



The Eternal Nazi: From Mauthausen to Cairo, the Relentless Pursuit of SS Doctor Aribert Heim

Nicholas Kulish , Souad Mekhennet

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From the *New York Times* reporters who first uncovered S.S. officer Aribert Heim's secret life in Egypt comes the never-before-told story of the most hunted Nazi war criminal in the world.

Dr. Aribert Heim worked at the Mauthausen concentration camp for only a few months in 1941 but left a devastating mark. According to the testimony of survivors, Heim euthanized patients with injections of gasoline into their hearts. He performed surgeries on otherwise healthy people. Some recalled prisoners' skulls set out on his desk to display perfect sets of teeth. Yet in the chaos of the postwar period, Heim was able to slip away from his dark past and establish himself as a reputable doctor and family man in the resort town of Baden-Baden. His story might have ended there, but for certain rare Germans who were unwilling to let Nazi war criminals go unpunished, among them a police investigator named Alfred Aedtner. After Heim fled on a tip that he was about to be arrested, Aedtner turned finding him into an overriding obsession. His quest took him across Europe and across decades, and into a close alliance with legendary Nazi hunter Simon Wiesenthal. The hunt for Heim became a powerful symbol of Germany's evolving attitude toward the sins of its past, which finally crested in a desire to see justice done at almost any cost.

As late as 2009, the mystery of Heim's disappearance remained unsolved. Now, in *The Eternal Nazi*, Nicholas Kulish and Souad Mekhennet reveal for the first time how Aribert Heim evaded capture--living in a working-class neighborhood of Cairo, praying in Arabic, beloved by an adopted Muslim family--while inspiring a manhunt that outlived him by many years. It is a brilliant feat of historical detection that illuminates a nation's dramatic reckoning with the crimes of the Holocaust.

The Eternal Nazi: From Mauthausen to Cairo, the Relentless Pursuit of SS Doctor Aribert Heim Details

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From Reader Review The Eternal Nazi: From Mauthausen to Cairo, the Relentless Pursuit of SS Doctor Aribert Heim for online ebook

Brian says

The Eternal Nazi is a well-researched and methodically told history of how Dr. Aribert Heim eluded capture after being known as Dr. Death at the Mauthausen Concentration Camp. During his time at Mauthausen Dr. Heim was known for almost unspeakable cruelties including keeping the skulls of his victims and injecting gasoline into the hearts of healthy patients. After the war Heim was able to clear American detention (rushed due to demobilization) and begin a trek that differed from so many other Nazi's choosing to relocate to Egypt as opposed to Latin America. The story tracks the investigation for the Doctor as well as his efforts to remain hidden which included name changes and eventually a conversion to Islam. It is a riveting read packed with detail and does not get bogged down at any point. Well worth the time for those who are interested in the hunt for Nazi war criminals or those who enjoy a good drama filled chase.

Rachel says

Book was ok would give 2.5 stars. Aribert Heim not particular interesting person (or what was written about him here). Wouldn't recommend

Lissa says

I found myself with a two hour layover in the Denver International Airport, and since one of my favorite independent booksellers (Tattered Cover) had just opened a new location in the airport, of course I had to browse the shelves. I ended up choosing this book, mainly because I'd never really heard of Dr. Aribert Heim before, and the title of the book was intriguing. I pictured Dr. Heim as being completely dedicated to the Nazi beliefs and continuing to work toward them even while on the run (well, it's not exactly my fault - "The Eternal Nazi" kind of led me there). That's not exactly what happens, but the book is still interesting.

It's not a secret that Dr. Heim is never brought to justice - even the book jacket itself states that he eludes capture, and the prologue gives "the ending" away, as well. So for those who are looking for a sense of closure in this book, let me save you several hours - it's not there. Instead, Dr. Heim's life, and those who spent most of their lives trying to track him down and ultimately failed in that endeavor, is quite messy, which is just how real life is most of the time. I don't mind messy and complicated.

In fact, Heim's crimes are never truly "nailed down" in a straightforward fashion. It's said that he killed inmates by injecting gasoline into their hearts. It's said that he deliberately killed inmates by operating on them - sometimes without anesthesia. It's said that if an inmate had a particularly good bite and a full set of teeth, Heim would have him killed, cut off the inmate's head, strip the flesh from it, and keep the inmate's skull for a grisly souvenir. But there is never a true "list," shall we say, of what truly happened during Heim's time at Mauthausen. It's not even certain how long Heim was there - witness testimony contradict one another - but it appears that he was there for less than a year.

I think the main reason why Heim's crimes remain rather shadowy and without detail is because he was

never brought to trial, at least a criminal trial. There was a civil action against him, but those who were investigating his crimes balked at sharing their information with those prosecuting the civil case. And most of the witnesses against Heim died, while the Doctor himself lived on in Egypt.

I always find it fascinating how people can divorce themselves from the evil they have done, either blaming it on the orders they received or outright denying what they did. Heim falls into the latter category; he claims that he is completely innocent, that he didn't want to be at the camp in the first place and he did everything in his power to get out as soon as he could, and while he was there he did nothing horrific. He insists upon this until the end, leaving the one son who still has something to do with him, Ruediger, confused as to what his father actually did.

Interspersed throughout the book are the fates of other Nazis - some famous, some not. Some got away (Dr. Josef Mengele, who suffered a stroke while swimming and drowned, is probably the most famous), some were able to stave off justice for many years (Klaus Barbie, "the butcher of Lyon," who wasn't captured until a few years before his death from cancer), and some were very publicly brought to justice (Adolf Eichmann, who was brought back to Israel and executed, only the second person - and, at this moment, still the last - executed by Israel [the other being Meir Tobianski, a member of the IDF who was falsely accused of being a spy and posthumously exonerated]).

The book also examines the changing attitudes of German citizens and how they thought the war crimes of Nazis should be prosecuted, if at all. In the beginning, shortly after the end of the Second World War, Germans "wanted their boys home" and were completely against the denazification trials. Even into the 1960s, Germans for the most part thought that what was over should be over - many who faced trials for their war crimes ended up being found not guilty or serving only a year or two for killing thousands. Ironically, by choosing to run and exiling himself to Egypt, Heim's thirty years of exile were probably decades longer than any sentence he would have received in Germany in the early 1960s (which is when he fled). Disturbingly enough, Heim's son Ruediger wasn't even taught what had happened in Germany during the Second World War; many young Germans in that era had no idea what had occurred to the Jews and other "undesirables" under the Nazi regime. That began to change, and by the 1970s, Germans were much more accepting of Nazis being tried and sentenced for their crimes - some even called for it. The evolution of the acceptance of guilt is interesting.

As for Heim himself, and his choice of refuge in Cairo, I had no idea that Egypt had once been a "safe space" for former Nazis. After the war, the Egyptian military was keen on building new war materials, especially rockets, as the tensions with the new state of Israel heated up in the region. Many Nazis fled to Egypt, where they were paid well for the knowledge that they had acquired during the war. Egypt also had no extradition treaty to Germany or any other country in Europe; Egyptian soil was indeed "safe" for the former Nazis. I knew that such things happened in other countries, particularly those in South America, but not Egypt.

Altogether, I recommend this book, although I would suggest at least a working knowledge of the camps and Nazi Germany itself before picking up the book. There are a lot of names and people in this book, and the authors have a tendency to jump around non-chronologically, so it's difficult at times to keep everything, and everyone, straight. Ultimately, though, I feel that this book is an interesting look at this time period.

❄️ **Pixelflocke** ❄️ says

3,5 ?

Zwei Dinge haben mich beim Lesen wirklich erschüttert: zum Einen die Verbrechen von SS-Arzt Dr. Aribert

Heim (Dr. Tod) und zum Anderen wie halbherzig (bis gar nicht) in der BRD bekannte Nazis verfolgt und zur Rechenschaft gezogen wurden.

Das Buch erzählt die Jahre nach dem zweiten Weltkrieg aus mehreren Perspektiven. Zunächst sind da die Kapitel über Aribert Heim und seine Familie, dann werden die Ermittlungen von Polizeikommissar Aedtner dargelegt, der sich der Suche nach Heim verschrieben hat und zu guter Letzt springt das Buch viel zu anderen Persönlichkeiten und Geschehnissen dieser Zeit. So finden sich andere Nazi-Verbrecher wie Eichmann oder Mengele wieder, aber auch die RAF oder der Nazi-Jäger Simon Wiesenthal. Und genau das war auch ein Stückweit das Problem: das Buch wirkte recht zerfasert und gerade ab der zweiten Hälfte hatte ich den Eindruck, es geht nur noch marginal um Aribert Heim. Sicher sind letzten Tag von Mengele und Eichmann auch interessant, aber dann lese ich ein Buch über diese beiden! Ich hatte manchmal den Eindruck, als hätten die Autoren ein wenig den Fokus verloren und wollten den letzten Teil des Buches irgendwie strecken, da ja Heims Leben in seinen letzten Jahren nicht mehr viel Interessantes hergab.

Cheryl says

Ok, not that I am rooting for violence but I did think that this book would go into details more about Dr. Heim's procedures and his crimes. I thought that this book would focus on Dr. Heim's time in the concentration camp. Instead if focused more on the time span from when Dr. Heim escaped the camp and Police investigator Alfred Aedtner's hunt to find him.

The investigation was intriguing. It was amazing how Dr. Heim could be easily missed by the authorities. It is not like he really was hiding out that well. Well not in my opinion. He was able to do so because of all of the miscommunication or sloppy investigating. If it was not for people like Alfred not willing to give up then criminals would be able to get away with a lot more back in this time period. This book did more along quickly as it spanned time periods. A interesting look into history and events that should not be forgotten for the people who lived it.

Kathleen McRae says

This story was well written and researched. The hunt for Doctor Aribert Heim who was a doctor at several camps under the Nazi Regime and committed acts that were a crime against humanity. The documentation was excellent but in the end he evaded capture and lived many years in Egypt hiding in plain sight.

SundayAtDusk says

Not only was *The Eternal Nazi* about the hunt for Nazi doctor Aribert Heim, it was also a book about why so many Nazi war criminals were never brought to trial. Europe was such a mess after World War II, it almost seems amazing any Nazis were prosecuted. When Dr. Heim realized his days of freedom were possibly going to come to an end in Europe, he fled to Cairo, one place where no Nazi hunters appeared to be looking for him.

Why those searching for him did not think to follow Aribert Heim's youngest son, or uncover where he had travelled, was the one question the authors did not seem to ask or answer. For his youngest son often visited Dr. Heim in Egypt, including up to 1992, when Aribert Heim was dying of cancer. The book also ends on a

strange note, with a quote from Dr. Heim's illegitimate daughter, Waltraut, who never met her father, but only knew him from her mother's stories. "She only said good things about him," Waltraut said. "For me, he was a role model." Why did the authors end their story about an atrocious Nazi doctor, who used Jewish skulls to decorate his desk, with that quote?

Overall, though, *The Eternal Nazi*, was an informative and engrossing read. One of the interesting things the authors mentioned was how the German people were profoundly affected by the mini-series Holocaust. That American TV show seemed to have quickly educated an entire generation that had been kept ignorant about much of the horrors of Nazism. It is so many such facts like that which makes Nicholas Kulish's and Squad Mekhennet's work one that will greatly appeal to the general public. Not surprising by a book written by journalists, since the general public is who journalist are taught to write for and educate.

(Note: I received a free ARC of this book from Amazon Vine.)

Alisi ? wants to read too many books ? says

This book would've been interesting if it was about Aribert Heim. As it was, it seemed to be about every other SS doctor. There was very, very little Heim himself. The book seemed to randomly cut away to what other SS doctors (and war criminals) had done.

Unfortunately, this made this book not only hard to read but it gave them impression that Heim really didn't commit what he's said to commit. I don't think that was the intention nor do I think he was innocent but we aren't given really anything about him. It's basically 'he killed Jews' and 'someone said he performed one operation with the patient awake.'

I'm not saying that's a good thing. It's just so vague and then it cuts out to all these other doctors (and other criminals) and goes into great detail. It just makes it sound, by contrast, that what Heim did wasn't not were near the supposed title of "Doctor Death" the book gave him.

Pooja Kashyap says

The Eternal Nazi: From Mauthausen to Cairo, the Relentless Pursuit of SS Doctor Aribert Heim is written by Nicholas Kulish and Souad Mekhennet. It is a semi biographical sketch of SS officer Aribert Heim, a medical doctor by profession and an able ice hockey player. He was serving at Mauthausen during 1941. People who survived the concentration camp reported that he used to take pleasure in operating healthy people without giving them anesthesia. Plus, he decorated his table with skulls of victims and offered the same as gifts to his mates.

Post war, he served 3 years at prisoner-of-war camps as treating the prisoners. His bloodcurdling horrors at Mauthausen didn't surface then and around 1947, he was set free. Thus, he moved to West Germany. In 1949, he married and started practicing gynecology in Baden-Baden. He remained there for more than a decade. However, he left his home around 1962 after he heard the news of hanging of Adolf Eichmann, a leading practitioner of deadly Nazi pseudoscience, in Israel.

A list of 70,000 names of war criminals was compiled by establishments like Jewish Historical Documentation Centre and similar by the Allies. Around 1946, first case was proceeded at Dachau, where 61 people were tried and 58 were sentenced to death by hanging. All of them were working at Mauthausen.

More than 1,400 Nazis were convicted at the court overseen by members of the US military. These many Nazis along with the Nuremberg trials, which were 116 in number, were concluded by 1949. Foundation of Federal Republic of Germany that also happened around the same year was one of the factors, which led to the hastening off the trials. Moreover, factors like lack of funds and infrastructure along with beleaguered investigators made the trails go quickly relatively. Politically, the country was in a mode of assembling the broken pieces and in building up of the social set-up that was left after the war.

Americans that were supposed to help in re-establishing the southeastern area were soon become concerned with the nascent political threat posed by the Soviet Union. Consequent upon which, Allies pivoted to bureaucrats to help with the transition. Some of these bureaucrats were former Nazis who were partaking role in providing justice to war criminals.

It is at this social milieu, two people, one, a Holocaust survivor, Simon Wiesenthal, and second an unknown police investigator, Alfred Aedtner decides to take up the job of finding the Eternal Nazi, Aribert Heim.

Socio politically, accelerating stress on prosecuting his case made him fled Europe. Somewhere along the lines, his prosecution became fervor with these two men as well.

Heim's place of hiding - Cairo, Egypt- surfaced only after his death although he did remain in touch with his family via physical mail using codenames. The lonely and detached life in the company of local children that he led in Cairo was quite antithetical of what he had lived in Mauthausen.

Although the trails against the SS officers were termed as the postwar justice, but the justice was far from thoughtful trials and sentencing. In fact, people with an awakened historical consciousness like Alfred Aedtner or Wiesenthal's tireless quest for retribution called more for bloody punishments even at the sake of their own life.

The book is indeed a slow read. No doubts, Kulish and Mekhennet have been pretty much successful in scraping the barrel while surfacing the post war lives of old Nazis.

Reproduced from: *The Eternal Nazi*

Steve says

A quick-reading but thorough history of how post-war Germany, and the world dealt, or rather didn't deal with, former Nazis through the story of one of them.

It shows how much greyer the historu is than the black and white history most of us tell ourselves. And there are hauntingly sympathetic portrayals of how hard it can be to wrestle with a collective guilt, and maddening descriptions of how so many often enthusiastically turned a blind eye.

It's not an earth shaking investigation but it's thoroughly told and really sets the collective sins of an era as something that you cannot bury, despite your many efforts.

Caidyn (SEMI-HIATUS; BW Reviews; he/him/his) says

This review and others can be found on BW Book Reviews.

2.5/5

So, the only reason I read this was because of *I Was Told to Come Alone: My Journey Behind the Lines of Jihad* by Souad Mekhennet. In that book, she had a huge chapter about Cairo, which was where she got arrested by the Egyptian police and was confined for ages. Like, that was probably one of the most worrying parts of that book... which says a lot since Mekhennet went and interviewed jihadis and went into their camps.

This book was the reason why she got arrested. Egypt thought she was trying to make them look bad for harboring Nazi fugitives when she was just trying to expose the truth. Sadly, I just didn't find it as good as I had wanted to. I kept spacing out while I listened to it. So, suddenly, all of these German names make no sense and why are we talking about Islam and who is this illegitimate daughter.

The focus is just so off for me. It had a great potential for me, too. While I do like reading nonfiction about the actual atrocities committed by Nazi Germany in order to learn about what humans are capable of, I also like reading about people hunting for them. My problem with this book was that it jumped around so much. Sometimes the book was actually about Aribert, sometimes it was about the main investigator, sometimes it was about Aribert's family. The topic of the book was all over the place, making it hard for me to pay attention.

When I did pay attention, it was really interesting and I could jump back in with only a little bit lost on me pretty easily. Both authors were good writers, but it was just that I had an issue paying attention and knowing what to pay attention to. Feel free to blame it on me listening to audiobooks at work on a stressful day when I'm definitely going to pay very little attention to the audiobook.

Doubleday Books says

A thrilling read from the *New York Times* reporters who uncovered the real story behind SS Doctor Aribert Heim. A historical account that reads with twists and turns (and reviewers agree):

“He was hardly as famous as Josef Mengele, but Aribert Heim was every bit as vicious. And, like Mengele, this doctor-torturer-murderer eluded his hunters until the very end. *The Eternal Nazi* finally reconstructs Heim’s dark odyssey—from his sadistic practices in Mauthausen to his life in hiding as a convert to Islam in Cairo. Part detective story, part meditation on how family loyalties obstructed those seeking justice, this book is a remarkable achievement.”

—Andrew Nagorski, author of *Hitlerland: American Eyewitnesses to the Nazi Rise to Power*

“With exacting detail and a rich cast of characters, *The Eternal Nazi* chronicles the feverish, zigzagging hunt for the barbarous Dr. Heim. A journalistic masterpiece and a thrilling read.”

—Neal Bascomb, author of *Hunting Eichmann*

“This is a deeply reported, fascinating tale of obsession and the heavy burden of family and national guilt. Nick Kulish and Souad Mekhennet take us on a gripping search for the handsome Nazi doctor who became one of the world's most elusive war criminals.”

—Evan Thomas, author of *Ike's Bluff*

Relstuart says

Doctor Heim was an SS doctor during the war. While he apparently saw some frontline service taking care of soldiers he also spent time as a doctor at the concentration camp at Mauthausen. He was athletic and taller than average. Witness testimony indicates he murdered Jews by various means while at the camp. These included operating on people without any pain medication and removing their organs, injecting gasoline into their hearts, and multiple witnesses stated he liked perfect skulls and people with perfect teeth were in danger of being murdered so he could take their skulls for his collection. He survived the war and after being interred in a prisoner of war camp for some time was released as not being one of the bad guys as no testimony had been advanced about his time in the concentration camp and he "neglected" to mention that in his record of service he recorded for review of his case.

The doctor went on to establish a medical practice (as a gynecologist) and married a doctor. They started a family and had several children. As Nazi offenders became news as they were hunted and prosecuted the doctor became uneasy as efforts were being made to find him. He moved and cut ties to some of his past to make it more difficult to be found. He stopped playing hockey despite being very good at it. Eventually in the 1960s he hired a lawyer known for representing those accused of war crimes and purchased property that could generate rental income to support himself and his family. He then fled the country as it appears sometime likely tipped him off the authorities were getting ready to arrest him.

His case became very public as Simon Wiesenthal, famed Jewish Nazi hunter, published his name and the crimes he was wanted for. He disappeared from view and despite a large reward being offered for information leading to his apprehension he was not located. Eventually, the German authorities realized he was being supported at least in part by income from owning an apartment building in Berlin. They began legal proceedings to take the building from him to cut off his income. In some ways it was trial in absentia as his lawyer appeared but he did not. The German government was successful in cutting off this funding.

Unbeknownst to those hunting him, Dr. Heim fled to Egypt and lived out the rest of his life there. He changed his name and lived in an apartment with little contact with other Europeans in fear he might be recognized. He eventually converted to Islam and spent time writing a book based on very questionable research claiming the Jews were actually descended from a Turkish tribe and their claims for a Jewish state were based on a false understanding of history. He eventually suffered from cancer and his youngest son visited him and stayed with him until he passed away in the 1990s.

Dr. Heim was never put on trial for what he did as a concentration camp doctor. His family (including a daughter from outside his marriage) suffered shame and reproach because of their connection with him. However, he did suffer some loss. He was cut off from anything like the society he grew up with and spent nearly 50 years in exile living in fear of discovery. He lost his family and aside from his youngest son the rest of his family had little to no contact with him. Had he allowed himself to be arrested in the 60s, Germany at this time had banned the death penalty and the sentences for offenders during this time indicate he likely would have been allowed to serve his time and return to his family and society. By running away he lost that chance.

Laura says

The Eternal Nazi is a good, but not great, look at the decades-long hunt for SS doctor Aribert Heim. During WWII, Heim served at the concentration camp Mauthausen where he performed unspeakably cruel acts. Though he initially escaped prosecution following the war, by the early 1960s Heim is forced into exile in Egypt, while a determined German investigator named Alfred Aedtner doggedly pursues him.

The Eternal Nazi is well-written, well-researched, and very interesting in a lot of ways. It's an interesting look at the families of Nazis and how they justified what their relatives did and supported them even at great personal cost. It's an interesting look at Germany's evolving relationship to its past and how there were definitive tides of anti-Nazi feeling. And it's an interesting look at what constitutes justice.

But while it has these many interesting points, the story itself is a bit anticlimactic. As a fugitive, Heim necessarily lives a quiet and uninteresting life. And the search for him is decades-long, without much success. This isn't a movie with some tense chase scene where everything comes together. (view spoiler) Everything just sort of peters out at the end. It's more realistic than a movie, of course, but it's also not as compelling.

Additionally, the beginning quarter of the book is very choppy and a bit hard to follow, jumping from Heim, to Aedtner, to random other people, to the German government, and other seemingly random post-war events. Eventually the book focuses in on Heim's flight and Aedtner's pursuit, but the beginning sections seem unrelated and lacking in logical transitions.

Though not perfect, this book does bring up some interesting topics and I would recommend it to those interested in WWII, specifically the prosecution of Nazi crimes. But it's doesn't have enough spark to hold much broad appeal.

Note: I received this book through Goodreads' First Reads program.

Angela Risner says

The Eternal Nazi follows the (very) long road to locating a former SS doctor, Aribert Heim. Heim, like many other cowardly Nazis, fled a defeated Germany in order to escape being brought to trial for atrocities against concentration camp inmates. Heim's family supported him while he lived in exile.

Though I've read a great deal on the Holocaust, I had not heard of Dr. Aribert Heim before. He was not as well-known as other Nazi leaders such as Eichmann or Himmler, nor as recognizable as another famous Nazi doctor, Mengele. However, he did spend time at the camp at Mauthausen, and according to eyewitnesses, enjoyed killing prisoners by injecting gasoline directly into the heart.

After the war, there were so many Nazis rounded up that it was easy for some of the lesser-known monsters to change names and eventually disappear. Heim went home and managed to lead a relatively normal life for a time. He and his wife had two boys. However, as folks like Simon Wiesenthal refused to allow what the Nazis did go unpunished. Eventually, the pressure mounted to a point where he fled to Egypt.

Working against Wiesenthal and police investigator Alfred Aedtner were several things:

- Germany was desperate to move past the atrocities against the Jews
- Eyewitness testimony was at times difficult to procure and even then, some were too scared to provide much detail
- Heim's sister and mother funneled money to him to allow him to live well enough to not have to work

I have to admit, I was impressed with what Germany eventually did for the survivors and families of those who perished in the concentration camps. They did step up to the plate (many years later) and face what happened.

Some other interesting notes:

- Overzealous SS officers summarily executed deserters with growing frequency as the certainty of defeat loomed larger. Some twenty-two thousand German soldiers were killed in all.
- German law does not permit the prosecution of direct blood relatives for aiding and abetting fugitive family members. Close relations...are not expected to cooperate. The ties of blood are stronger, the law presumes, than the individual's loyalty to the state.

Heim, unsurprisingly, felt as though he was being unjustly pursued. How could the military in other countries be allowed to claim that they were just following orders yet the Nazis were not allowed the same defense? It all speaks to someone who had very little insight and a lack of reality.

The writing is fairly solid, but the book is just too long. This felt like you were slogging through the years right along with Heim or Aedtner. Definitely needs to be edited down.

Interesting, but more of a scholarly treatise than a narrative read. Recommend as we should never forget what happened.
