The Spy who confused Fantasy and Real Life

By Dean McCleland in History, Opinion Pieces

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The most successful spies are those who live the role that is assigned to them: the fewer the lies, the less the chance of a mishap. In the case of Lotz, a Mossad spy in Cairo, he took the role too much to heart

The game of spy craft is not James Bondesque with glitz and glamour. Champagne breakfasts, socialising and the luxurious idyll do not normally form part of the Job Description. Rather one operates in the shadows being unrecognisable and unremembered little grey men.

Main picture: Wolfgang Lotz and Waltraud

When the Mossad selected German born Agent Wolfgang Lotz to be their "Champagne Spy" in Cairo little did

they comprehend that he would immerse himself in the role so successfully that he would adopt his new spying *persona* as himself.



Wolfgang and his son Oded

At the apex of his power Abdul Nasser had visions of being the Arab *conquistador*, the Arab leader who would regenerate Arab pride. Being militarily impotent was not on his agenda. With ex-Nazi scientists still being unemployed or rather underemployed, he viewed this as an opportunity. Instead of being beholden to foreign countries for specialist technology which they probably would not supply, he elected to establish a local armaments industry.

In this role these scientists would be ideal. They could work with local Arabs in Cairo and develop a missile similar to the V2 missile to carry weapons of mass destruction to Israel.



Abdul Nasser

The Israeli's needed to prevent this development but how? How could an Israeli Jew obtain access to these German expatriates living in Egypt? It certainly could not be by obtaining employment at this development centre. The cunning plan that they devised was to use somebody who was a German to infiltrate this coterie of workers.

Who better than Wolfgang? As a German Jew, he had been born in Germany but his parents had emigrated to Palestian when Hitler had ascended to power. His undercover story was that as a member of the SS he had emigrated after the war in order to avoid prosecution.

Of course the Egyptians could not confine these German Scientists in a compound for weeks on end, so they were allowed them to socialise within bounds outside these Compounds.

The Mossad set up Lotz as a wealthy horse breeder, trainer and owner. Lotz would frequent the Gezira Equestrian Club and as an accomplished rider and successful breeder, he became well-known in not only the equestrian circles but eventually within the expatriate circles as well. Finally he became known to the Germans working on the missile project. His *bona fides* were immediately accepted as his youth had been spent in Berlin.



In reality Lotz was already married and he had a son, Oded who the Mossad had relocated to Paris for the duration of the Mission. Wolfgang would travel “home” to Paris every six months for one week to visit his family and to report back to the Mossad.

It was during one of these visits home that Lotz met Waltraud Neumann. The attraction and animal magnetism between them was instantaneous and mutual. Lotz invited Waltraude to live with him in Cairo. Waltraude did not demure or hesitate.

Lotz had commenced living a double life unknown to Mossad. The confrontation between Wolfgang and Mossad when it ultimately arose was undoubtedly acrimonious and rancorous. Lotz was adamant; he was going to marry Waltraud to which Mossad Chief Isser Harel reluctantly consented. What option did they have? Having invested so much in Lotz’s lavish lifestyle and on the cusp of success, it was the lesser of two evils.



Meanwhile his faithful wife, Rivka, waited patiently in Paris with their son, Oded, for his ever more sporadic visits.

The first that anybody was aware of Lotz's predicament was a report in the newspapers that the Egyptian authorities had arrested thirty West Germans and their wives for espionage. They named them all. The list included a Wolfgang Lotz and his "wife" Waltraud. From the report, the Egyptians appeared not be aware that the spy was an Israeli. Mossad even approached the West German intelligence services, Gehlen, not to reveal Lotz's true identity as being Israeli which they willingly agreed to do.

What had actually occurred was that Nasser had been pressurised by the Russians to invite the East German President, Walter Ulbricht, to visit Egypt. When the West German government protested about the visit, Nasser elected to arrest 30 West Germans as an act of revenge to this opposition. Of course Lotz was unaware of the real reason for their arrest and incarceration. He assumed the worst; that somehow the Egyptian authorities were aware of his espionage activities. With his soul mate, wife and lover incarcerated as well as her parents who just happened to co-incidentally be visiting Egypt at that time, Wolfgang decided to confess to spying for the West Germans. To his interrogators utter amazement, what was going to be a perfunctory questioning developed into an exhaustive interrogation.



Even though Wolfgang had unwisely involved Waltraud in his espionage activities and thus as a co-conspirator, he attempted to deflect culpability from her at all times. She was sentenced to three years hard labour and Lotz himself to life imprisonment.

For unwisely being involved with another woman and bringing her to Cairo, he had not only placed another life in jeopardy but possibly compromised the whole operation.

Of course even at this stage, Waltraud was unaware that Wolfgang was a married man.

After the Six Day War, the Israeli's had not only routed and humiliated the Arab Armies but they had 5000 prisoners with which to bargain for the release of the half a dozen Israelis either imprisoned such as Wolfgang or as POWs.



It was only on his flight back to Israel after his release that Wolfgang handed Waltraud a letter. In it he exposed himself as being a bigamist and having a wife, Rivka and son Oded waiting for him. At approximately

the same time in Israel Rivka was getting dressed in a specially purchased outfit in order to meet her long awaited husband, when the head of Mossad arrived at her house. She was bluntly told that her husband was already married and that Waltraud was not a wife for subterfuge purposes but his legal wife. Rivka must have been devastated. After spending time purchasing an elegant frock for the occasion, she was confronted with the harsh reality that Wolfgang had been living a double life.

The Mossad felt a moral responsibility to assist Wolfgang as best as they could. He was given an allowance to start an equestrian centre similar to the one that he had owned in Cairo. By now Wolfgang had become accustomed to the better things in life – the lavish parties, the expensive wines and the hordes of guests. Like an alcoholic or drug addict, he could not confront the reality of the situation. Mossad was no longer going to fund his munificent and extravagant lifestyle. Wolfgang was also not able to curb his profligate ways. Waltraud attempted to restrain him by placing strictures upon him. Nothing helped. The venture went bankrupt. With assistance from friends, he attempted another venture but again without success.



At that point the love of his life and kindred soul in many facets suffered a brain haemorrhage and died.

Lotz was soon married again and in 1980 he moved to Munich when Egon Flörchinger general manager of book publisher Moewig Verlag published a number of his paperbacks. Always short of cash but with no specialty apart from his fame, he became the manager of the sports department of the department store “Kaufhof” in Munich from which he was ultimately fired.

During the 1982 war in Lebanon his old companion Ariel Sharon recalled him for a special Mission to Israel. Together with his assistant he was to guide foreign journalists to Beirut and to explain to them the Israeli position.

Wolfgang then divorced his wife accusing her of only bringing him bad luck. Back in Munich he met an attractive journalist Herma Haddorp and fell in love with her. The couple moved into a luxurious apartment in Munich-Bogenhausen where he lived, probably at her expense until his death in 1993.



Wolfgang had led a curious life. After the Mossad had transferred him from the Army and placed him in the role as their pre-eminent spy, Wolfgang adopted the role of a rich equestrian playboy so successfully that his *persona* was transformed. Of course Wolfgang had always been an extrovert. That is why he had been selected as a Mossad agent. But when fantasy and his personal life became intertwined, this placed not only himself at risk but Waltraud's life. From that moment onwards Wolfgang was like a drug addict always seeking that high which, without the resources to sustain it, was outside his grasp.

Of course like all narcissists, he blamed everybody but himself becoming estranged from his son. For the rest of his life, he was forced to play the one advantage that he possessed, his fame as a spy in Cairo. This autobiography entitled *The Champagne Spy* encapsulates the essence of Wolfgang Lotz.



The title of the book is his subtle unstated admission that he attempted to recreate the Cairo epoch once released from prison. Surely he should have contemplated the fact that all he was doing in his endeavours was harming those dearest and nearest to him?

But I somehow doubt that.