

*The Nazis Next Door: How America Became a Safe Haven  
for Hitler's Men* by Eric Lichtblau  
(Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2014.  
288 pg. \$28.00 ISBN 978-0547669199).

Monique Laney<sup>1</sup>  
Auburn University

Written by a Pulitzer-prize winning investigative reporter in the Washington bureau of the *New York Times*, Eric Lichtblau's second book, *The Nazis Next Door*, is an engrossing read that recounts luring tales with colorful characters. Much of it reads like a spy novel.

*The Nazis Next Door* is a follow-up to a breaking news story Lichtblau authored in 2010 when an unredacted version of a 600-page report chronicling the activities of the U.S. Department of Justice's "Nazi hunting" Office of Investigations was leaked to the *New York Times*.<sup>2</sup> The fact that the United States has been harboring Nazis, some of whom were war criminals, has not been news at least since the 1970s, but as Lichtblau explains in his 2010 article, the report "goes further in documenting the level of American complicity and deception," especially the CIA's involvement in using Nazis for postwar intelligence purposes, as Lichtblau wrote in *The New York Times*.

Lichtblau describes not only how America became a "Safe Haven" for Nazis but also how it has been trying to correct this mistake more or less successfully. In a titillating prologue, Lichtblau introduces the reader to the Nazi war criminal-turned-CIA operative, Tom (Tscherim) Soobzokov, whose relationship with the CIA was more clearly revealed with the 2007 declassification of CIA records relating to Nazi and Japanese Imperial Government war crimes.<sup>3</sup> Soobzokov's outrageous story reappears throughout the book, illustrating the peculiar nature of the relationships between these CIA operatives and their handlers as well as the substantial compromises US officials made in the name of fighting Communism.<sup>4</sup> While the book focuses mainly on those former Nazis used to spy for US intelligence agencies after the war, Lichtblau dedicates several chapters to the stories of the rocketeers Wernher von Braun and Arthur Rudolph in addition to the space medicine expert Hubertus Strughold. Because these accounts are less dramatic and add little to what we already know, they distract somewhat from the otherwise original content.

Following the initial chapters that outline the ways in which many of the Nazi war criminals were able to enter the country, the book recounts the history of how the OSI came into being. Accordingly, protests denouncing "Nazi war criminals in our midst" (77) in the 1960s, along with the INS's

apparent inability to effectively deal with some of the accused individuals, eventually led to enough publicity to bring the complaints in front of Congress, which in turn led to the creation of the Justice Department's Office of Special Investigations (OSI) in 1979 as well as the approval of the Holtzman Amendment. Together, these new measures were intended to put more emphasis on, and authority behind, the investigation and denaturalization of U.S. citizens who had been able to enter the United States by lying about their involvement with Nazi war crimes. Despite the new process, some of the offenders could still not be prosecuted. The CIA evidently not only knew about some of their operatives' past involvement in Nazi atrocities but, by documenting their knowledge, made it practically impossible for the OSI to prosecute those who could argue that they had told the truth about their pasts. The rest of the book depicts the OSI's struggles in prosecuting Nazi war criminals.

Lichtblau's monograph joins a list of similar books on the topic written by investigative reporters, including Tom Bower's *The Paperclip Conspiracy: The Battle for the Spoils of Secrets of Nazi Germany* (London: M. Joseph, 1987), Linda Hunt's *Secret Agenda: The United States Government, Nazi Scientists, and Project Paperclip, 1945 to 1990* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1991), Annie Jacobsen's *Operation Paperclip: The Secret Intelligence Program that Brought Nazi Scientists to America* (Boston, MA: Little, Brown and Company, 2014), Richard L. Rashke's *Useful Enemies: John Demjanjuk and America's Open-Door Policy for Nazi War Criminals* (Harrison, N.Y.: Delphinium Books, 2013), and Christopher Simpson's *Blowback: America's Recruitment of Nazis and Its Effects on the Cold War*. (New York: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1988). What is different, apart from some of its content, is that it reads more like what journalists call a "human interest story." Lichtblau dramatizes scenes and creates the illusion of being in the room with his characters, sometimes turning the main character into the narrator and quoting dialogue he could not possibly have overheard. That would not be acceptable among academically trained historians because it distorts the facts, but it is an effective strategy to engage the reader.

The story Lichtblau tells is generally correct, although his statements sometimes lack precision that can be misleading, as Robert Huddleston has pointed out in his review of the book for *History News Network*. For his recap of "Project Paperclip," with which I am most familiar, I wish he had relied on professional historians rather than on other investigative journalists. This military operation, which provided jobs and U.S. citizenship for several hundred German and Austrian scientists, engineers, and technicians after World War II, has received attention from professional historians who were generally ignored by Lichtblau, including Clarence G. Lasby's *Pro-*

*ject Paperclip: German Scientists and the Cold War* (New York: Atheneum, 1971, which, while dated and not including many files that were not yet declassified, is still the only comprehensive scholarly account of the operation, and John Gimbel's article "Project Paperclip: German Scientists, American Policy and the Cold War" in *Diplomatic History* (14 (1990): 343-65), which is a direct corrective of the conspiracy claims made by the authors that Lichtblau cites. I was also missing more analysis that might help his non-specialist readers understand what all of this means and why it is important, other than to incite moral indignation. Why were American officials so willing to embrace former Nazis? What exact role did the Cold War play in this history? Were most of the OSI's cases as bizarre as the ones cited here? What are some long-term implications of this history? Why did the U.S. Justice Department not want to release the report chronicling its activities? Since we keep finding war criminals among immigrants, what can we learn from the mistakes outlined in this book?

*The Nazis Next Door* is a good read that makes this history interesting and therefore more accessible for a larger audience. That said, I hope the report that stimulated Lichtblau to write this book receives another, more scholarly, treatment in the future.

#### NOTES

1. Reviewer Dr. Monique Laney is assistant professor of history at Auburn University.

2. Eric Lichtblau, "Nazis Were Given 'Safe Haven' in U.S., Report Says," *New York Times*, November 13, 2010; "Justice Department Censors Nazi-Hunting History," *The National Security Archive*, <http://nsarchive.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB331/index.htm>, last accessed December 31, 2015.

3. Press Release, "New Records Now Available as a Result of IWG Extension. CIA Agrees to Disclose Operational Materials." *National Archives website*, <http://www.archives.gov/iwg/about/press-releases/nr06-114.html>, last accessed December 31, 2015.

4. For a scholarly account of Soobzokov's story, see Richard Breitman's work on him for the Federation of American Scientists, available at <http://www.fas.org/sgp/eprint/breitman.pdf>.

