

The Greatest Intellectual Property Theft in History: Operation Paperclip – The plunder of Germany’s scientific and industrial knowledge after World War Two.

Description

By [Larry Romanoff](#)

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The initial purpose of what began as Operation Overcast was to plunder Germany of all its scientific and industrial knowledge after World War Two. The plan was to steal documents and working samples, but the depth and breadth of German industrial knowledge proved much too complex to be usefully understood from a simple examination of documents. In spite of the immense trove of scientific, technical, and industrial knowledge confiscated from Germany, the US failed to benefit due to a lack of know-how. It became quickly apparent that the process would require an extensive debriefing of German scientists and technicians to obtain adequate working knowledge of German industrial and scientific theory and processes.

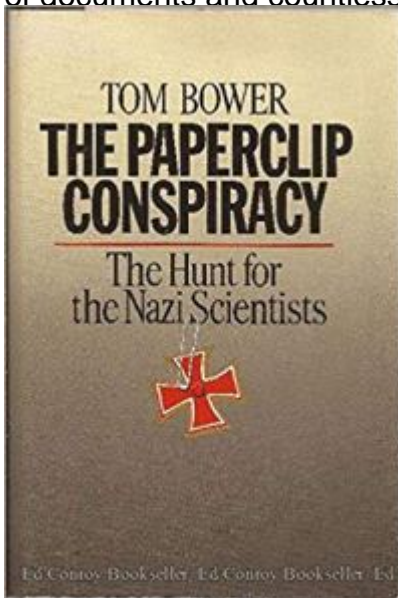
This realisation led to the immediate creation of vast internment camps containing all the scientists and technicians the Americans could take into custody where these people could be debriefed over time. When it became apparent that both plundering and debriefing would be insufficient, Operation Overcast became Operation Paperclip which involved the forcible transfer of countless thousands of these same individuals to the US.

Operation Overcast has been described as being “as massive a logistical enterprise as that of any major war campaign, involving enormous pre-planning and coordination that included literally dozens of government agencies and departments, ancillary groups like the Library of Congress, hundreds of US corporations and countless thousands of individuals.” It has been downplayed as a simple post-war immigration of German scientists and military personnel to the US, but it extended far beyond this. As in virtually every other area, American history has been revised, deleted, sanitised and Photoshopped to prevent the truth from escaping into the world at large.

Germany had been thoroughly looted after the WWI, including the confiscation of nearly all foreign assets belonging to German companies, (1) and plans were well under way to repeat the process long

before the Second War ended. This time, instead of simply seizing German assets and stealing their patents throughout the world, the Americans concocted a grand plan with an almost savage determination to plunder the entire nation of Germany itself, to the maximum extent possible. This was Operation Overcast, the planning for which was completed at least two years before the war ended.

When Germany surrendered and the Americans entered the country in force, hundreds of teams of scientists and industrialists, military and other specialists, were often only minutes or meters behind the troops, in their determined effort to confiscate everything useful lest it be destroyed before their arrival. These hundreds of groups had been selected and prepared in advance, with experts in every specialised scientific, industrial, and military area, those who were best qualified to judge what material was useful or valuable in their fields. A few groups focused on military items, but by far the largest effort was by the TIIB, the Technical Industrial Intelligence Branch of the US Department of Commerce, whose task was to examine every possible segment of German industry and to collect any and all information including documents, patents, processes, prototypes, models, working samples, anything that might be of interest or use to American industrial firms. The TIIB sent many hundreds of commercial investigating groups to Germany, with each group reportedly confiscating millions of pages of documents and countless tons of equipment and product samples. Even the Library of Congress sent a team, tasked with locating and confiscating all German books and journals useful to American corporations.



Every kind of German company of every size was targeted in this

enterprise if it might possibly contain research or products of potential use to American companies. Further, all universities, research institutes, patent offices, laboratories of every kind, all government agencies, research councils, were stripped bare, as were every kind of library. This latter included not only public libraries but all those inside German corporations like I. G. Farben, Volkswagen, Dornier, Messerschmitt, Hoescht, and thousands of others. And not only the libraries, but the internal research facilities of these thousands of firms were emptied of all their research documents, publications, and proprietary information. Entire factories and physical production facilities were combed for anything of commercial value.

It was reported that even the Steiff stuffed animal factory was emptied of its patterns, proprietary books and documents, production methods, patents, and samples of teddy bears. The Americans literally took everything, reportedly coming in waves with one wave taking whatever the prior waves left behind,

until factories, warehouses, libraries, universities, patent offices, were simply empty. The document haul alone was in the tens of thousands of tons. No one counted the number of samples, prototypes, working models, of vehicles, aircraft, military appliances, and vast numbers of commercial items, and the number of books stolen was likely in the millions.

Secrets by the Thousands

One of the few recorded instances of public documentation and acknowledgement of this massive theft was an article written by C. Lester Walker and titled, "Secrets by the Thousands". (2) His article begins with the following:

"Someone wrote to Wright Field recently, saying he understood this country had got together quite a collection of enemy war secrets, that many were now on public sale, and could he, please, be sent everything on German jet engines. The Air Documents Division of the Army Air Forces answered: "Sorry – but that would be fifty tons (of documents)".

Moreover, that fifty tons was just a small portion of what is today undoubtedly the biggest collection of captured enemy war secrets ever assembled. The collection is today chiefly in three places; Wright Field (Ohio), the Library of Congress, and the Department of Commerce. Wright Field is working from a documents mother lode of fifteen hundred tons. In Washington, the Office of Technical Services reports that tens of thousands of tons of material are involved. It is estimated that over a million separate items must be handled, and that they, very likely, contain practically all the scientific, industrial, and military secrets of Germany. One Washington official has called it the greatest single source of this type of material in the world, the first orderly exploitation of an entire country's brainpower."

Walker confirms that the US organised a colossal search for what it euphemistically termed "war secrets" but which was simply a treasure hunt for military, commercial and scientific knowledge that the US lacked. "To accomplish this task, various US agencies formed more than 500 intelligence groups, ranging in size from a few to a dozen or more individuals, which closely followed the invading US army into Germany with the intent of confiscating everything of value before the other Allied forces arrived. Most of these Joint Intelligence Objectives search teams were ordered to locate and confiscate industrial and scientific secrets in particular. According to Walker, these US heroes "performed prodigies of ingenuity and tenacity" in accomplishing their task. To some extent, he was correct. In one case the German Patent Office put some of its most secret patents down a sixteen-hundred-foot mine shaft, but the Americans found it and confiscated the entire contents as US "war reparations".

German citizens were forced by the Americans to sign documents testifying that they had turned over "all scientific and trade data, and if not, would accept the consequences" – which meant execution, and these were staff of commercial enterprises totally unrelated to military items. The US had photo crews and microfilm recording teams working 24 hours a day to document German inventions. Walker stated that at Hoechst alone, the Americans had more than 100 researchers who would "struggle feverishly to keep ahead of the forty OTS document-recording cameras which route to them each month over one hundred thousand feet of microfilm". To put this into measurable perspective, the US was extracting several million pages of documents each month from Hoechst alone. Such was the scale of the US theft of German scientific and commercial secrets.

Walker then proceeds to give readers “some outstanding examples from the war secrets collection” which included 1,000-watt micro-miniature vacuum tubes made of porcelain rather than glass, that were virtually indestructible, and a tenth the size of the best the US could make. He listed an apparently miraculous magnetic recording tape, and infrared devices for perfect night vision and a “remarkable diminutive generator which operated it”. He states that German infrared technology was so advanced that, according to US military sources, “German cars could drive at any speed in a total black-out, seeing objects clear as day two hundred meters ahead. Tanks with this device could spot targets two miles away. As a sniper scope it enabled German riflemen to pick off a man in total blackness. ...It stepped up current from an ordinary flashlight battery to 15,000 volts.” Prior to these discoveries the Americans had no idea these items even existed, much less of how to design or manufacture them.

Walker listed an array of electronic items including remarkable condensers that appeared to be magic to American scientists, the manufacture of large sheets of synthetic mica, which was important for many manufacturing processes and which the Americans had never been able to make, in any size, but which immediately increased American cold steel production by 1,000%. The Germans had perfected the process of cold metal extrusion, which the Americans also could never do, and which now permitted US manufacturers to increase the production speed of many items by ten times.

Walker stated that the head of a military communications unit told him this one “war secret” alone would totally revolutionise dozens of American metal fabrication industries. He went on to state that “In textiles the war secrets collection has produced so many revelations that American textile men are a little dizzy.”

He relates discoveries of a German rayon-weaving machine (“discovered” by the American Knitting Machine Team that was scouring Germany) that increases production by 150%. There were looms that produced seamless hosiery for ladies, textile needle-making machinery that the American firms had never dreamt possible, a patented way to separate the wool from sheepskin leaving a perfect hide surface. One American dye authority declared, “It includes the production know-how and the secret formulas for over fifty thousand dyes. Many of them are faster and better than ours. Many are colors we were never able to make. The American dye industry will be advanced at least ten years.”

[Patents, Theft of Intellectual Property \(IP\), Product Piracy and US-China Relations](#)

Walker continues:

“In matters of food, medicine, and branches of the military art the finds of the search teams were no less impressive. And in aeronautics and guided missiles they proved to be downright alarming. ... the Germans had discovered was a way to sterilize fruit juices without heat. Milk pasteurization by ultra-violet has always failed in other countries, but the Germans had found how to do it ...”

His sources told him the Germans had invented a continuous butter-making machine, something the Americans had always wanted but couldn't figure out how to do it.

Samples of the machines were immediately confiscated and shipped to the US dairy companies. The

Germans had invented remarkable new ways of preserving food, and air conditioning and water reclamation so efficient that “German submarines could travel from Germany to the Pacific, operate there for two months, and then return to Germany without having to take on fresh water for the crew.”

Walker tells us as well that a US Army surgeon claimed German medical secrets, many of which were startling and revolutionary, would save American medicine “years of research”, items that included a process for producing synthetic blood plasma on a commercial scale, and substitutes for both blood liquid and adrenaline. These were also areas where the Americans had tried for years, and failed, but Walker then crowed, “Today we have the secret of manufacture.” And let’s not forget these were all categorised by the Americans as “war secrets”, this categorisation somehow justifying their theft. The Germans also had developed methods of reviving bodies in cases of complete standstill of heart and cessation of respiration, Walker noting that “Before our war with Japan ended, this method was adopted as the treatment for use by all American Air-Sea Rescue Services, and it is generally accepted by medicine today.” Likewise, the Germans had already discovered the medical importance of negatively-ionised air and methods of creating it.

Walker further proceeds to tell us,

“But of highest significance for the future were the German secrets in aviation and in various types of missiles. The V-2 rocket which bombed London, an Army Air Force publication reports, was just a toy compared to what the Germans had up their sleeve. When the war ended, we now know, they had 138 types of guided missiles in various stages of production or development, using every known kind of remote control and fuse: radio, radar, wire, continuous wave, acoustics, infra-red, light beams, and magnetics, to name some; and for power, all methods of jet propulsion for either subsonic or supersonic speeds. Jet propulsion had even been applied to helicopter flight. The fuel was piped to combustion chambers at the rotor blade tips, where it exploded, whirling the blades around like a lawn sprinkler or pinwheel.”

Walker goes on to mention supersonic rockets with speeds of almost 6,000 miles per hour with intercontinental range that could reach New York from Germany in about 40 minutes. He tells us, “Little wonder, then, that today Army Air Force experts declare publicly that in rocket power and guided missiles the Germans were ahead of us by at least ten years.”

Walker completes his article with examples of how “the American public”, i.e. American companies “are eating up” all this information, with hundreds of thousands of requests for documents on every conceivable commercial application. American companies like Bendix, Pillsbury, Pioneer, Pacific Mills, requested German patent and process information on record player changers, flour and bread production methods, insect repellent compounds, crease-resistant finishes for spun rayon. And of course Polaroid, the great American camera company obtained all its information from the exploitation of German photography and optics documents, as did Kodak after World War I, without which the company would have amounted to nothing.

Daniel W. Michaels wrote a series of informative and excellently-researched articles on this matter, one titled “The Great Patents Heist”, which is filled with detail and background. (3) Michaels was for decades employed as a translator of German for the US Department of Defense and the Naval Maritime Intelligence Center, and has much personal experience of the extent of this theft. John

Gimbel also wrote a treatise titled, "Science, Technology, and Reparations. Exploitation and Plunder in Postwar Germany", which was published by the Stanford University Press in 1990.

Michaels begins by stating,

"It is quite acceptable to American pride to acknowledge that immigrants have contributed to our prosperity and greatness. It's a little harder to swallow that a good deal of our scientific lead and prosperity has come from simply seizing German patents and inventions after World War I, and far more so after World War II."

He notes that the most creative period in world history may have occurred in Germany between 1932 and 1945, and that it was the theft of this German scientific research that fueled America's post-war technology boom. It was Truman's Executive Order 9604 – which, he notes, was also known as the "License to Steal" – that constituted what was perhaps the greatest robbery in the history of the World, the theft of all German intellectual property, products, processes and patents existing to that time.

The US today makes a great show of protecting intellectual property while disclaiming any past or present efforts to obtain by clandestine or dishonest measures the IP of other nations, desperately insisting its espionage and other efforts deal only with 'terrorism' or national security issues. These denials can be easily dismissed as outright lies when faced with these revelations and the subsequent Project Echelon. Truman's Executive Order 9604 provided for the seizure of "scientific and industrial information, including all information concerning scientific, industrial and technological processes, inventions, methods, devices, improvements and advances" discovered in Germany, and "regardless of its origin".

"One of the largest hauls of classified information harvested by the Allies came from laboratories and plants of IG Farben, whose vaults contained secret industrial information on, among others, liquid and solid fuels, metallurgy, synthetic rubber, textiles, chemicals, plastics, drugs and dyes. Several U.S. Army officers stationed in the Farben Building after the war commented that the value of the files and records confiscated would (from that source alone) have been sufficient to finance the war."

Michaels also noted that among the great aeronautical discoveries were "the papers describing the sweptback wing and providing considerable wind-tunnel data which showed clearly that the sweptback plane had superior speed properties near the speed of sound. These data were the first of their kind.

Schairer (a Boeing engineer) quickly wrote to his Boeing associates to stop work on the Mach 1 transonic plane with the straight wing which they had designed, telling them of his find. He microfilmed the data and used them when he got back to Seattle to design the B-47, the first U.S. sweptback bomber...."

Michaels again:

"The theft of intellectual property is not new, but the extent and ruthlessness of what the "wannabe" superpowers did in Germany from 1945 to 1948 was unprecedented. The United States ... literally stole the entire extant store of German patents, designs,

inventions and trademarks. Germans, who were not forthcoming in informing the U.S. Occupation Forces of the existence and location of such records could be imprisoned, punished and even threatened with death for “insufficient reporting”. When World War II ended, America’s elite determined that the United States would not lapse back into its prewar depressed state, but rather would revitalize its economy and have a first-class military and industrial establishment. To this end, Germany’s advanced military hardware, aeronautical and industrial secrets would simply be confiscated and transplanted in America ... reinvented and stamped “Made in the U.S.A.”.

To ensure that the Allies would have an insurmountable head start in exploiting the patents, the Germans were even forbidden to use or refer to their own inventions after they were confiscated. The German Patent Office was closed by the Allies and (when it reopened), the first number assigned was 800,001, indicating that some 800,000 original patents had been looted by the Allies.

Germany had been deprived of all prior IP in existence to that point and, by its deliberate exclusion from the international Patent Union, could not patent or exploit any new discoveries. All new German inventions or scientific discoveries were simply confiscated by the US and, thanks to the massive and overwhelming infiltration of the US’ Project Echelon embedded in Germany (and throughout Europe), American espionage would quickly discover any new German inventions. To make the situation permanent, in May of 1955, the Americans, “aware of the improprieties involved in their seizure of German industrial secrets”, forced Germany to sign the ‘Paris Agreement’ and “to renounce all claims or objections to Allied actions during the occupation”. The so-called “agreement” stated:

“The [German] federal government shall in the future raise no objections against the measures which have been, or will be, carried out with regard to German external assets or other property, seized for the purpose of reparation or restitution, or as a result of the state of war, or on the basis of agreements concluded, or to be concluded by the Three Powers with any other Allied countries, neutral countries or former allies of Germany.”

The Second Wave – Forcible Emigration

The original intent was to steal documents and working samples, and to debrief scientists wherever necessary to obtain working knowledge of theory and processes. Since the extent of necessary debriefing could not reasonably be known in advance, the plan was to gather up all German scientists, technicians, and skilled workers and, to prevent their dispersion, to imprison them in concentration camps until they could be fully debriefed and all useful information extracted. However, German knowledge was far in advance of anything imagined by the Americans, and it was realised almost at the beginning that simple confiscation and debriefing would be hopelessly insufficient. As one example, the US military located and shipped home the components for more than 100 newly-manufactured but still unassembled V-2 rockets, but discovered they had no idea how to assemble the pieces nor any understanding of either the scientific principles or the mechanics of how the rockets functioned.

From this one dilemma and so many others in so many industrial areas, the Americans realised that, just as occurred after World War One, they were so far behind Germany they weren't able to even understand, much less utilise, much of what they had stolen. They then realised they had no choice but to relocate to the US many thousands of captive scientists, engineers and technicians, and eventually a great many skilled craftsmen as well. As one author noted,

“The American experience of virtual hopelessness in deciphering Germany's wartime rocket program alone, quickly led to the solution of confiscating not only the documentation and products but the people as well, for hundreds of other scientific, military and commercial processes.”

This was when Operation Overcast morphed into Operation Paperclip. It hasn't received notice in the historical narrative, but these deportations were forcible. The alternative presented was a trial and probable execution as war criminals, the US having essentially full authority and discretion to make these determinations and thus leaving the victims with little choice. These relocations were not only forcible, but abrupt, with only one day's notice in many cases:

“On orders of Military Government you are to report with your family and baggage as much as you can carry tomorrow noon at 1300 hours (Friday, 22 June 1945) at the town square in Bitterfeld. There is no need to bring winter clothing. Easily carried possessions, such as family documents, jewelry, and the like should be taken along. You will be transported by motor vehicle to the nearest railway station. From there you will travel on to the West. Please tell the bearer of this letter how large your family is.”

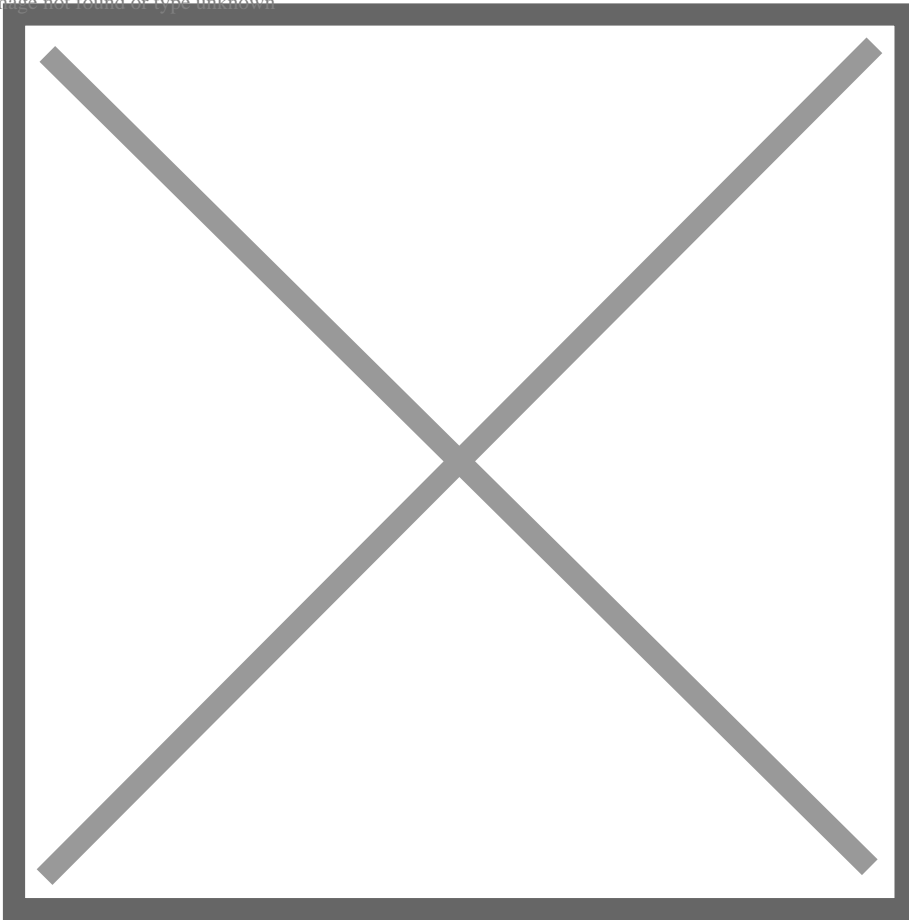
The first personnel transfers were of military specialists, but all subsequent waves were of purely commercial interest, the Americans forcibly importing scientists, technicians, skilled workmen and specialist craftsmen in virtually every industry, including steel, metal fabrication, glass, porcelain, printing, dyes and fabrics, electronics, musical instruments, auto manufacturing, aircraft design. The list is almost endless.

In 1987, Tom Bower wrote a book titled “The Paperclip Conspiracy” (4) in which he detailed the extent, and the value, to the US military alone, of the importation of these German scientists. He listed scores of dramatic German achievements that had been far beyond the ability of the US at the time: advanced aircraft power plants, guided missile control, in-flight refueling, high-temperature alloys, precision optics, infra-red detectors, new diesel engines, new fuels and lubricants, a wind tunnel running at Mach 8, which was three times the speed and ten years ahead of the best American effort, high-altitude reconnaissance and mapping, acoustic weapons. He further noted the American military opinion that the Germans had “made contributions of an unusual and fundamental nature” in the realms of equipment design and development, generators, microwave techniques and crystal structures. In a review of this book, Publisher's Weekly wrote, “Bower's revelations are individually shocking and cumulatively devastating . . . will appall readers.”

In a BBC news article on 21 November 2005 titled, “Project Paperclip – Dark side of the Moon” (5), Andrew Walker detailed how 60 years ago these imported German scientists provided the US with cutting-edge technology in which it still leads today. In addition to the items covered in Tom Bower's

book,

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Walker lists “supersonic rockets, nerve gas, jet aircraft, guided missiles, stealth technology and hardened armor” as just a few. Walker argues, as do most others, that Germany’s Horten Ho 229 was the first stealth aircraft, complete with radar-absorbing skin and single-wing shape, and that the US-based Northrop B-2 stealth bomber (at \$2 billion each) is virtually a clone of the German design from 1944.

After the uncounted tens of thousands of the most useful knowledge candidates had been transferred to the US, there was still an enormous remainder being maintained in these concentration camps – widely known as “Eisenhower’s Death Camps” – individuals who had been debriefed and for whom the Americans had no further need. I believe it was Michaels who noted there was at one point a plan by American General R. L. Walsh, known as the German “Urwald-Programm” or jungle program, which was a massive plan to scatter and resettle these Germans in small numbers as widely as possible anywhere and everywhere in the Third World, as one way to prevent Germany from ever again forming a critical mass of industrial knowledge. (6) In the end, those ‘debriefed and not especially valuable’ millions were either executed outright or starved to death, totaling some 12 million Germans, a large part of the content of Bacque’s “Other Losses”. (7) It should be noted, as Bacque has done, that the death by starvation of the many millions of German civilians was a planned and deliberate process. (8) (9)

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Notes

(1) The US military entered every country with a German corporate presence and claimed ownership of all German assets.

(2) Harper's Magazine, October, 1946. I would note here that I have seen several claims that this issue of Harper's is unavailable publicly in print form, that even in libraries or other collections that contain every issue of Harper's since inception, this one issue is missing. I was told this article is available online from Harper's, for a price, if you know the title and publication date. The issue is of course that there are few people alive who would be aware of the existence of this article and even fewer who could specify the precise title and date of publication.

(3) [The Great Patents Heist](#)

(4) [The Paperclip Conspiracy: The Hunt for the Nazi Scientists](#)

(5) [BBC: "Project Paperclip – Dark side of the Moon"](#)

(6) This was part of the Deep State's Morgenthau Plan, meant to complete the total destruction of Germany by permanently deindustrialising the country, to turn Germany into Europe's dairy farm and potato patch. The intent was to forever deprive the country of not only its best scientific minds, but also of this entire second and third tier of scientific intellectuals, technicians and skilled workers, to prevent a German attempt to rebuild itself after the war.

(7) Bacque was a popular Canadian author, his short stories, novels and articles appearing regularly in all the prominent media but, after publishing "Other Losses", he was blacklisted and destroyed in Canada. No newspaper or magazine would return his calls, and all publishers refused contact with him. He was excoriated in the US media as a fraud, even though his research was impeccably detailed and his book carried an introduction and testimony from prominent and high-ranking American military officers. Almost no one in North America is aware of his extraordinary historical discovery since his books have been virtually banned on the continent. By contrast, his many books on this subject have been a major hit in Europe, having been translated into I believe now 15 languages, documentary movies have been made of his discovery and he is widely recognised in Europe as a prominent and respected historian.

(8) It now seems that the popular photos we have all seen, of piles of emaciated dead bodies, were not of Jews killed by Germans (as we have been told) but of Germans killed by the Americans. An undetermined number of those incarcerated and killed were women, and more than a few were

children.

(9) The only shortage of food in Germany was caused by the Americans who forbade all external food shipments to Germany after the war, and it was widely announced that anyone attempting to smuggle food into the camps would be shot on sight.