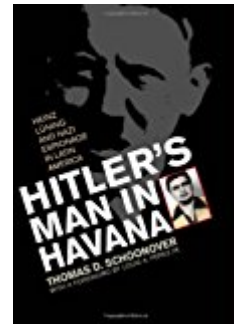


Thomas David Schoonover. *Hitler's Man in Havana: Heinz Lüning and Nazi Espionage in Latin America*. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2008. 256 pp. \$29.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8131-2501-5.

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German Spying in Havana and U-boats in the Caribbean

Thomas D. Schoonover is one of the eminent scholars of the history of U.S.-Latin American relations, as well as European relations with Latin America. He has also written more broadly on international history. Reflective of his work—stretching back over more than three decades—is thorough, multinational, and multilingual archival work, as well as a skillful use of the relevant secondary sources. Because his work has focused on the mid-nineteenth- to mid-twentieth-century period, he has built up a substantial stock of knowledge that is evident in the book under review. *Hitler's Man in Havana: Heinz Lüning and Nazi Espionage in Latin America* is a multifaceted, impressive work. Lüning's career intersected with some of the more important personages in the United States, Latin America, and Cuba. It also connected with some important literary figures. Ernest Hemmingway plays a cameo role, and, more significantly, the British novelist (and spy) Graham Greene found Lüning's activities interesting enough to craft one of the more popular spy novels of the twentieth century.

Using the brief career of one seemingly hapless and ineffective Nazi spy as a vehicle, Schoonover weaves a fascinating tale of intrigue that opens windows for the reader with regard to key aspects of the intelligence communities in Cuba, Europe, and the United States. Because Lüning's career coincided with historic changes in U.S.-Latin American relations, Schoonover's book proves

an important contribution to the growing literature on those relations during the World War II era. By the late 1930s, the United States had solidified control over what it considered its sphere of influence in the Americas, and the Nazis reached out militarily to the Western Hemisphere to undermine U.S. support for the Allies as well as, more generally, U.S. power in the Western Hemisphere. Not surprisingly, U.S. concern with growing Nazi power caused it to investigate Nazi spies in the region.

Because U.S. officials feared that Nazi military power might disrupt important Caribbean and Atlantic shipping lanes, with Cuba being the linchpin of those key routes, Nazi influence in Cuba proved significant, and—concomitantly—U.S. fears of growing German power in the Pearl of the Antilles grew in the late 1930s and early 1940s. Thus, Lüning's capture in 1942 by United States intelligence officials, after only eleven months in the service of his nation, and his quick trial and execution (the only Nazi spy in Latin America executed by the United States), provides evidence of the “shadow war” that the United States and the Germans fought in Latin America during World War II.

In the end, Lüning produced little “actionable” intelligence during his short tenure. In part, structural factors help to explain the small value to Germany of his placement in Havana. Through Schoonover's skill-

ful use of German and U.S. sources, the author informs the reader that bureaucratic wrangling in those nations significantly limited both intelligence gathering as well as U.S. counterintelligence activity. Certainly, Lüning's own lack of training with regard to Latin American issues and his lack of interest in the region accentuated his deficiencies. Nonetheless, his position in Havana proved of more enduring importance, as Graham Greene almost certainly (as Schoonover persuasively argues) used Lüning's career as the basis for his novel *Our Man in Havana* (1958).

In order to keep the book a reasonable length, Schoonover has compressed some elements of the story. In general, he does a good job, clearly highlighting the most significant aspects of Lüning's experience while putting them in the broader contexts of Atlantic world and U.S.-Latin American relations. However, he might have gone into more detail in connecting U.S.-Latin American relations and U.S.-European relations in the 1930s and 1940s with Lüning's story. Although he has thoroughly investigated the very interesting ideas of "social imperialism" and "informal empire" in past work, his compressed discussion of it in this book leaves the reader a bit unclear as to the significance of these concepts. On p. 26 he notes, "Internationally, from the mid-nineteenth century to World War I, the leaders of the North Atlantic societies nudged these young, unstable, industrializing nations toward increased international competition and risk taking (colonialism, colonial wars and revolt, imperial acquisitions, social imperialism achieving domestic objectives through international activity, and informal empire)." There is a lot here that could have been more thoroughly unpacked and analyzed.

The nature of piecing together a spy narrative almost necessarily means that the author will not be able to answer all the questions he raises. There are always many threads to the story, and it is never possible to tie all of them together. In general, Schoonover raises the key questions, and answers them well. However, he might have reflected more deeply on the striking difference between the success of the German U-boat campaign in the Caribbean in mid-1942, on the one hand, and the apparent uselessness of Lüning's intelligence, on the other. The U-boat campaign was going well for the Germans by mid-1942. It seems the Germans did not need Lüning's presence in Cuba. The fact that they did not supply him with the names of other important Nazi spies in the region testifies to the Germans' lack of confidence in his ability, and their lack of interest more generally in his posting in Cuba. Why, then, did the Nazis send him to

Cuba in the first place; or, why did they not quickly recall him to Germany, or perhaps detail him to a lower-profile post? Why would the Germans risk the capture of one of their spies, if he did not significantly contribute to the war effort? It seems that the Germans might have feared that his capture could have provided the United States with some damaging information on the German intelligence system. In addition, the United States could have made Lüning's capture a high-profile event, generating publicity that would have significantly increased anti-Axis sentiment in the region, and maybe even caused governments which had not declared war against the Axis (such as Chile and Argentina) to do so. It would have been interesting for Schoonover to reflect a bit more on these issues.

However, this is a minor criticism. In the end, as Schoonover persuasively argues, Lüning's capture and execution seemed to have little effect on Germany's efforts to threaten U.S. or Allied shipping in the Western Hemisphere. As Schoonover points out, the German U-boat campaign in the Caribbean came to an end (regardless of German spying) because of problems with fueling the U-boats, combined with increased U.S. vigilance.

Schoonover argues that Lüning was executed (eleven months after he was posted to Havana) because U.S. and Cuban officials needed a scapegoat for Allied losses in the Caribbean due to U-boat attacks. These officials even claimed—incorrectly—that Lüning had used a radio to inform the Nazis of the locations of Allied ships. Schoonover writes that such erroneous claims were intended to persuade the U.S. public, which wanted to know who was responsible for the deaths of U.S. personnel on the ships sunk by the U-boats, that something was being done to rectify the situation. Lüning's execution was evidence for the U.S. public that the Allies were "turning the tide" against the Axis. Schoonover summarizes how others used Lüning for their own ends: "The Allied counterintelligence leaders enhanced their careers, seized the spotlight, and gained prestige through claims of destroying a major Nazi spy ring that they deceptively linked to a threat from German U-boat operations in the Caribbean basin" (p. 138).

In general, it was important for many reasons that U.S. officials capture and execute a Nazi spy in the Americas. The fact that Lüning's supply of intelligence information was of little value to the Germans (and at least some U.S. officials suspected as much) was beside the point. His trial and execution represented a "win" for the Allies in their struggle against the Axis.

Overall, Schoonover's book is valuable because it highlights an important and heretofore untold story which informs us about the history of intelligence, wartime inter-American relations, and the Atlantic world in the mid-twentieth century.

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