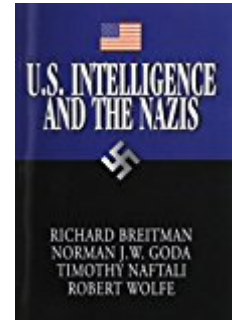


**Richard Breitman, Norman J. W. Goda, Timothy Naftali, Robert Wolfe.** *U.S. Intelligence and the Nazis*. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005. 495 pp. \$27.99, paper, ISBN 978-0-521-61794-9.



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**Published on** H-German (June, 2006)

In 1998, under the Nazi War Crimes Disclosure Act, approximately eight million pages of documents were newly declassified. These pertained to U.S. intelligence-gathering concerning Nazi atrocities during World War II, as well as the recruitment and operational use of Nazis and collaborators by U.S. intelligence services during and after the war. They made up the largest targeted declassification in U.S. history. Working as consultants for the Nazi War Criminal and Imperial Japanese Records Interagency Working Group, the four authors of this volume examined hundreds of thousands of pages of OSS, CIA, FBI, U.S. Army Intelligence, State Department, NSA and Office of Naval Intelligence documents as part of this process. Their goal in this volume is to "demonstrate that newly declassified documents, particularly when combined with previously available documents, allow us to add to, or even revise, our understanding of certain aspects of the Holocaust, of the looting of assets by Nazi Germany and its allies and of perpetrators of war crimes or acts of persecution" (p. 5).

One can only commend the authors for their diligence, thoroughness and erudition in undertaking what was obviously a daunting task. In working through this enormous quantity of material, they have rendered an invaluable service to other historians working on topics related to the Holocaust or the use by Allied intelligence services of Nazis as intelligence assets. Anyone thinking of consulting these newly declassified documents would be well advised to consult this volume first. At the same time, however, the current volume is characterized even more than most multi-authored books by the lack of a central narrative or argument. Given the nature of its origins, it is inevitable that this work is driven more by its source material than by any overarching theoretical or historiographical concerns. As a result, this is a book that most readers will likely want to consult for specific questions, rather than for any general conclusions. The fact that, unlike many multi-authored volumes, this one contains an extensive and thorough index is particularly useful in this regard. Despite these inevitable limitations, the authors do a commendable job of bringing a degree of coherence to what might

simply have been a set of disconnected research reports. In particular, in the conclusion, they link the failure by U.S. intelligence to properly understand the Holocaust to the postwar practice of recruiting many Holocaust perpetrators as intelligence operatives.

At its most basic, the book addresses two themes: what the newly declassified documents tell us about Nazi atrocities, the Holocaust in particular, and what they tell us about the nature and extent of the contacts between U.S. intelligence and Nazi war criminals during and after the war. Richard Breitman, sometimes in cooperation with one of the other co-authors, deals with the questions pertaining to the Holocaust and Nazi atrocity, while the other authors, Norman Goda in particular, deal with the questions pertaining to the cooperation of U.S. and Allied intelligence agencies and former Nazis and collaborators. One can say that the information gleaned by the authors from their voluminous researches does not radically alter our understanding of either topic. At the same time, however, the newly declassified documents do provide countless illuminating nuggets of information and details that do much to flesh out or add nuance to formerly established views. If the newly declassified material thus does not fundamentally alter the way we think about either the Nazi regime or the relationship between U.S. intelligence agencies and Nazis, it does greatly enrich our understanding of countless specific instances in that history. If it lacks sufficient focus to be considered "field defining," this book will nevertheless be an indispensable starting point for anyone working on the history of the Holocaust or the relationship between U.S. intelligence and Nazi war criminals.

Starting with the Holocaust itself, the new documents generally confirm that the Western Allies, including the United States, knew a great deal about the specifics of the Holocaust already during the war. According to Breitman, both MI-6 and the OSS assembled considerable detailed informa-

tion regarding the Nazi camps during the war, yet they rather systematically failed to understand the implications of that information properly. In particular, neither MI-6 nor the OSS ever "acknowledged that the Jews were the primary victims" of the Nazi regime (p. 34). Rather, the Allied intelligence agencies "incorrectly sewed Jews into the broad quilt of Nazi Germany's many racial and political enemies" (p. 35). Breitman comments: "It is hard to fathom how analyses of this nature [referring to an MI-6 report from April 1945] could have misrepresented so many aspects of the German system this late in the war. A great deal of information was readily available on extermination camps and also on the singling out of Jews for mass murder" (p. 36). According to Breitman, the explanation for these systematic misunderstandings lies in the "strategic priorities of the war" (p. 37). In other words, because the primary goal of Allied intelligence was to contribute to military victory over the Nazi regime, there was a pronounced tendency to ignore or misinterpret information that came to light pertaining to Nazi atrocities that did not seem directly relevant to that purpose. In this respect, as Breitman makes clear, the new documents serve to confirm, rather than alter, the established view of Allied responses to the Holocaust during the war.[1]

In chapter 3, Breitman (together with Robert Wolfe) considers several specific incidents during the Holocaust in light of the new documents.[2] Particularly illuminating in this regard is the new information that comes to light regarding the role of Herbert Keppler, an RSHA agent in Italy, in the round-up and deportation of Rome's Jews in Fall 1943. After the war, Keppler had claimed to have delayed the implementation of Himmler's order for the deportations. In light of the new documents, Keppler's postwar claims seem questionable on two counts. First, it now appears that Himmler's order arrived after September 12, later than Keppler had maintained, which implies that he did not in fact delay the implementation of the order (p. 78). Secondly, the fact that Keppler ex-

explicitly warned Berlin that some Jews were successfully escaping Rome prior to the round-up casts further doubt on his claim to have resisted Himmler's order. To the extent that Keppler evinced concern about the measures leading up to the round-up, primarily the attempts to extort gold from Rome's Jewish community, they seem to have been strategic, rather than moral, in nature (p. 79). According to Breitman and Wolfe, "if Keppler were opposed to deporting the Jews of Rome, it was only because he had concerns about whether he could pull it off without the full support of the German authorities in Italy and in the face of hostile Italian public opposition" (p. 80). Moreover, Keppler at least felt that the relative failure of the eventual round-up of Rome's Jews in October, when only about 15 percent of the Jewish population was arrested, was due in large part to the opposition of the Vatican, thus adding additional information to the debate surrounding the role of the pope and the Vatican in the Holocaust. The new evidence therefore sheds light on the timing of the order to deport Italian Jews, on the role and motivation of one of the central German actors in this event and, indirectly at least, on the role of the Vatican in the Holocaust.

In terms of the relationship between Allied intelligence services and the Nazis, what is surprising is not that the current volume largely confirms the all too frequent willingness of the Allies to make extensive use of Nazis and collaborators as intelligence assets, both during and after the war. Rather, what is striking is the extent to which opposition to the use of Nazis and agents emerged within the U.S. and Allied intelligence agencies, on both moral and operational grounds. If these objections only rarely met with success, the fact that they were raised at all does much to problematize the all too easy generalizations about the moral prevarications and opportunism of Western intelligence in dealing with Nazis.

For example, when the U.S. Army Counter Intelligence Corps (CIC) recruited the former SD

agent, Wilhelm Höttl, an unknown U.S. operative wrote a warning to the U.S. commander in Austria in October 1948: "Knowing Hoettl's past, his own dubious character as well as of his co-workers and the most questionable political intrigues of Hoettl and his circle ... warning must be given.... Should it eventually become known that Hoettl is being used by the Americans this would be incomprehensible to all decent Germans and Austrians" (p. 274). In the summer of 1949, CIC decided to drop Höttl, in part because he was disrupting other intelligence networks, which feared him. "The reason that he is feared," read one case report, "is that he was an excellent intelligence man in his day and actually a war criminal" (pp. 277-278). In the case of Ante Pavelic, founder of the Ustaša and head of the client Croatian state during the war, Norman Goda makes clear that the United States wanted him brought to justice. Rather, it was likely the British, not the Americans, who were protecting Pavelic after the war (p. 215). Similarly, Goda demonstrates that the FBI neither "planned nor condoned the immigration of lesser Axis officials and collaborationists" into the United States. He is quick to add, however, that "once these men were in the United States, the FBI, as the nation's chief federal law enforcement agency, did not create for itself an especially distinguished record" (p. 255).

Still, the volume confirms that despite these occasional reservations--themselves frequently instrumental and strategic, rather than moral in character--U.S. intelligence agencies were all too willing to make use of former Nazis and collaborators, whatever their involvement in Nazi atrocities, whenever this appeared expedient. Timothy Naftali's conclusion concerning the CIA would apply to other U.S. agencies as well: "This is not a story of a dark conspiracy, nor is it one of well-meaning innocence.... [T]he CIA assumed the tainted man could be exploited without consequence. The CIA did not bother to look deeply into the background of those it was interested in recruiting.... [T]he CIA and its representatives con-

sciously chose to fight the Cold War in an amoral environment where recruitment decisions rested primarily on the perceived operational utility of an agent" (p. 341).

Thus, as Breitman and Goda make clear in their conclusion to the volume, U.S. intelligence knew even more about the Holocaust than has previously been assumed, yet despite this, they undertook "no bold initiatives" in response. As an explanation for this inaction, the authors speculate that U.S. intelligence operatives feared that "too much attention to Nazi killings of Jews might jeopardize American consensus for the war itself" (p. 445). Nor, according to Breitman and Goda, do the new documents support the notion that the German intelligence services were either particularly effective or opposed to Nazi crimes (p. 447). As far as the use of former Nazis and collaborators as intelligence operatives, the volume concludes that, while there was "no overarching policy by which American intelligence agencies targeted known SS or Gestapo officers for hiring," such recruitment occurred frequently on a case-by-case basis, both as a result of the opportunistic pragmatism of U.S. intelligence agencies and because their own earlier down-playing of the Holocaust made these Nazis seem less objectionable than they in fact were (p. 449). All in all, then, this sobering and illuminating volume does much to improve our understanding of both the Holocaust and U.S. intelligence during and after the war.

#### Notes

[1]. Breitman's "strategic" explanation for the failure of Allied intelligence to grasp the specific character of the Holocaust within the broader framework of Nazi persecution is somewhat different from and more narrowly focused than other interpretations of this same phenomenon. Tony Kushner, for example, has argued that the exclusionary logic and homogenizing tendencies of liberalism accounted for the failure to recognize properly the distinctiveness of Nazi anti-Jewish

policy. See Tony Kushner, *The Holocaust and the Liberal Imagination* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994).

[2]. An earlier version of this material was published as Richard Breitman, "New Sources on the Holocaust in Italy," *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 16 (2002): pp. 402-14.

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**Citation:** Devin O. Pendas. Review of Breitman, Richard; Goda, Norman J. W.; Naftali, Timothy; Wolfe, Robert. *U.S. Intelligence and the Nazis*. H-German, H-Net Reviews. June, 2006.

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