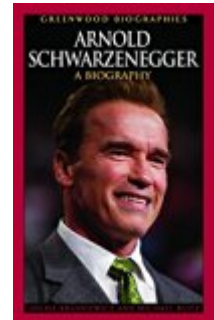


Louise Krasniewicz, Michael Blitz. *Arnold Schwarzenegger: A Biography*. Westport: Greenwood Press, 2006. 192 pp. \$29.95, cloth, ISBN 978-0-313-33810-6.



Reviewed by Günter Bischof

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The usual paradigm in which the history of Austrian immigrants to the United States has been narrated is one of "the quiet invaders."^[1] There is nothing quiet or bashful about Arnold Schwarzenegger, the bodybuilder turned actor and Hollywood icon turned politico. He has been an in-your-face superstar producing serial blockbuster movies. With this image of his global star power, much of which he has very consciously cultivated, a political career was launched that brought him to Sacramento and the governorship of California in 2003. As the governor of a state comprised of almost 40 million residents (illegal immigrants included), and with an economy that is the sixth strongest in the world, he has perforce become a major player in the American political arena. Ever since he listened with the help of a translator to the Nixon vs. Johnson presidential race in 1968, when he first entered the United States, he has called himself a Republican. Nixon sounded less "socialist" to him than Johnson. Yet on social issues (abortion, stem-cell research) he is far removed from the ideological core of the Republican Party. Economically he is a firm believer in laissez-faire and a strict follower of Milton

Friedman, whom he befriended, but at the same time has accepted the fact that global warming does occur and that the government needs to get involved to control emission of greenhouse gases. (Is Schwarzenegger familiar with the intellectual pedigree of the "Chicago School's" ties to the Austrian school of economics?^[2] His biographers obviously are not).

Given Schwarzenegger's stellar careers and the speculations about his future political prospects and presidential ambitions--despite certain obstacles in the U.S. Constitution--it comes as no surprise that the publishing industry has discovered a new prospectively profitable subject. The biography under review, written for a series produced mostly for the considerable American library market, is disappointing on every level and is hardly worthy of the colorful subject it tries to portray. The volume is riddled with factual inaccuracies, fails to ask big and important questions about Schwarzenegger's upbringing and career, ignores the context of "the times" of his life's trajectory, and incorporates at best skimpy research. Apart from a few biographies, authorized and

unauthorized, the research is based on Internet sources.

The book's guiding principle is based on the simple-minded notion that Arnold Schwarzenegger represents the "American Dream" incarnate. Arnold, the authors argue, "was born for the USA." Growing up in postwar Austria, at age ten he dreamed of being an American. He had a "Master Plan" for his life, he told an early biographer: he would go to America, become the world's greatest bodybuilder, get an education and learn English, work in the movies, become a millionaire, invest his money in real estate, find a glamorous spouse and get involved in politics. Arnold knew he was "destined for greatness" (p. 7) and could fulfill his dream of material abundance only in America. Ronald Reagan was Arnold's paragon, since he defined the economic and moral dimensions of the American Dream so purely and simply. In 1986, Reagan is quoted as saying on the radio: "Here in America we've been fortunate to be the keeper and custodian of a dream ... a dream that millions of people hope to share in someday" (p. 6). Louise Krasniewicz and Michael Blitz, quoting authorized biographers, do not ask the obvious question of whether Schwarzenegger *constructed* his own biography after the fact, once things started to go his way. Did he mythologize his past in order to shape his political future? *Los Angeles Times* reporter Joe Mathews, in the best book written on Schwarzenegger to date, thinks so. He takes note of the "Master Plan" too, but qualifies it by arguing that "Schwarzenegger himself had mused publicly and privately about a political career, but not until much later in his life would he think about it in a focused way." [3] If Reagan is Arnold's muse with regard to the noble American dream, we must still ask whether the governor is greeting the world's "tired and poor" and whether California voters eagerly welcome the "huddled masses" of Central America to share their American dream.

The chapter on Schwarzenegger's Austrian background is frightfully riddled with basic mistakes on Austrian history. Styria, the Austrian state (*Land*) he grew up in, is called a "county" (p. 12). Austria is called a "puppet of fascism" (p. 12). What the authors mean by this is, however, unclear. Do they mean Engelbert Dollfuß's protection by Italian fascists? Dollfuß's resistance to National Socialism, for which he paid with his life? The homegrown *Ständestaat* ("Austrofascism") he pioneered? Arnold's father Gustav is said to have joined the National Socialist Party in Austria "in 1939, right after Adolf Hitler annexed Austria" (pp. 2, 14). The fact is that Gustav joined the Nazi Party soon after the Anschluss in March 1938 and volunteered for the SA in 1939. This step makes him a committed Nazi rather than the run-of-the-mill *Ostmark* species of fellow-traveler. The authors also seem a little confused about the difference between the SA and SS.[4] Austria was a "defeated country, having been part of a despicable alliance with Nazi Germany" (p. 16), they claim. The facts are: the Nazis invaded and annexed Austria in 1938, with considerable popular support, but there was never an "alliance." Instead Austria was wholly absorbed into the Third Reich, and unlike Germany, the Allies considered Austria a "liberated" country in 1945. The readers of this volume will learn that Austria was occupied by the Russians, the British, and the Americans after World War II and Styria also was occupied by all three powers (pp. 16f). The history books, however, tell us that Austria, like Germany, was occupied by four powers, including the French, and Styria was liberated by the Red Army and the British. The Soviets withdrew from Styria in July 1945 and the British became the exclusive occupiers until 1955, when the occupation powers withdrew by October, not in 1966 (p. 12), as is written in this book.[5] This is not quibbling but setting the facts straight.

Schwarzenegger, of course, has added to the general confusion about the occupation of Austria by claiming at the Republican National Conven-

tion in New York in 2004 that he himself saw Soviet tanks in Styria after the war (pp. 109-13). Since he was not yet alive in 1945, when the Soviets were stationed in Graz from May to July, he could only have heard about such tanks from his parents and friends later. He may also have been close to Styria's northern or eastern border as a young boy and peeked across the zonal border line into Lower Austria or Burgenland, where Soviet troops and tanks were stationed until 1955. Of course, biographers may establish one day that Schwarzenegger went on a family trip to Vienna or into the Soviet Zone before the age of eight and did personally see such tanks. Austrian veterans of World War II did more traveling than they had ever wanted in Hitler's army, however, and after the war they tended to stay put as they raised families in the 1950s, when times only slowly started to get better. But maybe Austrians are simply too sensitive about this moment and fail to see that Schwarzenegger simply used the tank as a symbol for the Soviet presence and its repercussions in "Austrian socialism." When doing his mandatory service in the Austria Army in 1965-66, Arnold volunteered for the tank forces. His gung-ho service in the Austrian Army may also have fuelled his visions of threatening T-34's. He also went AWOL to go to Germany for a bodybuilding competition, which he promptly won, thus launching his bodybuilding career in the Army (pp. 36f).[6]

This sloppy handling of Schwarzenegger's early years in Austria raises a larger issue for the reader: how did Austria itself or Arnold's experiences there influence his later path? Born in 1947, he lived there for the first nineteen years of his life, spending a couple of years in Munich before he came to the United States. What kind of education did he enjoy and what kind of intellectual growth might be detected in the young man? Here Krasniewicz's and Blitz's account is totally mute and useless, though other biographical accounts are not much better. The glowing recent hagiography by Austrian journalists Werner Kopacka and

Christian Jauschowitz, natives of Styria who have followed Schwarzenegger through his Hollywood career for the Austrian yellow press sheet *Kronenzeitung*, offers some modest insight.[7] Arnold attended *Volksschule* in Thal and then *Hauptschule* in Graz. *Hauptschulen* still exist in Austria, providing pupils, usually those who do not want to go on to *Gymnasium*, with a somewhat better education than elementary school. When Arnold went to school in Austria, only more privileged bourgeois and upper-class children attended *Gymnasium* and went on to university. It would have been typical for the son of a petty-bourgeois policeman to enter an apprenticeship after eight years of mandatory schooling. Arnold completed his apprenticeship as a store clerk in a hardware store. [8] But he never received a *Matura*, as the high-school diploma that qualifies its recipients to attend a university is called in Austria.

All biographers correctly point out that Schwarzenegger pursued his own individualized education devotedly, and as time permitted, after he came to Los Angeles. He took classes at Santa Monica City College and the UCLA Extension School. When Schwarzenegger was invited by the University of Wisconsin-Superior to lecture on physical fitness, he made a deal with the school, which accepted his credits from Los Angeles institutions and allowed him to complete the rest of the course work in correspondence courses in return for a few lectures. It is not clear how many courses he took at Superior or how long it took him to complete his degree. It is probably safe to assume that the university wanted to be associated with his famous name and was willing to be generous. Schwarzenegger got his B.A. in international marketing and business administration after the fall term of 1979.[9] None of the biographers seem to have noted his university entrances without a high-school degree. Students can enter Santa Monica City College at the age of 18 without a diploma. At Superior no one seems to have both-

ered. Careful biographers might have pursued such issues.

Given Schwarzenegger's purported early fascination with the "American Dream," one might have thought that the biographers would have asked how this fascination was generated and fed. No biographer appears to ask questions about whether Arnold was one of the postwar central European teenagers who became "Americanized" as a result of his fascination with American popular culture. Did he wear jeans, listen to jazz and rock 'n' roll, and watch Jimmy Dean movies? More likely not, as recent scholarship into the "Americanization" of postwar Austria explains. He grew up in the British rather than the American Zone. The British were not as active in establishing their cultural presence in Austria as were the Americans with their proliferation of "America houses," distribution of American movies, and sponsoring of concerts and traveling "bookmobiles" for hungry readers of Americana. The children of urban bourgeois families attended such programs and became fascinated with all things American. Such attitudes also constituted in part a generational rebellion by Austrian baby-boomers against the generation of their "Nazi" fathers. Influence was especially attenuated in the Austrian countryside, though, and children in rural Austria from modest educational backgrounds were less likely to be "Americanized." When they were, the process was slow. Whether Arnold, as a teenager hanging out in gyms during workouts, began to imbibe American popular culture and thereby the "American Dream" is a question future biographers will need to answer. By the mid-1960s he was fully invested in his bodybuilding career. He does not seem to have been involved at all in the debates his cohort of educated young Austrians engaged in about the Vietnam War; he was thus also less susceptible to the wave of anti-Americanism that swept western Europe after the mid-1960s.[10]

As a teenager Schwarzenegger seems not to have been interested in furthering his intellectual

growth; instead he became obsessed with building his body by weightlifting in Graz. When he started his apprenticeship in 1961 he also began a punishing regime of lifting weights to build "The Body Arnold," the best chapter in this otherwise anemic biography (pp. 27-51). Popping anabolic steroids became part of the regime of developing muscles, strength, body bulk, and eventually fame and fortune (pp. 20f). From Graz, via Munich, bodybuilding led Schwarzenegger to Los Angeles, where he became a serial winner of top awards such as "Mr. Universe" and "Mr. Olympic." He joined business ventures to promote bodybuilding and contributed to and profited from the fitness crazes of the subsequent quarter century. He developed into a savvy businessman as his bodybuilding and later film career prospered. With typical hyperbole, the authors speak of a brutal "shock and awe" approach to training and competition, which made him "the conqueror of all the world's greatest bodybuilders" (pp. 44-47). This oversized body then translated into a movie career and global stardom.

His first film role came in *Hercules in New York* (1970), later voted by film aficionados number fifty-nine of the hundred worst movies ever made (p. 55). Then came the bodybuilding epics *Stay Hungry* (1976), which inexplicably won him a Golden Globe, and *Pumping Iron* (1977). One would think that a Schwarzenegger biography would go on to analyze carefully Hollywood's marketing of Arnold's perfect male physique and the titillation of audiences worldwide with strange hybrid characters such as "Conan" and the "Terminator," as well as new film languages and computer-generated characters. The arrival of mega-blockbusters and Schwarzenegger's role in this process is, however, not the subject of this biography. The authors simply present a long chapter listing his films, cameos of their stories, and box office receipts (pp. 59-90). Film scholars will find little to learn from this book.

During the 1980s and 1990s Arnold's blockbuster film career and business ventures in real estate and fitness conventions prospered. He married journalist and TV anchor Maria Shriver, a member of the vaunted Kennedy clan ("Husband Arnold," pp. 102-3). This step would not hurt even a Republican's future prospects in the political arena. Our biographers might have asked whether the famous Kennedy ethos for public service might have "Americanized" him, insofar as up until this time Arnold showed limited inclination to civic engagement. Joe Mathews is much better here when noting that "the Shrivvers became a second family to Schwarzenegger." Not only that, like a sponge Arnold soaked up an enormous amount of private tutoring about American political traditions from Maria's father Sargent Shriver.[11] This information may well have been the most important education he received for his future political career. In a similar vein of tender mentoring, his mother-in-law Eunice Shriver encouraged him in his contribution as a weight trainer in Special Olympics programs for handicapped youth. Arnold's intellectual and emotional growth clearly benefited from these influences.

In 1983, on the day Schwarzenegger was naturalized as an American citizen, he walked around with an American flag over his shoulders—displaying his new-found patriotism but not in keeping with the "quiet-invader-image" of Austrian immigrants. Without giving specific evidence, Krasniewicz and Blitz conclude that "few in America could be described as more in love with the country, its people, and its culture" (p. 100). He told reporters that day: "to become [an] American is like becoming a member of the winning team." Our biographers did not notice that he hedged his bets and, with the help of political friends in Austria, managed to hang on to his Austrian citizenship.[12] Whether his dual citizenship will be a problem for his future political ambitions, no one can tell. Cosmopolitan California vot-

ers, to their credit, apparently do not mind that dual citizenship might spell dual loyalties.

The 1990s, in many respects, seem to be the most admirable years in his career, as he demonstrated enormous stamina for public service. George H. W. Bush appointed him chair of the President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports in 1990. Arnold traveled to all fifty states and launched "Great American Workouts." He had served as weight training coach of Special Olympics since 1979 and continued his engagement in this organization. He also helped establish the Inner City Games Foundation in Los Angeles in 1995 to guide and train troubled kids in the ghetto. This activity helped launch a national "After-School All-Stars" program. As governor he would route millions of dollars to such programs (pp. 103-7).

The launching of Schwarzenegger's political career in 2003 as a result of Governor Gray Davis's recall opens the latest chapter of a life that seems charmed. Lest we forget, every career change and advancement was achieved with hard work and innate savvy, and even though he is not from a peasant background, his shrewdness is captured well in the German term *bauernschlau*. Krasniewicz and Blitz capture this phase by concentrating on the concatenation of the release of *Terminator 3* in the summer of 2003 and the advent of his run for governor. The issues surrounding his father's Nazi past his own seemingly long record of groping women are described uncritically in a cutesy subchapter entitled "Terminating the Barbarian" (pp. 126f). For a much more complex analysis of Schwarzenegger's campaign and early career as California's governor, readers will have to turn to Joe Mathews's absorbing book. Mathews, who has covered Arnold extensively, analyzes his career within the larger context of California populist politics started by the Progressive governor, Hiram Johnson, before World War I. Mathews terms the combination of direct democracy techniques with plebiscites and propo-

sitions, a situation in which the styling and marketing of political candidates is everything, as "blockbuster democracy." After Reagan, Hollywood thus again furnished a candidate to the Sacramento state house, of which Mathews quips "it might be nothing but a show." [13] This time it was the "governator" with an Austrian accent, amiable and scripted like Reagan, with even more formidable fundraising but less effective communication skills.

The greatest challenge for future biographers may well be that of adding psychological and gender biographical details to a life that is ripe for such interpretations. His uncalled-for denunciation of Democrats as "girlie men" begs for this type of analysis. How are Senators George McGovern and John Kerry, who fought in World War II and Vietnam, "girlie men"? No one doubts his manhood, Mathews rightly insists, even though his political handlers prefer "feminine styling" to temper his "Conan" and "Terminator" public image. [14] His reputation for "being crude and sexist with female co-workers" and his temptation to grope has sparked the ire of the feminists. Susan Faludi called him "Conan the Vulgarian" (p. 127). As a bodybuilder and as "Terminator" Arnold has shown much more skin in his career as an entertainer than Janet Jackson ever did; yet the Republican watchdogs of the nation's purity seem to have no problem with that. Arnold learned to work out in the Munich club scene of the mid-1960s, which "did not discriminate between heterosexual and homosexual bodybuilders." Arnold, however, did not accept the propositions of wealthy men who "picked up" some of his colleagues after workouts (pp. 37ff). This information suggests that bodybuilding incorporates a gay subculture that Schwarzenegger must have encountered in his first career but did not partake of. Surely California's loosening sexual morals during the late 1960s offered constant temptations for a young man in his prime and Hollywood's traditional sexual promiscuity would not have been easy to resist. The record shows that as a

mature man he began to quiet down, and that he has been a solid family man and good father to his four children. But with their subject coming from the land of Freud and the subconscious, future biographers will explore such issues with glee now that Arnold has become a public political animal.

What about Arnold and religion? He grew up in heavily *Catholic* rural Austria. Apparently one of his bodybuilding mentors in Graz gave him the famous mid-nineteenth-century anti-clerical rant against the Catholic clergy, *Pfaffenspiegel*, and "cured" him of his Catholicism, so that he stopped attending church (p. 22f). One wonders whether this attitude might have gotten him into trouble with his devoted Irish-Catholic in-laws? Does he qualify as a "secular humanist"? Might his distance from practicing religion, similar to Reagan, explain why he is less ideological about social issues such as abortion rights? What would this stance spell for a future presidential run with hard-core, faith-based Republican voters?

Arnold came to America because this land offered opportunities for a young man on the make, particularly one with a bent to entertain the public. Did he pursue a master plan for the "American Dream"? In hindsight, maybe he did. All he wanted was to leave the stifling atmosphere of 1960s Austria behind. The West German *Wirtschaftswunder* was the traditional first step for young Austrians with ambitions; going to America was a logical continuation of that journey outward toward betterment of one's life. Arnold's autobiographical observations ring true about petit bourgeois Austrian *Gemütlichkeit*: "Even people's ideas were small. There was too much contentment, too much acceptance of things as they'd always been." [15] Along the lines of traditional immigration research, this suggests that "push" were as strong as "pull" factors. We all wait with baited breath to see whether Schwarzenegger, driven by political ambition, will one day succeed in having the U.S. Constitution changed to al-

low foreign-born citizens a run for the White House. Will this "unquiet invader" end up on Mount Rushmore? Stay tuned.

[Readers of this review may be interested to learn that the trajectory of Arnold Schwarzenegger's life between Austria and the United States is of inherent interest to me, as an Austrian also born into the cohort of postwar baby-boomers with a father who fought in the *Wehrmacht* and turned shopkeeper after the war. My first trip to the United States came in 1972/73 for a year in high school in the San Francisco East Bay area as an AFS foreign exchange student. I was fascinated by San Francisco's Haight-Ashbury district, the Berkeley campus, and the McGovern campaign. I have lived in the United States since 1982 but have not applied for citizenship; as my Cajun wife says tongue-in-cheek, "she's married to the wrong Austrian."]

Notes

[1]. "From the very start [the Austrians] were content to be counted with the Germans and, in later years, to rush for their first papers for American citizenship without stopping to wave the flag of the unpopular Habsburgs or the little-known Austrian Republic. An amazing number of distinguished Austro-Americans have been playing a part in American life for over a century without beating any drums for their native land.... Most of the Austrians have come so quietly and with so little to say about the glories of the old monarchy or the charm of the young republic that Americans are surprised to learn that they were ever anything but American." E. Wilder Spaulding, *The Quiet Invaders: The Story of the Austrian Impact upon America* (Vienna: Oesterreichischer Bundesverlag, 1968), 1.

[2]. Hansjörg Klausinger, "How Far Was Vienna from Chicago in the 1930s? The Economists and the Depression," in *The Dollfuss/Schuschnigg Era in Austria: A Reassessment*, ed. Günter Bischof, Anton Pelinka, and Alexander Lassner (New Brunswick: Transaction, 2003), 56-72.

[3]. Joe Mathews, *The People's Machine: Arnold Schwarzenegger and the Rise of Blockbuster Democracy* (New York: Public Affairs, 2006), 29.

[4]. Mathews researched Gustav Schwarzenegger's career in the Nazi party carefully for an article for the *Los Angeles Times*, quoted in *People's Machine*, 30.

[5]. The international history of Austria in this period is covered by Günter Bischof, *Austria in the First Cold War, 1945-55: The Leverage of the Weak* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999).

[6]. Typically, Krasniewicz and Blitz miss the detail of his volunteering for the big machines--the tanks. See Werner Kopacka and Christian Jauschowitz, *Arnold hautnah*, with preface by Arnold Schwarzenegger (Munich: Herbig, 2004), 54-62.

[7]. Jauschowitz's contribution, as the photographer's close access to Schwarzenegger, makes at least the illustrations of this book fun.

[8]. Ibid., pp. 31-46. He did not have a "vocational high school degree," as Mathews insists in *People's Machine*, 34.

[9]. Mathews, *People's Machine*, 41. Krasniewicz and Blitz's account is woefully underresearched again: "in 1979, Arnold found the time to graduate from the University of Wisconsin Superior with a B.A. in business and international economics" (p. 105). Presumably, the "American Dream" is achieved by furthering your education, but no mention is made of how you piece a college degree together.

[10]. There is a fabulous book on the "Americanization" of Austria and the generational conflict over the acceptability of American popular culture: see Reinhold Wagnleitner, *Coca-Colonization and the Cold War: The Cultural Mission of the United States in Austria after the Second World War*, tr. Dianna M. Wolf (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994); see also Günter Bischof, "Two Sides of The Coin: the Amer-

icanization of Austria and Austrian Anti-Americanism," in *The Americanization of Europe: Culture, Diplomacy, and Anti-Americanism after 1945*, ed. Alexander Stephan (New York: Berghahn Books, 2006), 147-81.

[11]. Mathews, *People's Machine*, 40f.

[12]. Ibid., 42

[13]. Ibid., xxiiiif and passim.

[14]. Ibid., xx.

[15]. Quoted in ibid., p. 34.

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