

America's Distortion of the History of the 20th Century: "The Legacy of World War II and the Holocaust"

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What follows is the text of a talk I was scheduled to give at the conference: "The Legacy of World War II and the Holocaust," held on June 22, 2010, in Kiev, Ukraine, during the Presidency of Viktor Yanukovich, a meeting in which I was unable to participate, due to other commitments on that date.

Introduction

From 2010 until the present, there is no evidence that neofascist and neonazi influences in the USA and elsewhere have decreased:

new figures, television channels, and speaking platforms have joined these once-fringe areas of the political arena, and their impact appears to have increased and spread, more so in the USA and Europe, than in Mexico, in which I have lived for more than two decades. Right-wing political groups have appeared in other parts of Latin America, but it is difficult to determine their influence as of this writing (mid-2024). Text of this speech, originally dated 2010, follows.

My name is David Stea.

I am an American expatriate living in Mexico for a considerable number of years. Like those Europeans who left Europe during the 1930s, many Americans left the USA during the aptly-named witch-hunts of the post-World War II era to seek refuge in Mexico during the reign of Joseph McCarthy and the Congressional UnAmerican Activities Committee in the USA. My family was not one of those. In some ways I was part of a later diaspora, having returned to the USA in 1997, I was unable to stomach the neofascist regime of George Bush, and

returned to Mexico in 2006.

This is a rather personal narrative. So perhaps some history is in order.

Having been born in New York, I did not have to live through the Holocaust.

But I grew up during the nightmare of World War II; by the time I was six years old, all of my crowd had been through weekly air-raid drills - my father, just barely too old for military service, was a warden and I well recall his helmet and special issue flashlight, which partly dispelled the darkness of the blackouts. We kids, having no doubt that the Nazis might soon invade, carefully studied plane-spotter cards depicting silhouettes of German aircraft, and learned the names of the German general staff and what SS ranks corresponded to Wehrmacht ranks.

We knew that U-boats were blowing up British ships outside New York harbor, but the concern with aircraft later seemed silly; after all, how could German planes have crossed the Atlantic? It turned out much later that we were closer to the truth than we then realized.

I studied engineering, and by the late 1950s became a reliability engineer and ergonomist working for the prime contractor to the US Atomic Energy Commission. Of course this was all very hush-hush; most of us were convinced that, in the long run, war with the Soviet Union was inevitable. Weapons reliability was therefore one of my areas of emphasis, and we were in close contact with one of the world's experts in reliability engineering, a brilliant and charming figure named Robert Lusser. While we never met face-to-face, we exchanged correspondence, and he was quite helpful to me.



After having too many mushroom-shaped dreams, I left that line of work and eventually accepted the invitation to enroll in the PhD program in experimental psychology at Stanford University, in Palo Alto California. After receiving the PhD at Stanford University, I helped to found the field of environmental psychology, and became a university teacher. Flash forward to 1970, when I attended an outdoor graduation exercise at Clark University, where I was Professor of geography and psychology. As Robert Goddard, the father of American rocketry, had been at Clark University, at this graduation exercise an honorary doctorate was bestowed upon Dr Werner Von Braun.

I knew by then that Dr Von Braun, regarded as a role model for American youth interested in science, had also been a dedicated Nazi and an officer of the SS. Ashamed that an American university at which I was employed was awarding a doctorate to the father of the

V-2 ballistic missile, responsible for so many civilian deaths in Great Britain, I attended no more graduation ceremonies at any of the universities at which I worked for the next 25 years.

This was, of course, a hollow gesture. More important was that I began to study the strange history of Nazi scientists and their associates who had entered the US, many literally smuggled in by the US government, during the early years of the Cold War. I did not have to search very far; hidden away in the back rooms of libraries were published books detailing, with illustrations, how the Nazi connections of people deemed potentially valuable to future US military effort were simply expunged from their records, literally deleted. Tom Lehrer, a stage personality who was both a comic writer and singer, wrote a song lampooning the Van Braun personality cult, but the supposed father of German rocketry was merely the tip of a metaphorical iceberg largely ignored by US audiences.

Until the demise of the Soviet Union, anything which, we were told, would increase American security, seemed justified.

In 1988 the motion picture "The House on Carroll Street" exposed a governmental plot to smuggle former Nazis unto the USA.

It was not a box office success. At about that time, I found that the cordial colleague of my weapons reliability years, Dr Lusser, had been a fierce competitor of Von Braun, that Lusser, who worked with Willy Messerschmidt, had been the designer of both the V-1 "buzz bomb" and the ME-262, the first operational jet aircraft, and at least a peripheral figure in "Projekt Amerika", a plan to launch planes from the Azores to bomb targeted East Coast US cities. So we kids in Brooklyn had not been so paranoid after all.

How, then, did the Cold War, the fear it engendered on two continents, the consequent support for neofascist governments, and, indirectly for neofascist movements in various countries, come to be?

At least part of the answer lies in one of the ironies of modern times. David Irving, British military historian, a notorious anti-Semite, Holocaust denier, and supporter of neo-Nazi causes, unwittingly did us a favour: he was also the translator of several books written by high-ranking SS and Wehrmacht officers.

Among these was General Reinhard Gehlen, the head of Fremde Heere Ost, or FHO, Branch 12 of the Germany Army's General Staff, controlling intelligence activities on the Wehrmacht's eastern front before and during WWII. His book, whose English title is "The Service" details not just Gehlen's rise to chief of the FHO, but his surrender -actually a "sale" - of the Gehlen Organization first to the USA and later to West Germany, where the Gehlen group became the Federal Intelligence Service (BND), with Gehlen as not just reserve lieutenant general of the Bundeswehhr, but President of the BND.

Why is this important? It is important precisely because it was Gehlen who, to increase his apparent value, convinced the American government that he possessed an enormous amount of intelligence on Soviet plans and plots, of what he regarded as the imminent and incredible danger posed by the Soviet Union.



Allen Dulles

John Foster Dulles, who became Secretary of State under President Eisenhower, and his brother, Allen Welsh Dulles, an expert on Germany and head of the CIA, believed absolutely in the veracity of Gehlen's every word, and, as a corollary, the importance of incorporating the skills of the German military into the USA - which meant importing the people who had developed them as well, a plan that Allen Dulles was to call "Operation Paperclip".

The agenda of the UnAmerican Activities Committee shifted from combating subversives to combating communists: the Nazi/fascist threat was deemed no longer to exist.

Whether this made it easier for former high-ranking SS to escape to South America and the Middle East — via the supposed ODESSA organization or Martin Bormann's brilliant plan for the emergence of a Fourth Reich through establishing Nazi cells outside Europe - remains unsubstantiated.

Thus, under the umbrella of combating the Soviet threat were the Nazi histories of such imports as Werner Von Braun expunged.

Von Braun became an American citizen and the most important figure in the US National Aeronautics and Space Administration, where Lusser worked as well, under the direction of his former adversary.

Toward and Into the 21st Century

The good news is that the Fourth Reich never arose. Paradoxically, one of the Latin American countries that absorbed the most fascists and Nazis took in more Jewish refugees than any other country in the world: almost half a million. For reasons unknown Argentina's President Juan Peron was attracted to the Axis powers and sympathetic to the plight of the Jews.

The bad news is that in the USA, much of what transpired, or failed to transpire, in the realm of social progress was dictated by fears of Communism during the two decades after the end of WWII. Many social programs, such as those directed at ending racial segregation in the American south, were labeled Communist or communist-inspired by reactionaries.

Even the term "reactionary" once used to label neofascist movements was replaced by "conservative", previously meaning "keeping things as they are". As the once-powerful Ku Klux Klan waned, with its hatred of racial minorities, Catholics, Jews, and almost everyone,

waned in strength, the American Nazi Party became a political organization dedicated to “white power”.

The danger to America in the first decade of the 21st century has not been movements that are blatantly Nazi but, what have been called “hate media”: television talk show hosts such as Rush Limbaugh and Glenn Beck emerged in the first decade with a racist and classist appeal that has been attractive to millions of viewers. The neo-fascist Ann Coulter has proposed that the solution to problems in Middle Eastern countries is for the US to invade these countries, kill all their leaders and forcibly to convert the population to Christianity: shades of the Crusades. Christians, she claims, are perfected Jews, which implies that Jews are simply less perfect Christians – or simply less. A book by Ann Coulter is virtually guaranteed to hit the New York Times best seller list within weeks after its appearance.

The conservative juggernaut rolls on. As immigrant paranoia increases in Europe, so it does in the USA. The latest mandate in the American state of Arizona forces police to stop and demand identification of status by anyone even vaguely suspected of being in the US illegally. The states of Texas and Ohio, and at least one city in California are considering similar laws. Changes in the Arizona educational system will mandate firing teachers of English who speak with a (presumably “foreign”) accent.

There is an old English saying that “sticks and stones may break my bones, but names will never harm me.” It’s from a different era. The use of sticks and stones may be less fashionable in today’s world, but names do harm. They always have and always will.

Thank you.

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Dr. Stea has held four distinguished professorships in the U.S.A., Indonesia, and Mexico. He is a member of the editorial boards of a number of journals, the co-author or co-editor of several books, including Image and Environment, Landscape in Language, and Maps in Minds, and some 150 articles.

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