed it to Germany. They were not even ashamed to send victims' clothes, jewelry, gold teeth, or watches.

Without realizing what I was doing, I memorized the officers' mailing addresses. When all the parcels were ready, I suddenly got an idea: why should I resign myself to death? Why not try to escape and

avenge the murder of my people? If a final accounting ever came, it would be helpful to remember where the murderers lived.

I did such good work on the parcels that it became my duty to wrap the Nazis' loot. In a few months, I knew where most of my torturers lived in Germany.

But how did you escape?

I joined some prisoners who planned a mass breakout. We dug a tunnel under the electrified barbed wire and below the machine guns on the watchtowers. But, unfortunately, only a few of us managed to escape.

Once outside, I joined a group of Polish guerrillas and fought with them until Germany's surrender. I was then transferred to the special security service of Polish Intelligence with the task of ferreting out fugitive Nazi war criminals along the Baltic coast. In less than two months, I arrested more than 1,000, mostly Gestapo and SS members.

I was thanked personally by General Korczynski, the chief of the Polish Secret Security Service, and became his good friend. About a year later, he warned me to get out of Communist Poland while I still could and provided me with the necessary documents.

Where did you go?

Like many other Jewish refugees, I went to Vienna. I had amassed considerable experience in Nazi-hunting and, with the addresses I had memorized in camp, I was valuable. With other agents, I caught more than 200 SS and Gestapo officers, including a few senior generals and gauleiters (Nazi governors).

We handed them over either to the Russians and Poles, who summarily hanged them, or to the Americans and British, who jailed them. But one prize eluded me—Adolf Eichmann.

I began hunting Eichmann in Vienna in 1946. We never believed stories about his death. By 'we' I mean undercover operatives of the Israeli Secret Service in Europe under the leadership of Asher Arthur Ben-Nathan, now director-general of the Israeli Defense Ministry.

NO. 1 NAZI BUTCHER"

What were the events leading up to Eichmann's capture?

Eichmann succeeded in hiding under our noses in Austria and Germany for about five years. First, he hid in an American POW camp, posing as a soldier named Eckmann. He escaped the camp and hid with the family of the SS trooper whose identity he had assumed. He also spent about three years in a woodcutter's cabin in Germany.

When he felt safe, he contacted the secret Nazi underground—headed by Gestapo General Mueller, Deputy Fuehrer Bormann, and SS Colonel Otto Skorzeny. They helped him get out.

What were you doing meanwhile?

I had arrived in Israel with trunkloads of files, dossiers, and documents on war criminals still at large and set up the Nazi War Crimes Documentation Center.

But it took me 10 years to catch up with Eichmann and then only when our undercover operative Henry Diamant (code name "Manus"), a former guerrilla fighter, got friendly with one of Eichmann's former girl friends, a Mrs. Misenbacher. She ran a small hotel in the Austrian town of Duppel. "Manus" went to stay at the hotel and started courting the widow.

For love and money, Mrs. Misenbacher produced Eichmann's photograph and love letters. This was a real prize because when Eichmann saw the end of Germany in sight, he began planning his eventual escape.

First, he wanted to get rid of all surviving witnesses, so he toured Nazi-occupied Europe and ordered the mass execution of any Jews left. Next, he filled several suitcases with jewelry and money, which he had extorted or confiscated from his victims.

Third, he collected genuine foreign passports, in various names and identities, travel documents to neutral countries, and the like.

Fourth, he destroyed all his photographs, letters, signed orders, fingerprint samples, medical record files, and service dossiers.

Therefore, no matter how hard we looked, we couldn't have gotten far without discovering how Eichmann and his handwriting looked.

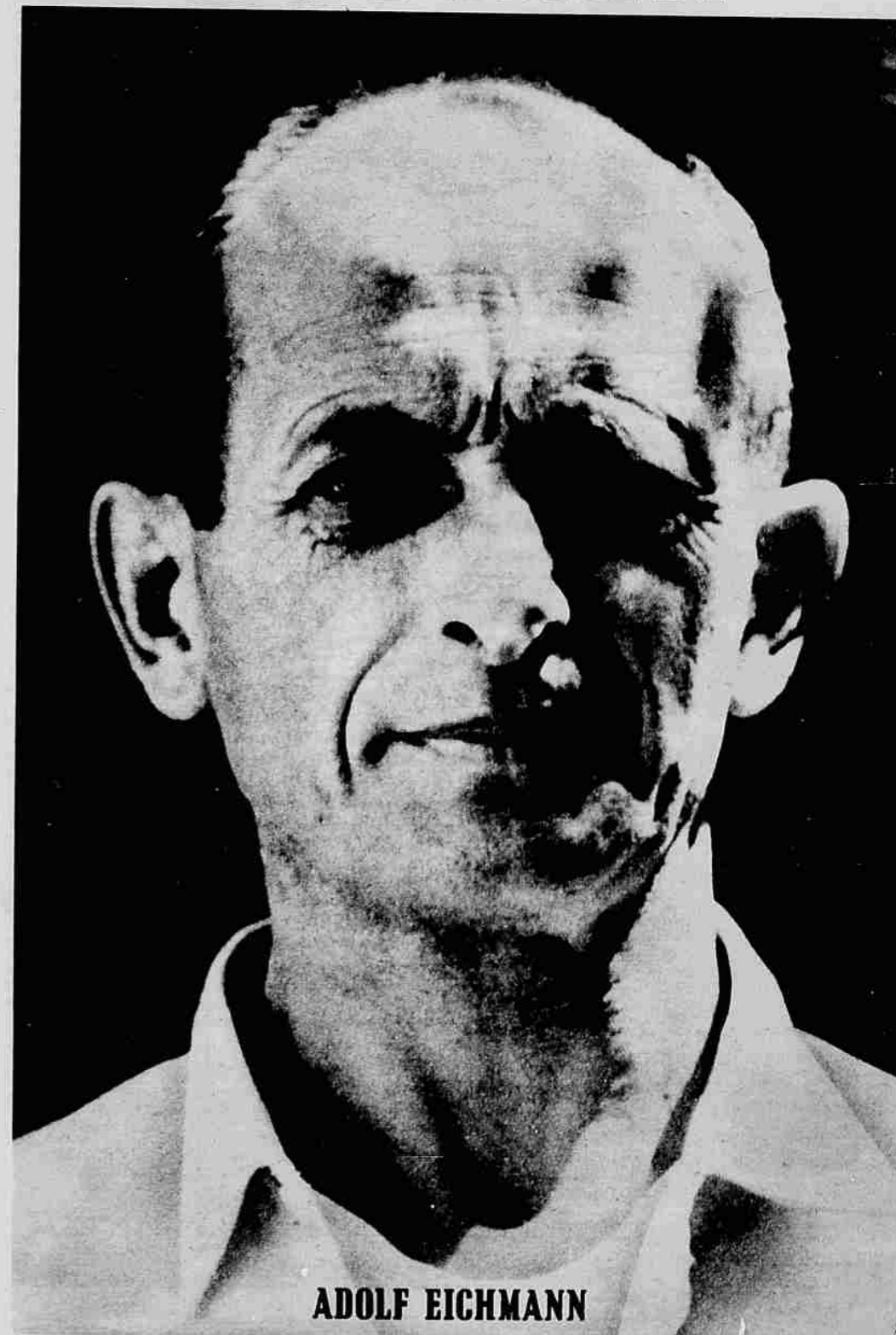
What was your next step?

Well, we were tipped off that the Russians had captured some secret Gestapo archives in Berlin. I went to Berlin and got Eichmann's service file and medical record. The Nazis did everything in duplicate or even triplicate. Eichmann probably forgot that a copy of his records was available in the Gestapo headquarters on Prinz Albrecht Strasse in Berlin.

What did these documents show?

They gave us an accurate picture of Eichmann's dental work, a record of his birthmarks, scars, and

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ADOLF EICHMANN