

Operation Paperclip: The Past in the Personnel File

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The United States recruited German specialists after the war, including men with Nazi affiliations. Archival records show security assessments being revised to admit some recruits, exposing the moral compromises behind the technical acquisition.

STATUS	Documented recruitment program and compromised security screening
CLASSIFICATION	STR
MATERIAL	Germany and United States
DISPOSITION	PUBLIC / SOURCED STORY
CATEGORY	Strange Files
RECORD TYPE	Secrets & conspiracies
STORY HISTORY	1945-1950s

THE ACCOUNT

As the Second World War ended, scientific expertise became something the victors competed to collect. German specialists could offer knowledge useful to the United States, but their histories did not disappear with Germany's defeat. Operation Paperclip brought the conflict into personnel files: the same dossier might contain a valuable technical skill and a political past that should disqualify its owner. The question became which part of the record would govern the decision.

FOLLOWING THE TRAIL

The National Archives' Nazi War Crimes Disclosure Act report describes President Truman's restrictions on recruiting active supporters of Nazism. It also records requests for revised security reports after some scientists were rejected because of their pasts. Recruitment under Paperclip and related programs is established, as are documented attempts to ease obstacles. Individual responsibility must still be assessed person by person; the label does not make every recruit's history identical.

WHY IT STAYS WITH US

The secret is not hidden in a futuristic laboratory. It sits in the wording of an assessment, where an inconvenient past can be softened enough to let a desirable specialist through. Paperclip is compelling because it joins technical achievement to a separate historical accounting, asking what was known, what was excused and who benefited from changing the description.

WHERE THIS TELLING COMES FROM

Implementation of the Nazi War Crimes Disclosure Act: Interim Report

National Archives

<https://www.archives.gov/iwg/reports/nazi-war-crimes-interim-report-october-1999>

RETURN TO THE STORY

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<https://u225x.com/record/STR-SECRET-033>
