

Newly released files show

Postwar German government and CIA shielded Adolf Eichmann

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3 July 2006

The recent publication of some 27,000 pages of secret CIA documents has brought to light new details regarding the close ties between the political elite in post-war Germany and leading Nazis who survived the collapse of the Third Reich.

The publication is a result of a 1999 US law, which had been opposed by the CIA, that regulates the release of US government documents concerning German and Japanese war crimes. The documents on Japan are to be made accessible to researchers this summer.

The historian Timothy Naftali from the University of Virginia, who has seen the documents, discovered that the West German government under Konrad Adenauer had known the secret whereabouts of Adolf Eichmann since at least 1958 and had covered this up. The CIA had also shielded the Nazi mass murderer from prosecution.

Eichmann was a participant at the 1942 Wannsee conference, held outside Berlin, where the Nazis planned their “final solution” for the Jews. He was then responsible for carrying this policy out, authorising the deportation of more than 4 million Jews.

He was eventually, on May 11, 1960, apprehended in Argentina by Israeli secret service agents and taken to Israel, where he was tried and sentenced to death. He was executed on June 1, 1962.

Eichmann personified the crimes of the Nazi regime. His trial was closely followed around the world—not least by Hannah Arendt, who observed and reported on the trial—and had a major impact on a new generation, especially in Germany, which began to question more sharply the role of the German ruling class as a whole in the crimes of the Nazis.

The documents published by the CIA make clear that both the German and American governments had shielded Eichmann for a long time in order to protect the Nazi elements whom they were deploying against the Soviet Union in the “Cold War.”

A memo to the CIA by a German secret service operative on March 19, 1958, noted that, according to reports, Eichmann had been living in Argentina since 1952 under the pseudonym Ricardo Clement.

Eichmann escaped from an American internment camp in 1945. He then lived in Germany for several years, using forged papers. In 1950, he, like many other Nazis, went to Argentina along the so-called “rat line,” receiving help from the Vatican. Somewhat later, he was joined by his family, and they lived undisturbed in Buenos Aires.

The references to Eichmann were not followed up by the German or American secret services because it was feared he might divulge information about Hans Globke, a lawyer in Hitler’s Interior Ministry and the author of a commentary on the Nazis’ notorious Nuremberg race laws. Following the war, Globke became an undersecretary of state in Germany and was regarded as the “grey” (in reality, “brown”) eminence of the Adenauer chancellorship.

Naftali told the Reuters press agency, “The newly-published CIA

material points to the fact that there were concerns at the highest levels in the Adenauer government about what might be said about the chancellor’s close collaborators if Eichmann were arrested.” He added that the US secret service had not taken part in the hunt for Eichmann for “reasons of state.” Even after Eichmann was unmasked, the CIA exerted pressure on journalists to suppress any reference to Globke.

After *Life* magazine had acquired Eichmann’s memoirs, then-CIA director Allen Dulles wrote on September 20, 1960, in an internal memorandum: “The entire material was read. An ambiguous mention of Globke was omitted by *Life* magazine on our demand.”

Who was Globke?

Unlike Eichmann, the lawyer Hans Globke had not fled abroad after the Second World War, but had risen to become an undersecretary of state and security advisor to Chancellor Adenauer. He was regarded as the chancellor’s right-hand man, and was responsible for the fact that numerous old Nazis gained prominent posts in the Federal Republic of Germany (West Germany). Adenauer stood by Globke throughout his term in office, which ended in 1963.

Globke came from a rich Catholic household, studying law after the First World War. He attained his doctorate in 1922 and three years later was deputy chief of police in Aachen. In 1929, he entered the Prussian Interior Ministry and by 1932 had already risen within the Reich Interior Ministry, where he was active until 1945.

In this position, he was the co-author with William Stuckart of the first commentary on the Nuremberg race laws. After the Nazis had seized Slovakia in 1939 as a so-called “protectorate,” Globke was involved in the elaboration there of the “Codex of Jewish Law,” a euphemism for the expropriation and repression of the Jewish population.

After 1945, Globke denied having any close involvement with the Nazi regime. But he was by no means a mere “fellow traveller,” as he claimed. Working in the Prussian Interior Ministry even before Hitler came to power in 1933, Globke had ordered that “Efforts by Jewish persons to mask their Jewish origins by changing their Jewish names cannot therefore be supported.”

People who sought assistance from him for their relatives during the war were harshly rejected and threatened against continuing to support Jews and “Polacks.”

Globke could not deny his authorship of the commentary on the Nuremberg race laws, printed by the C.H. Beck publishing house (Stuckart/Globke: *Kommentare zur Deutschen Rassengesetzgebung* [*Commentary on the German Race Legislation*], Munich and Berlin, 1936). Globke’s text contains among other things the following remark: “The dramatic decline in feeling for the purity of blood in the decades before the radical change [Hitler’s coming to power] appears to urgently demand social intervention.” He also wrote: “The Jews must resign

themselves to the fact that their influence on the organisation of German life is gone for ever.”

Globke also classified the degrees of Jewishness in his commentary: “The three-eighths Jew, who possesses one full-Jewish and one half-Jewish grandparent, is considered as a half-breed with a full-Jewish grandparent, the five-eighths Jew, with two full-Jewish grandparents and one half-Jewish grandparent, is a half-breed with two full-Jewish grandparents.”

After the Second World War, Globke maintained that he had merely commented on the laws, and claimed that he bore no responsibility for their development or implementation. This was a lie.

His superior, Nazi Interior Minister Wilhelm Frick, who was condemned to death in the 1946 Nuremberg trials, had issued the following testimonial on Globke in 1938: “Senior government advisor Globke is unquestionably among the most capable and most efficient officials in my ministry.” Frick went on: “He played an outstanding role in elaborating the laws specified below: a) The Law for the Protection of German Blood and German Honour of 15 September, 1935; b) Law for the Protection of the Genetic Health of the German People of 18/10/1935; c) the Civil Status of Individuals law of 3/11/1937; d) the law concerning the change of surnames and first names.”

Adenauer’s right-hand man was involved in the elaboration, formulation and application of laws whose consequence was the “final solution of the Jewish question”—i.e., genocide in Auschwitz and elsewhere.

Globke was, however, only one of many. The names of the high-ranking officials, judges, state lawyers, SS men and Nazi party members of the Third Reich who continued their careers in the Federal Republic of Germany, more or less without interruption, would fill volumes. Here are only some.

Hermann Josef Abs was a member of the executive board of the Deutsche Bank from 1938 to 1945. Among other things, he was jointly responsible for the “Arianisation” (expropriation) of Jewish businesses and banks. After the war, he was deeply involved in the setting up of the Federal Republic of Germany, including his role, between 1948 and 1952, as chairman of the board of the Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau (Loan Corporation for Reconstruction), and afterwards as a financial adviser to Konrad Adenauer and executive board member of the Deutsche Bank.

Reinhard Höhn, an administrative specialist, had been a member of the Nazi party and SS since 1933. In the 1950s and 1960s, he trained some 600,000 managers at the “Academy for Senior Economic Personnel,” which he founded in Bad Harzburg.

Theodor Maunz, who under Hitler was an influential constitutional lawyer, wrote the first commentary on the 1949 post-war German constitution. He did so with his student, Roman Herzog, who later became president of the Federal Republic of Germany. This commentary by Maunz and Herzog is still cited today. Maunz has also provided legal advice to the self-proclaimed Hitler admirer Gerhard Frey, who founded the German Peoples Union and publishes the *German National and Soldiers’ Newspaper*. Maunz has written articles for this neo-fascist newspaper.

When the first German Bundestag (post-war federal parliament) met, more than half of the deputies had been members of Hitler’s NSDAP (Nazi Party) prior to 1945.

In the Foreign Ministry in 1952, two thirds of the senior officials were former NSDAP members. Among section heads, the number was four fifths.

Kurt-Georg Kiesinger, a former NSDAP member and leading functionary in Josef Goebbels’ Propaganda Ministry, was federal chancellor from 1966 to 1969. Karl Carstens, a member of the NSDAP and the SA (Brown Shirts), was federal president from 1979 to 1984.

Richard von Weizsäcker, federal president from 1984 to 1994, launched

his legal career as co-counsel for his father, Ernst, in the Nuremberg war crimes trials. Ernst von Weizsäcker was an SS Brigadeführer and an undersecretary of state in the Foreign Ministry from 1939 to 1943. He was sentenced to five years’ detention on April 14, 1949, because of his active involvement in the deportation of French Jews to Auschwitz.

Hans Filbinger, a member of the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) after the war and formerly a member of the NSDAP, resigned in 1978 as state premier in Baden-Württemberg when it was revealed that he had authorised the death sentence in several trials as a naval judge during the Second World War. The CDU in Baden-Württemberg thereupon appointed him an honorary chairman in 1979.

Hans Speidel, who had been a professional soldier since World War One, becoming a major general in the Wehrmacht under Hitler, was a military advisor to Adenauer and played a central role in the formation of Germany’s post-war Bundeswehr (Armed Forces). He died at 86, a highly decorated officer, having been awarded the Knight’s Cross in 1944 and elevated to the rank of four-star general in 1957.

Without the cooperation or at least approval of the US government and its intelligence services, the Adenauer government could not have proceeded in this way. The thousands of pages newly released from the American national archives also cast light on the work of US agencies. The material makes clear that the US maintained a vast spy network of former Nazis during the Cold War.

Probably of greatest significance was Reinhard Gehlen, Hitler’s chief of the military secret service on the Eastern Front. From 1942 to 1945, he led the espionage department in the Army general staff. Immediately after the war, Gehlen and his entire organisation, consisting of SS or SD (SS security service) people, were placed in the service of the American secret service, the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), predecessor to the CIA.

Gehlen was assigned to develop Germany’s foreign secret service, to be directed against the Soviet Union. “It was important to use every swine, as long as he was an anti-communist,” the former boss of CIA operations in the Soviet Union, Harry Rositzke, wrote. He added, “The necessity of recruiting fellow combatants required a not too critical look at their past.”

Thus, Germany’s foreign secret service (BND) absorbed whole departments from the Nazis’ security service.

At first, the Adenauer government was not informed of the CIA’s collaboration with Gehlen, who had his first contact with the new federal government only at the end of 1950. It was Hans Globke who made the first official contact with the general, who was working with his agents in Pullach, near Munich. “I immediately found a good contact and gained the impression that he correctly saw the significance of my organisation,” wrote Gehlen on this first meeting with Globke.

Gehlen led the BND till his retirement in May 1968. Even in 1970, between 25 and 30 percent of BND employees were former members of the SS, the Gestapo or the Nazi security service.

Therefore, it was natural that the CIA was interested in covering up for Globke in 1960. “The CIA, which cooperated closely with Globke, helped the West Germans protect their man against Eichmann,” says Naftali.

In January 1963, Adenauer was asked by a US press agency correspondent whether it had been an error to make people like Hans Globke one of his closest collaborators. Adenauer answered, “I have heard this question and also other names again and again. But note this well, my dear sirs, one needs capable and reliable people in order to develop a democratic state. Democracy lives by the will, the readiness and the abilities of people to secure liberty and morality within the legal order.”

This seems to have remained the attitude of German governments to the present day. The historian Naftali complains, “It is very difficult to illuminate international history from only one side. It is a genuine disgrace that the Federal Government refuses to publish its information on this topic. I do not understand why Berlin does not want to release the BND

files on the Eichmann case. Why not? I would be very curious to see what information the West German government had about Eichmann, and how the decision was reached about what should happen with Eichmann, taken in the highest circles between Adenauer and Globke.”

The German establishment has no interest in this chapter of German history being debated once again in public. The new exposures about Eichmann and Globke have received little coverage in the German press. They are all the more inconvenient at a time when the German government is again engaged in military operations around the world, and is promoting “a healthy patriotism” on the basis of 60 years of “experience with democracy.”



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