

The Irish Times

MUSSOLINI'S RESCUER BUYS IRISH HOUSE

Otto Skorzeny, the former German paratrooper leader, who visited Ireland recently, has bought Martinstown House, on the Curragh Camp, Co. Kildare, from Major Richard Turner, a Turf Club handicapper. The purchase price is undisclosed.

It is likely that Skorzeny, who is now in Spain, will live here for part of the year, with the rest of the time devoted to his business interests in Spain. He may come here at the end of this summer.

Last month, Skorzeny, who is famous for his rescue of Benito Mussolini from an Italian mountain top in 1943, visited Ireland. Skorzeny then denied that he had brought a farm here, but said he had thought of doing so later, "if I have the money". He said on his arrival that he would look around for a farm here, as he had done when he visited Ireland two years ago.

Skorzeny had lived in Madrid for the past seven years, looking after his engineering firm.

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Transcribed by Matt McNamara – June 2018





Lieutenant Colonel Otto “Scarface” Skorzeny
SS-Obersturmbannführer





Otto Skorzeny with Adolf Hitler 1943



Skorzeny in uniform.



Skorzeny with his farm labourers at Martinstown House 1959



Skorzeny enjoying the sunshine at Martinstown House, The Curragh



Martinstown House 2015







Skorzeny entertaining friends at Martinstown House 1959/60



Martinstown House was built in the 1830s as a shooting and hunting lodge by the Borrowes family and, along with the lodges to Dublin's Phoenix Park, is the only known Irish oeuvre of the distinguished English architect, Decimus Burton.



Skorzeny the businessman, Madrid 1960's



Skorzeny died of lung cancer on 5 July 1975 in Madrid, He was given a Roman Catholic funeral Mass and his body was cremated afterwards.

The following article appeared in the Irish Independent 9th May 2005



Nazi SS Colonel “Scarface” Otto Skorzeny

12 June 1908 – 5 July 1975

Sixty years ago, at the end of the Second World War, he was known as Hitler's most daring commando and was dubbed by the Allies 'the most dangerous man in Europe'. Otto Skorzeny was the legendary James Bond-figure who rescued Mussolini from a fortress in a plane during the war.

According to some accounts, he helped dozens of war criminals to flee to South America and had escaped himself from jail in Germany after the war. He reportedly had an affair with Eva Peron - the Argentinian dictator's wife who was misleadingly depicted as a tragic heroine in the musical Evita - and continued to be involved in all sorts of skulduggery.

What is less well known about the 'scar-faced commando' is that he lived for a time in Co Kildare. In the 1960s Colonel Skorzeny, one of Hitler's top henchmen and the pride of the SS, could be seen driving across the Curragh in a white Mercedes and popping into the local post office for groceries.

Skorzeny, who was a multi-millionaire, bought Martinstown House, a rambling 19th-century shooting lodge and farm, in 1959. At the time TD and former health minister Dr Noel Browne expressed concern that the commando might use Ireland as a base for "furthering Nazi or Neo-Nazi resurgent movements" in Germany and elsewhere.

Dr Browne told the Dail: "It is generally understood that this man plays some part (in Neo-Nazi activities) and, if so, he should not be allowed to use Ireland for that purpose."

Reggie Darling, a local historian and former barber at the Curragh camp, remembers coming across Skorzeny on the Curragh in the 1960s: "He was a big man and he certainly stood out because of the scar across his face. Everyone knew who he was. I wouldn't say he was particularly friendly. He didn't really mix with local people."

Although the crimes of the Nazi regime were well known in Ireland and Skorzeny had played a leading part in the round-up and torture of senior members of the German resistance in 1944, he was widely respected as a military man. Even Winston Churchill described his rescue of Mussolini as "one of great daring".

According to Mr Darling, Irish army officers planned to ask Hitler's henchman to give a talk at the Curragh camp but the talk was cancelled when senior officials got wind of it because of the obvious diplomatic sensitivities.

"Skorzeny liked to drive up to Dublin and park his car outside the Gresham Hotel on O'Connell Street," says Mr Darling. "He considered the parking fines of £1 to be good value."

Skorzeny ran the farm at Martinstown, where his wife Madame Skorzeny also lived. He employed a German housekeeper who was married to a local man. "He seemed to use Martinstown as a bolthole," says Mr Darling.

It was rumoured locally that senior Irish politicians were entertained by Hitler's ex-commando at Martinstown but this cannot be confirmed.

Skorzeny had risen to prominence in Hitler's ranks after joining the Nazi party in 1933. He earned the nickname 'Scarface' from injuries sustained in fencing duels as a student.

After being rejected by the Luftwaffe, partly because of how tall he was, he joined the SS, trained in espionage and was involved in several famous commando raids during the war. In July, 1943, he was summoned personally by Hitler and sent over to hunt for Benito Mussolini.

Discovering that Mussolini was being held in a hill-top fortress by Italian troops, Skorzeny first kidnapped the Italian general Soleti, predicting correctly that if he brought the general along, the Italian guards would co-operate.

Skorzeny, the general and a small group of commandos swooped down on the fortress in gliders. The guards held fire, Mussolini was located and was taken away in a small spotter plane. Hitler told Skorzeny afterwards: "You have performed a military feat which will become part of history."

In another famous commando raid in Hungary, Operation Mickey Mouse, Skorzeny snatched a member of the Hungarian royal family from a palace, rolling him up in a rug and putting him on a plane to Berlin.

During the German Ardennes offensive, the now notorious Scarface directed the infiltration by hundreds of English-speaking Germans clad in American uniforms behind Allied lines. After helping dozens of high-ranking Nazis to escape, the 'most dangerous man in Europe' eventually surrendered to the Americans on May 15, 1945, one week after the end of the war.

That was not the end of the story, however. Although he was acquitted of war crimes by a US military court, he remained a prisoner because other countries wished to bring charges against him. But, in typical fashion, the infamous commando fled.

After his escape he sought refuge in fascist Spain and Argentina, where he became close to Eva Peron, reportedly foiling at least one attempt on her life.

After he was officially 'de-nazified' in his absence by a German arbitration board, Skorzeny resumed his career as an engineer and bought his Irish farm. The farm was eventually sold in 1970 to the Long family. It is now run by Mrs Meryl Long as an upmarket guesthouse.

Skorzeny died a multi-millionaire in Madrid in 1975.

Kim Bielenberg
(Irish Independent 9th May 2005)

The shamrock and the swastika
Independent | January 6, 2007



Otto Skorzeny (2nd from left), 3 October 1943

A new RTE documentary reveals how the Irish establishment gave a warm welcome to a rogue's gallery of fascists and Nazis after the war. KIM BIELENBERG reports.

At one time Otto Skorzeny, Hitler's top SS Commando, lived with the tag "**the most dangerous man in Europe**".

But in June 1957, the Nazi who had made his name rescuing the Italian fascist leader Mussolini from a hilltop fortress, was made welcome in Dublin by such luminaries as Charles J Haughey.

A respectable gathering of Dublin middle-class folk assembled at a reception in Skorzeny's honour in Portmarnock Country Club. According to the Evening Press account of the event, "the ballroom was packed with representatives of various societies, professional men and, of course, several TDs".

Among the throng greeting one of Hitler's most notorious henchmen was the young TD, Charles Haughey.

In Irish press reports of the time, Skorzeny was portrayed as a glamorous cloak and dagger figure, the Third Reich's Scarlet Pimpernel. The tone in newspaper articles was one of admiration rather than repulsion.

Skorzeny was most famous for his 1943 commando raid on the castle in Italy where Mussolini was being held captive. Swooping down on the fortress in gliders with his accomplices, Skorzeny succeeded in getting away with the deposed dictator.

A year later, Skorzeny was involved in rounding up and torturing members of the German resistance after their failed attempt on Hitler's life. One of these plotters was my own grandfather, Fritz Schulenburg, who was executed in Berlin in August 1944.

After my grandfather was arrested with other resistance leaders and held in army headquarters in the German capital, Skorzeny arrived and pulled off the plotters' military badges, placing them in a tin helmet.

The plotters were then forced to listen to a speech given by Hitler on the radio, confirming that the Fuhrer was indeed still alive and well.

Despite his notoriety, Skorzeny was acquitted of war crimes by a US military court. He remained a prisoner because other countries wished to try him, but in typical fashion he escaped, eventually finding sanctuary in fascist Spain.

The cead mile failte extended to Skorzeny, a key figure in Hitler's tyrannical regime, by polite Dublin society encouraged him to buy a farm here in 1959. The man nicknamed "Scarface" owned Martinstown House near the

Curragh for a decade. On his regular visits he could be seen driving his white Mercedes across the Kildare countryside.

The TD and former cabinet minister Noel Browne must have seemed like a voice crying out in the wilderness when he expressed concern about Skorzeny coming to Ireland.

At the time, the spectre of Nazism still haunted much of Europe and there were genuine fears that it might re-emerge as a political force.

Dr Browne told the Dail: "It is generally understood that this man plays some part (in neo-Nazi activities) and, if so, he should not be allowed to use Ireland for that purpose."

During World War II, the Irish Government notoriously shut the door in the faces of Jews fleeing Nazi persecution across Europe. Even after the full horrors of the concentration camps had been exposed, the authorities were reluctant to allow Jewish refugees into the country.

But a two-part documentary which begins on RTE television next week reveals how a surprising number of Nazis were allowed to make a home in Ireland.

The programme's presenter, Cathal O'Shannon, who met Skorzeny during one of his Irish visits, has delved into the movements of Nazis in and out of Ireland. He estimates that between 100 and 200 Nazis moved here.

O'Shannon (78) is himself a World War II veteran, having served in the RAF in Burma. As a Dublin teenager, he crossed the Border into the North and joined up.

"I came back in 1947, and at that time you held your head low if you had been in the British forces. At that time, there was a very strong anti-English element in Ireland that supported the Germans.

"Many of the leading Nazis who came here were not German. They were collaborators from other countries such as Belgium or Croatia. There was a lot of sympathy for them because many of them were Catholic and anti-communist."

Chillingly, one of the Belgian Nazis, Albert Folens, helped to shape the minds of generations of Irish schoolchildren as one of the country's leading publishers of school textbooks.

As reported this week by Senan Molony in the Irish Independent, Folens fought for the Flemish legion of the SS before working as an interpreter for the Gestapo.

He appeared on an American list of suspected war criminals and security suspects but later denied any involvement in murder, torture and inhumane treatment.

Whatever the role of Folens in Nazi persecution, it is likely that it paled in comparison to that of Andrija Artukovic, the so-called "butcher of the Balkans" who found sanctuary in the genteel Dublin suburb of Rathgar in 1947.

In a sequence of events that shows the Catholic Church in an even less flattering light than The Da Vinci Code, the leading Croatian Nazi was given safe passage to Ireland with the help of the Franciscan order.

Before he arrived in Ireland, having been provided with immigration papers under the false name Alois Anic, Artukovic served as interior minister in the Nazi puppet regime in Croatia.

He instigated the opening of concentration camps and was accused of being involved in the genocide of up to one million Orthodox Christians, Jews, Romany gypsies and other minority groups. None of this seemed to deter Catholic Church authorities from sheltering him.

Artukovic lived with his wife and children in Rathgar for a year, passing himself off as a professor of history and living under his assumed name. His son Radoslav was born in a nursing home in Terenure.

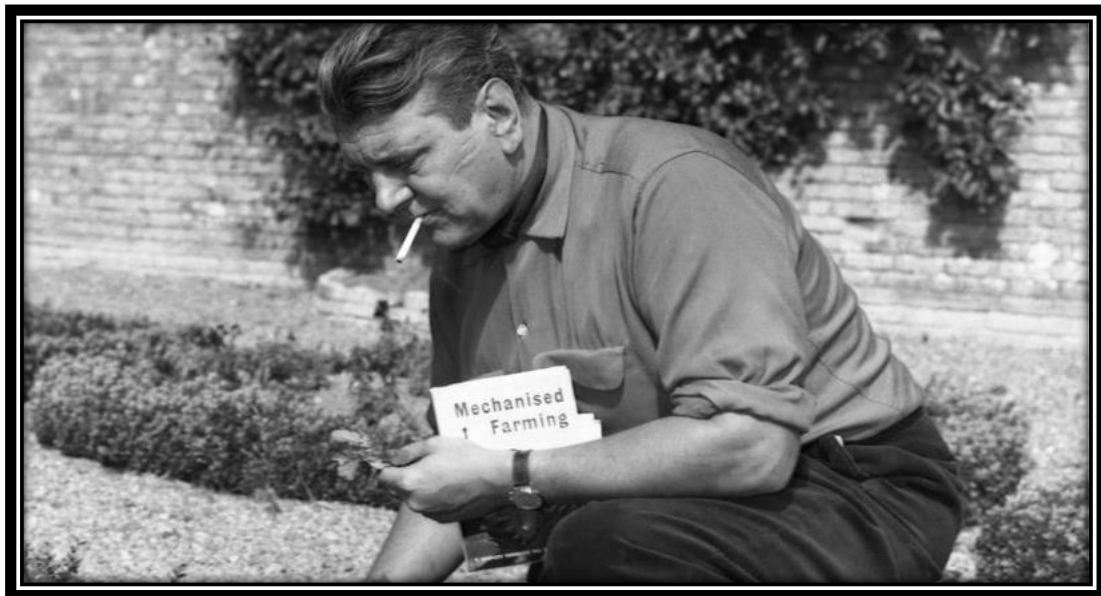
He moved on to the United States and was extradited to Yugoslavia decades later and sentenced to death for his murderous activities (the sentence was never carried out, because the authorities ruled that he was too ill to be executed).

The mass murderer's stay in this land of saints and scholars might have passed without notice had it not been for the persistence of the Kilkenny

writer Hubert Butler, who tracked his movements here decades after Artukovic had moved on to America.

The precise circumstances in which the Croatian received papers to move here remain mysterious. According to Tile Films, the film company which has made the RTE documentary, the Department of Foreign Affairs still refuses to release its file on the war criminal.

All but a few of the Nazis who came to live here after the war are now dead. But until now, much of the story of how they came to live here and why they were let in has remained untold.



Otto Skorzeny on his farm in Martinstown, The Curragh