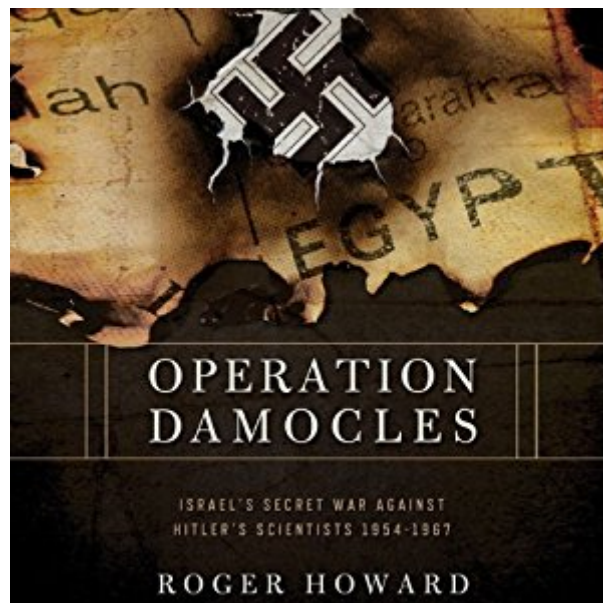


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# Operation Damocles: Israel's Secret War Against Hitler's Scientists, 1951-1967



## Synopsis

The forgotten cloak-and-dagger history of the former Nazi scientists who were recruited by Egypt to develop long-range missiles capable of striking Israel. From 1951 to 1967 Egypt pursued a secret program to build military rockets that could have conceivably posed a threat to neighboring Israel. Because such an ambitious project required Western expertise, the Egyptian leader President Nasser hired West German scientists, many of them veterans of the Nazi rocket program at Peenemünde and elsewhere. These covert plans soon came to the attention of Israel's legendary secret service, Mossad, and caused deep alarm in Tel Aviv. Would Israel fall under the shadow of long-range missiles held by a ruler who was sworn to destroy the Jewish state? Could the missiles be fitted with warheads filled with radiological, chemical, or even nuclear materials? Israel responded by using threats, intimidation, and brutal assassination squads to deter the German scientists from working on Nasser's behalf. Exactly half a century later, this book tells the gripping story of the mysterious arms dealers, Mossad assassins, scientific geni, and leading figures who all played their part in Operation Damocles.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

great book knew a little about the history of this subject,have not started reading it.

Roger Howard's book "Operation Damocles - Israel's Secret War Against Hitler's Scientists, 1951-1967" published in 2013, deals with the Israeli attempt to stop Egypt from developing a long range missile that could eventually be used as an aggressive weapon against the new Jewish state.

The Egyptian dictatorial regime of Gamal Abdel Nasser hired German scientists like Willy Messerschmidt, Eugen Sänger, Hans Kleinwachter, Rolf Engel, Kurt Hainisch, Ferdinand Brandner, Wolfgang Pilz, Paul Goercke and others, who had previously worked for the Nazi V2- or other war programs, in order to produce an Egyptian rocket and an Egyptian fighter jet. The Israeli secret service, the Mossad, sent under-cover agents to Germany and Egypt to disrupt this effort by any means necessary. The central figure was an Israeli veteran of the Haganah, Wolfgang Lotz, a German born uncircumcised Jew. He posed as a former SS member and present horse breeder with residence in Cairo. He managed to get all the news Israel needed to assess the dangers emanating from the former Nazi scientists on the payroll of the Egyptian dictator. A public campaign on behalf of two arrested Israeli agents in Switzerland who had tried to press family members of the scientists to convince them to quit their posts in Egypt was quite successful in turning public opinion against the project, and as it turned out the Egyptians were unable to provide the Germans with the tools and sophisticated machinery they needed to produce a modernized version of the V2 or of a competitive jet fighter. Lotz, however, was finally detected by the Egyptians, convicted, and later exchanged for Egyptian soldiers captured by Israel after the war between those two nations. His civil life was not as successful as his life as a spy. At the end of his life he moved back to Munich and worked in a department store. The author managed to fill 250 pages with this story but only by repeating facts several times over again. He provided his sources and he nicely included a name index, photos and maps. The story itself is very interesting and gives good insights into the competition between the two Israeli secret services, Mossad under Isser Harel and Shin Beit under Meir Amit. Interestingly Howard omitted to inform his readers that there exists an alternative version for Lotz' arrest. According to him the Egyptian secret service got on his trail by unknown reasons whereas the alternative story claims that he got arrested out of security reasons when East German leader Walter Ulbricht visited Cairo and Lotz revealed his true identity then, believing they knew about him already. It's a worthwhile read.

Great book telling the story of Gamal Abdel Nasser, of Egypt, and his quest for warplanes and rockets, and the Israeli, Mossad, response. Fantastically told. Fun for fans of Egypt, Israel, Cold War, Mossad, espionage, etc. A little of this and a little of that adds up to a very well written and very interesting book. For those who want to know where some of the second and third tier Nazi scientists and engineers went, this book is for you. We and the French got the top performers in the aforementioned group, Egypt got the bench, it seems. I had not really studied much of Nasser's regime, so this was very enlightening to me. Also fun to see just how amateur and dare I say this,

bush league, the early Mossad was. Knowing now what a professional and world class organization Mossad is, some of the tales of the early days almost boggle the imagination. Many names you will probably recognize: Peres, Shamir, Meir, etc, that have figured so prominently in the annals of the Jewish state. Well worth the time.

Most of the book is NOT about Operation Damocles. It is the author's dull as dust historical account. The author's anti-Israel pro-Arab bias is also clear to the knowledgeable reader. For example, Arab wars of extermination are described blandly as "conflict broke out." The author pooh-poohs the issue of fedayeen (terrorist) raids. He equates terrorist raids with Israeli attempts to stem terrorism. And a major issue, Egypt's seizure of the Suez Canal followed by extortionate transit fees and seizure of vessels is dismissed in a few paragraphs. There is also occasional outright factual misstatement throughout the book. The most striking and offensive dishonesty is found in the last chapter, a purported summary. The author, acting as a Monday morning quarterback, dismisses Israel's concern over Egypt's huge project to build missiles and WMD's to exterminate Israel. This chapter in particular shows his contempt for the Jewish state as he blandly dismisses Israeli concerns over Egypt's work toward a "second holocaust." The story could have been fascinating and enlightening. In this author's hands it is dull and dishonest.

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