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The Nazis Next Door

with Eric Lichtblau

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Speaker: Eric Lichtblau

Transcribed by: Rachel E Lieu

[Holocaust Living History Workshop](#)

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Time Transcription

00:03 [uctv / University of California Television / www.uctv.tv]

00:12 [Read Write Think Dream / The Library UC San Diego Channel /
www.uctv.tv/library-channel]

00:15 William Lerach: We're very lucky indeed, we're privileged, to have with us tonight Eric Lichtblau a distinguished journalist and author. After several years of investigative journalism at the *L.A. Times*, Eric moved on to the *New York Times* was their lead investigative journalist covering the [George W.] Bush Justice Department. Most recently he's moved on to Washington D.C. where he heads CNN's investigative journalistic unit and God knows he's got a lot to do right now. In 2006 Eric was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for exposing the Bush administration's NSA's illegal domestic wiretapping program and then wrote the highly acclaimed *Bush's Law: [The] Remaking American Justice* and just most recently he's written the *The Nazis Next Door: How America Became a Safe Home for Hitler's Men*. That's what brings us here tonight. The book is ever so timely, sometimes Deborah, it seems like the events of Nazism and that air is getting stale and old. It's 80 years ago. To me, recent events confirm it has lots of contemporary relevance. Our country today is ripped apart by a legal and political fight over whether refugees, victims of totalitarianism, can enter our country. We debate travel bans and extreme vetting and we'll see a Supreme Court case near along that will rival Korematsu. In this context let's remember, our nation refused to admit refugees attempting to flee Nazi totalitarianism before the war, condemning many of them to their deaths. And afterwards, we were ever so parsimonious in granting visas to the victims of the greatest human rights abuse in history but as Eric has exposed at the same time, somehow, top Nazis, well-known, were admitted to the United States. The perpetrators got in - the victims were excluded, exposing yet another baffling contradiction that plagues our democracy. So please, with me, welcome Eric Lichtblau. [Applause]

03:15 Eric Lichtblau: Bill [Lerach] and I did not consult about my talk and his remarks, but I swear, he must have done some sort of unconscious mind-meld because uh my mind is also on the Syrian refugee crisis um, and, and again I'm a little, I think Bill must have like come and swept my notes away when I wasn't looking and he sort of took the first part of my talk. But I'll give it anyway because it's because it's such an important topic. Um you know, when when I started doing the the research and writing for my book, now almost five years ago, there was no Syrian refugee crisis. You know, the civil war in Syria was, was just starting. Now we have, by the last count of the U.N. [United Nations] nearly five million displaced refugees in, in Syria, you know, the horrible images of, of children washed ashore, of chemical attacks from the Assad Regime. Just a few weeks ago my, my new employer CNN, where I moved last month as, as the head of the investigative team, had a, a

just horrible graphic report out of Syria from one of our foreign correspondents about the latest chemical attack where you can literally see people, you know, their lungs exploding, coughing their last breaths as as they die. And there's a lot of debate, I had just gotten to the, to the network when, when that was about to air. There was debate, do you, do you show photos like that, um, you know, on-air? And they made the decision, I think the proper one, that that was something people needed to know about. It wasn't just a faceless war crime, uh chemical attacks on on civilians, you know. These were people. You could literally see them, you know, gasping for their last breath and so that was a major report, which unfortunately did not, uh - not to bring this to current events as Bill might like - but it, unfortunately, got drowned out. About an hour after posted, the President [Trump] fired Jim Comey. So no one, so no one saw that report because everyone was talking about Jim Comey, to this day. And, uh, that a month later we're about to hear from Jim Comey tomorrow. So, but the Syrian refugee crisis is, it has really been on my mind since I, since I researched and wrote this book because there are such haunting parallels between, between the two.

05:24 Eric Lichtblau: Um, and you know it may seem strange, at first, it seemed like an odd parallel, you know, this guy's book is about the Nazis. You know, what, what does it have to do with with the survivors, um, or the victims of the Holocaust? As, as horrible as their, as their plight was. But the two really had everything to do with each other, I discovered in my research. Um, as many horrible things as I came across in interviewing survivors and, and Justice Department officials who were chasing Nazis and, and researching things in the archives - for all the horrible things I think the most galling to me was the treatment of, uh, of the survivors after the Holocaust, of the worst, um, uh, human rights crisis and, and, uh, refugee crisis to this day, until the current Syrian crisis. And to, you know, I realized in my research that to truly understand, you know, how maddeningly easy it was for, for Nazis - thousands of Nazis - to get into the United States after the war, you first have to understand how horribly difficult it was for thousands and thousands of the survivors to even get out of the very same concentration camps where they had been held. And, you know, we we think of the liberation of the camps. We just celebrated, uh what, the 70th anniversary a few years ago of the liberation the camps. There were ceremonies at Auschwitz, et cetera. And you know history remembers the liberation in, in sort of black and white reel-to-reel movies: the Russians coming from the east liberating Auschwitz, the Americans coming from the west liberating Dachau, the Brits coming, coming upon Bergen-Belsen and liberating Bergen-Belsen. You know, you can almost picture the gates of the camp swinging open and the survivors flooding out to some joyous reception. You know, like, like trapped coal miners who were climbing to safety, or a wrongly convicted prisoner walking free out of the prison gates after 25 years behind bars. That's at least how, how I as, as a generation born long after liberation sort of, sort of

thought of that before I, I started doing my research. The truth is it was nothing like that.

07:31 Eric Lichtblau: Um, it was this is sort of a, a, um a sepia image that we've created of the quote-unquote liberation of, of the camps. Um, you know, maybe some of us with longer memories remember the the difficulty that was dramatized in the, in the best-selling book *Exodus* by Leon Uris in 1958 uh, that told about the Jews getting to Palestine after the war and, and fighting so hard to get there because the British wouldn't let them in. But what history, I think, has really completely forgotten - at least for my generation and I think certainly for, for younger generations - um, was just how wretched the conditions were uh, for the people, the survivors, in these displaced person camps - the Jews, the gypsies, the homosexuals, the communists, the other persecuted persons who had, uh, who were put in the camps. And the euphemisms used for these for these displaced person camps, which of course were really death camps and slave labor camps. So indulge me for a minute, if you will, while I read just just a, a few sections from, um, from the opening section of my book because, I thought, that the treatment of the survivors again was so important and so overlooked in history and so central to understanding how the Nazis got here, um, that I made it the very first chapter of the book. Um, that, that was, to me, the the single most important theme of my research. First, first chapter is called *Liberation*.

08:57 Eric Lichtblau: [reading from his book, *The Nazis Next Door*] Spring, 1945, Föhrenwald Displaced Persons Camp, outside Munich. While the Nazis fled, their victims were left to languish. These were the lucky ones: hundreds of thousands of Jews, Catholics, Gays, Jehovah's Witnesses, Communists, Roma, and other quote-unquote parasites enslaved in Nazi concentration camps who, somehow, had managed to survive Hitler's genocidal killing machine. Yet even after Germany's defeat the survivors remained imprisoned for months in the same camps where the Nazis had first put them to rot. The names of their jailers had changed, with the dark Nazi swastikas now replaced by the bright-colored flags of the Allied victors flying above the camps, but the barbed-wire fences and armed guards still encircled the camps. They were in a post-war, post-war purgatory, living in horrific conditions that a high-level emissary of president Truman would compare to those imposed by the Nazis themselves. Jacob Biber, a Jew who survived the Nazi purge in the Ukraine, was among the masses confined to the American DP camp at Föhrenwald. Quote, we felt like so much surplus junk, Biber would write of his confinement, human garbage which the governments of the world wished would somehow go away. Many thousands of the survivors did not leave the Allied camps; some not for months, some not for years, some not at all. Thousands died from disease and maltresh, malnutrition even after Hitler's defeat. At Dachau, at Bergen-Belsen, and at dozens of DP camps like them, they remain jailed inside the walls that Hitler had erected. With the survivors surrounded by the stench of death and squalor, the liberating Allied forces led by General Dwight D.

Eisenhower would not allow them to leave. The world didn't know what to do with them

10:46 Eric Lichtblau: So when I was a researcher for about six months at the Holocaust Museum, I spoke with a researcher who specialized in Jewish music. This was a niche of hers. She looked at music that was that was performed and even originated by the Holocaust survivors in the camps, and she was doing a fellowship at the museum at the same time as I was. And I listened to her play recordings after the war of these heartbreaking Yiddish songs that were sung at the DP camps by the children and later recorded in New York City. Now my Yiddish is limited to, to two or three words but I'll try this in English. This was from one of the songs - where can I go? Who can answer me? Where can I go to when every door is locked? Now here's Jacob Biber again from Bergen-Belsen talking about the way they were treated months and even years after the war in those camps.

Eric Lichtblau: [reading from his book, *The Nazis Next Door*] A general malaise was growing as we realized how indifferent the world was to our tragedy, Biber wrote of his experience. Soon we began seeing men and women who had survived the worst tragedies imaginable during the war years suddenly killing themselves, often by hanging. Such events added to the news that Palestine remained closed to us, guarded by British soldiers who were turning away DPs by the thousands, this only added to our gloom.

12:15 Eric Lichtblau: Now things were so bad at the camps that word began to filter out across the Atlantic to Jewish groups in the United States, in late 1945 early 1946 about how horrible the conditions were. Politicians didn't want to believe it at first. This couldn't be true that we had just liberated these camps and people were dying from malnutrition and, and even violence, but the complaints grew so loud and so hard to ignore that President Truman had to finally appoint the Dean of the law school at Pennsylvania, University of Pennsylvania, Earl Harrison to go over and inspect the camps, to find out whether these complaints that were circling back to Washington could really be true or not. What he found should shock the conscience even today. As matters now stand, Harrison wrote to Truman in his final report, we appear to be treating the Jews as the Nazis treated them except that we do not exterminate them. How could this have happened? How could it be, that after fighting one of the worst genocidal killing machines in history, after vanquishing the enemy, that we could let their victims - up to 200,000 victims - literally starve to death in decrepit conditions in the same camps that the Nazis had put them? Well to answer that question I think you have to look unfortunately at the very real issue of antisemitism, and you also have to look at a man now regarded as a war hero. He was profiled in a book just a couple of years ago by Bill O'Reilly - George S. Patton. Patton, shown here on the right with General Eisenhower at a DP camp, touring the DP camp, was the commander of the U.S.

zone in post-war Germany. He ran the DP camps. He was a war hero, of course, old blood and guts, they called him. He was also, it turns out, a raving antisemite.

14:08 Eric Lichtblau: As I was doing my research at the Holocaust Museum, I came across the handwritten journal that was kept by General Patton. Listen to what he had to say in his journal after Earl Harrison sent that blistering report to Truman comparing the DP camps to the Nazi concentration camps. So after, uh the report for - to Truman came out from Harrison, talking about how horrible the conditions were, you would think that Patton might have, you know, perhaps done something to alleviate the suffering, the conditions, the the, the scarce food, the horrible living conditions, Jews who were literally bunked side by side with their Nazi captors. He didn't. He was furious. This is what he wrote in his journal, that handwritten journal.

14:53 Eric Lichtblau: [reading from his book, *The Nazis Next Door*] He wrote: "Harrison and his ilk believe that the Displaced Person is a human being, which he is not and this applies particularly to the Jews, who are lower than animals." Laying bare the rabid antisemitism that infected the American refugee effort, Patton complained of how the Jews in one DP camp with quote no sense of human relationships would defecate on the floors and live in filthy, in filth like lazy locusts. He told of taking General Eisenhower, seen here, to tour a makeshift synagogue that the Jews in the camp had set up to celebrate the holy day of Yom Kippur. "We entered the synagogue which was packed with the greatest stinking mass of humanity I have ever seen," Patton wrote. This was Eisenhower's first glimpse of the DPs, Patton said, so it was all new to him. Quote, of course, I have seen them since the beginning and marvel that beings alleged to be made in the form of God can look the way they do or act the way they act.

15:54 Eric Lichtblau: Patton's antisemitism infected the operations of the DP camps and it was made worse by the preferential treatment that Patton gave to the German POWs, the Nazis who we had just defeated. He got in hot water in fact with General Eisenhower for using Nazi officers as administrators to run these same DP camps. Lording over the Jews, giving them orders despite Eisen, Eisenhower's own orders to denazify these U.S.-controlled zones. But, Patton said, if you need these men, use them and don't worry about anything else. And his officers did just that. I tell the story in my book of General Patton visiting one of the DP camps, where some of the German's famed scientists and rocket engineers were being held. It's a telling scene that I came across in some military documents that I got through the Freedom of Information Act. At the German DP camp, General Patton went looking for one of the more prominent prisoners General Walter Dornberger who ran the Nazi's famous V-2 rocket program and was the boss of the even more famous Wernher von Braun. Patton walked up to him and said, are you that guy who was in charge of the development of the V-2 rockets? Jawohl Herr General, [Yes, absolutely, Mr. General] the imprisoned Dornberger answered. Patton pulled

three cigars from his pocket and handed them to the Nazi General. My congratulations, Patton said, I couldn't have done it.

Eric Lichtblau: So what did the disgraceful treatment of the Jews in the DP camps after the war have to do with the Nazis who actually made it into America? That's what my book was mostly about after all. Well, the treatment of the survivors and the, and the flight of the Nazis had everything to do with one another and it came down unfortunately to basic math. Visas to America were a precious commodity in those early months and years with some seven million people left stateless in Europe after the war, even more than the five million Syrians today, only forty thousand visas were issued in the first three years after the war and the immigration policies were stacked against the Jews in trying to get those precious few. This is what a senate lawyer wrote when he was trying to limit the number of survivors allowed into America, the Jews quote do not desire to work but expect to be cared for. Those visas were a golden ticket out and for every Jew who was kept in the brutal camps and denied an exit to America, that meant one more visa available for someone else. In those early years after the war, fully 40 percent of all the visas in America went, by design, to refugees from the Baltics - the so-called captive States that have been occupied by the Nazis during the war. Hundreds of thousands of Lithuanians, Estonians, and Latvians came. They were, as one policymaker put it, quote of good stock and good breeding.

18:37 Eric Lichtblau: Now, no doubt, the vast majority of those hundreds of thousands were in fact, were in fact refugees who had just escaped one tyrannical, uh, tyrannical occupying force the Nazis, and were looking to come to America as a place of refuge, the the beacon of light that we had always promised to be. And so, those, those Baltic refugees came but along - with them came thousands of Nazi collaborators, not scientists, not Wernher von Braun types, but just your everyday refugees who happen to be high-level Nazi collaborators. They came to America in Queens, in Boston, in Baltimore, in Washington, in Chicago, in Los Angeles, here in San Diego. As Jacob Reimer and Karl Linnaas showed, this was not hard to do. You identified yourself as a POW during the war, or a farmer, or a civil servant, or you simply put down a fake name. Andrija Artukovic got into America using an alias and lived in Southern California, up by Seal Beach, for more than 30 years before anyone questioned his identity. If he'd used his real name immigration officials might have realized that Andrija Artukovic was a top, top cabinet minister in Nazi-occupied Croatia and he was the man who signed the racist and antisemitic decree, decrees rounding up hundreds of thousands of Jews, Serbs, and Romas. But, of course, they didn't look and he was let in with his brother and lived a quiet life for years and years before any scrutiny fell upon him. There was little chance of getting caught since the post-war refugee system in Europe was so overwhelmed and so inept. Think of the flawed rollout a few years ago of Obamacare or some other government bureaucratic, uh, bureaucratic, um, falling out and, and, you'll imagine, uh, the in, the intense difficulties faced by, oh thank

you, the intense difficulties faced by the Allies in trying to, trying to find places to go even for those refugees who were ultimately granted visas.

20:41 Eric Lichtblau: So thousands of Nazis came in quietly through this back door, disguised simply as, several as, as someone else. Then there were several, several other thousand who came in through the front door, essentially invited by the US [United States] government by the Pentagon, the CIA [Central Intelligence Agency], and the FBI [Federal Bureau of Investigation]. I mentioned General Dornberger, the head of the Nazi's V-2 program. He and some 1,600 Nazi scientists came to America after the war in a secret program called, Program Paperclip. It was all about the Cold War, and the idea was to keep pace with the Soviet scientists. Officially the scientists we brought over couldn't allow, weren't allowed to be quote-unquote ardent Nazis, but this was a fig leaf, as the name suggests. In fact, these were high-ranking Nazi officials often involved in building rockets on the backs of slave laborers. In fact, I, I was just honored to meet, uh, the wife of one of the men who had worked at, uh, at [Mittelbau] Dora and she was telling me his, his story and it's, it's an honor to hear that. Um, so Dora, Walter Dornberger, and Wernher von Braun they built Hitler's rockets at a camp called Dora Mittelwerks in Nordhausen. They didn't build the rockets themselves, of course, the slave laborers did that. Most of the prisoners were POWs, not Jews surprisingly, for the most part, but French, French, Russian, Pole, and others, and the Nazis literally worked them to death building their rocket ships. The more rockets that Hitler wanted for bombing London and Antwerp and the faster he wanted them, the more prisoners died doing it. Some 10,000 slave laborers are estimated to have died there of disease, malnutrition, exhaustion, and worse. If workers didn't perform their tasks or were suspected of trying to sabotage the rockets, they faced the worst fate of all. They were hanged from a giant construction crane in the middle of the factory. Other workers were made to watch, as a lesson to them of what would happen if they didn't follow orders. This was the place that these quote-unquote non-ardent Nazis ran before they came to America and set up shop in Alabama. Unlike the discovery of Dachau and other camps, Americans didn't hear much about the liberation of Nordhouse and the slave labor factory and I suspect that was by design. U.S. military officials were not anxious to let the Soviets or Americans know that they were raiding the place, not only of its hardware, parts, and blueprints but of its scientists and engineers as well.

23:12 Eric Lichtblau: Let me show you one of the the Nazi scientists who ran Nordhausen. This is a man by the name of Arthur Rudolph. He was the head of rocket production at Nordhausen and he reported directly to Wernher von Braun. He came to the U.S. [United States] with the other paper clip scientists and became one of the top engineers in the Saturn rocket, Space Program. Decades later, in the 1980s, prosecutors confronted him about what had really happened under his watch at the factory at Nordhausen. Rudolph said he just built rockets. The prisoners, as far as he knew, were well treated, he said with a straight face.

He said he was just doing his job. Here's another scientist from Nazi Germany Hubertus Strughold. He was one of the doctors in the paper clip program. You probably have not heard about the doctors. You might have heard a little bit about the rocket scientists, Wernher von Braun of course being the most famous. But the doctors were equally important to the operation and equally grotesque in the means that they use to carry out their practice. There were three dozen doctors brought just to San Antonio um, in late 1945 led by this man Dr. Hubertus Strughold. What Wernher von Braun was to rocket scientists, Strughold was to space medicine. He was a revered scientist in Texas - the father of space medicine - they called him. His job was to keep pilots alive in space, U.S. pilots, in the changing atmosphere and he was doing it long before he got to Texas. In Germany, he and the Nazi doctors under him, ran and oversaw grisly medical experiments on prisoners in Dachau and elsewhere, even children, to see what the body could withstand in space and in high altitudes. They would send children into a flight simulator, not unlike the one you see with him here in Texas, and subject them to sudden, violent changes in altitude. Some died, many became sickened, and endured incredible pain. Other prisoners were made to drink putrid seawater until they vomited, or died. The idea was to see during the war how the Nazis could keep their own pilots alive once they crash into the sea. Many of them were dying from drinking the putrid seawater. They wanted to see how they could purify it, so they did horrible human experiments on those prisoners at Dachau to see how they could keep them alive. The ones that died, those were the guinea pigs.

25:42 Eric Lichtblau: Again, many of these prisoners died, all in the name of Nazi scientists. You could make the case, I suppose, and some have that morality aside, the scientific expertise that the Nazis brought to America outweighed the obvious baggage they brought with them. If it wasn't for von Braun's work on jet propulsion and Strughold's theories on space medicine the US might never have landed on the moon in 1969, ahead of the Russians. This is true enough certainly and, immoral or not, the recruitment of the Nazi spies brought the United States clear technological arguments, uh, technological breakthroughs the arguments go. But there's another group of hundreds of Nazis who are also aided and protected by the US government and you can't even make the - well it was worth it - argument with this group. They are, in my mind, the most insidious group of all the refugee, of all the Nazi refugees who got into America. These were the Nazi spies used by the CIA the FBI and U.S. Intelligence agencies as anti-Soviet assets in Europe, the Middle East, Latin America, and, yes, here inside the United States itself. The thinking was that no one hated the Soviets more than the Nazis and the United States needed to exploit their technological advantage. This was the thinking of people like J. Edgar Hoover at the FBI and here you see Allen Dulles at the, at what was originally the OSS [Office of Strategic Services], who you see here with, with President Kennedy. Dulles wanted to put the Nazis' hatred

of the Soviets to use by making them Cold War spies informants. Dulles, in fact, started dealing with the Nazis even before the war was over. I tell the story in the book of how Dulles met a few months before the end of the War with a Nazi general Karl Wolff, who you see here with Himmler, who was a top SS man to Himmler, his chief of staff in fact at one point and a key architect in designing the train and the railway system that would take millions to their deaths. Before the War was over, Dulles came up with a secret plan to try and infiltrate Nazis and use them as spies against the Soviets and he recruited Karl Wolff, the man you see here. In fact, they met at a secret meeting about four months before the end of the War, when it was clear already to the Nazis that they were going to lose and they were looking to save their own scalp.

28:06 Eric Lichtblau: They had a meeting in Zurich and they shared a bottle of scotch by the fireplace. Dulles would later write in secret cables that Wolff and his deputies in the Nazi party were quote-unquote moderate Nazis - that's his word - who could help America and he protected Wolff from war crimes charges. For years after the war, he lived a, a gilded life for a while in Bavaria in what was supposedly a P.O.W. camp. But he had use of his own boat; they even let him carry his own gun, and he complained, in fact, to Dulles years later that he had lost all his savings during the War and he was entitled to reparations - he might have wanted to see Bill if he was, uh, if he was so in the mood - from the United States, United States for his poor treatment given all the help he had given them. And ironically, it was only the Germans, years later in the 1960s, who prosecuted Wolff for war crimes, not the United States which had used him as a spy, which had paid him thousands and thousands of dollars, and which had protected him from war crimes charges at Nuremberg. Now, in, in those years there were, at least by my count, a thousand Nazi spies working for America in the decades after the war, doing everything from monitoring Soviet rail lines in Eastern Europe, to giving briefings to top CIA officials in Washington. So, unlike the technology that von Braun and Nazi engineers brought to America, much of the information that these Nazi spies were giving us, and we were paying them for, turned out to be essentially worthless. I spent weeks at the National Archives in in College Park, Maryland going through these declassified intelligence files, um, on the Nazi spies and their value to the U.S. was practically non-existent. It should surprise no one that the ex-Nazis, once they went to work for the United States, turned out to be liars, thieves, and drunks.

30:04 Eric Lichtblau: Some, in fact, were Soviet double agents, believe it or not, who were paid by us and then again by the Soviets to peddle back disinformation to us into the 1950s and 1960s and this was a pattern that continued in the 1970s. I, I came across documents from the 1980s and 1990s indicating that the CIA had sent material to Congress covering up its own tracks in using these spies. Some of them were still alive and living in, in Washington and elsewhere in those years and the Justice Department had begun going after them - as I'll talk about - and the CIA did everything it could to whitewash their records and distance themselves

from these men into the 1990s. So here's Otto von Bolschwing. He was a CIA spy in the 1950s. Though, not a very good one. He was once on a train in Austria, in 1953, and he lost a suitcase that was filled with top secret documents that he was supposed to deliver for the United States to another covert agent. He got his own satchel mixed up with another passengers and he opened the bag when he got to Hamburg and he realized that, instead of spy photos and top secret documents, there were pajamas and a shaving kit. Now he didn't get fired, instead, the CIA simply relocated him and his family to New York as what they called a quote-unquote reward for his CIA service and in view of the innocuousness of his Nazi war crimes. Now, when we say innocuousness, that's certainly an odd choice of words because von Bolschwing was a top aide to this man, Adolf Eichmann. This was his boss. He was in fact credited, or more accurately blamed, for coming up with the white papers that ultimately became the final solution.

31:49 Eric Lichtblau: He was an early Nazi loyalist, as both an operative, a propagandist, and almost an academic inspiration who wrote of the Jews as a, as a second-class citizenry. For a time, he talked of forcing them out of Germany into Palestine before the start of the actual Holocaust. But once, once more severe and, and grotesque methods were developed, he was at the front of the line in proposing all sorts of, of means of making the lives of the Jews - as he, as he put it in one paper - as miserable as humanly possible. Now in one paper, he talked of what he called the Jewish problem, and he said that if Germany was to finally get rid of its Jewish problem it needed to resort to extreme means, every means possible, to make the lives of the Jews as uncomfortable and miserable that they would either be forced to leave or would simply, would simply die through grotesque means. Now there are, there are other stories, um, throughout the book of, uh, of Nazis who came to America, who lived out their lives. I'll tell you one more and then we can probably go on to questions, because yeah, I think we're right about at time. So one other one, whose story I found just remarkably grotesque, was this man Aleksandras Lileikis. But Aleksandras Lileikis was, for years, an encyclopedia salesman in Massachusetts. You see his, his naturalization photo on the right looks like a very nice man. He was Lithuanian. He had contacts throughout the Lithuanian community in Massachusetts and elsewhere, and he sold encyclopedias in Lithuanian to fellow émigrés and lived a quiet, and fairly unremarkable life in, in Worcester, Massachusetts, in, in central, uh, central Massachusetts.

33:47 Eric Lichtblau: Now, what wasn't said at that time, was what he had done in Lithuania while he was a top collaborator for the Nazis. He was, in effect, the police chief of, uh, in Lithuania who was responsible for keeping law order, which of course was, was a euphemism then and perhaps now - I won't get into that - for suppressing minorities, mostly Jews, but other groups too. And when the Nazis invaded Lithuania in 1938, you see him there on the left in his police uniform, he was the one who was eager to round up thousands and thousands of Jews and essentially sign their death warrants by sending them to jails, and then turning

them over to the Gestapo, or to the Einsatzgruppen, or to other Nazi units. And many of them would ultimately be taken, and be marched to their deaths, in a death pit that was called Panerai, where they were simply gunned down. This was in the years before the gas chambers, before the Nazis had developed their even more sophisticated means. They were told that they were just being relocated, and instead, thousands and thousands of Jews, with Lileikis's signature on their warrants, were marched to their deaths. And the Lileikis lived with no, no remorse, as far as I could tell, in his in his file. I talked to his family, um and he was one of the most recent ones, in fact, to be prosecuted by the United States, after we finally, um, started taking our Nazi problem seriously.

35:26 Eric Lichtblau: That happened in the 1980s, after a number of Jewish groups, and members of Congress, including Elizabeth Holtzman, said wait a second - we have Nazis living here in America, Nazi refugees, high-level Nazis, and no one is doing anything about it? And at first, this met with sort of disbelief. Sort of like the the horrible conditions the DP camps, you can't believe that. There aren't Nazis in America, um, and the ones that we know about Wernher von Braun down in Huntsville, Alabama or Arthur Rudolph or Hubertus Strughold in San Antonio, they weren't ardent Nazis. They were okay. They, you didn't need to worry about them, but under pressure from Congress, and Holtzman, and others, and Jewish groups, Congress finally, in 1979, approved what became an incredibly important measure to create what was called the Office of Special Investigations within the Justice Department and finally take our Nazi problem seriously. And they open hundreds and hundreds of investigations. Remember, this is, this is now what, uh, 35 years after the War. These were men, who were at that point, in their, many of them in their late 50s, 60s, some in their early 70s. There were already people at that stage, at that point, on the other side of this debate. Pat Buchanan was probably the most vocal among them, saying these guys are too old, this was so long ago, let it go, what are we doing creating a whole Nazi-hunting unit within the Justice Department. And this became a furious political issue during the Reagan Administration with Pat Buchanan leading the way, um, and in fact there were, there were legal, um, there were endless years of litigation before the Justice Department was finally allowed to begin deporting, first denaturalizing and then deporting people like Lileikis.

37:14 Eric Lichtblau: But, proving that they were Nazis was only half the problem because what you had at the same time was that you needed countries that were willing to accept them, and this is true today too with deportations, that you can say you're going to kick them out but until a country says they're going to accept them you, they are basically stateless and remain in the United States. In fact um, there is uh, as far as anyone knows, one gentleman - I use the word loosely - living up in Queens who I met who has been denaturalized but no one will take him back, Germany or any other country. And he's been living on the second floor of sort of a ramshackle apartment in Queens for eight years now and he will probably

die there. He was 93 years old and he was he was a guard at Bergen-Belsen who, like all the others, shows no remorse, or no sign of, of contrition over their role but, um, has, has positioned himself as the victim of, of political persecution. And as a guard, he was just doing what he was doing. That was the message we heard from the Nazis over and over again. This was war and we did what we had to do. I took my orders. I did my job. In fact, the deeper you look the more you, the more you realize just how hollow those explanations were because these were men like Alexander Lalakis or Arthur Rudolph or even Wernher von Braun, who really gleefully and eagerly, um, executed their orders - in some cases even gave the orders - in collaboration with the Nazis, wearing the Nazi uniform. And to say that they were just doing their job is to really to, to hold up to ridicule the plight of millions of Holocaust victims. [Applause] Thank you.

39:10 Erich Lichtblau: Good evening. Thank you. One of the things I found so striking when reading your book, was our Government's willingness to not just overlook but to hide evil in the name of fighting Communism. And I'm wondering, do you see any dangers of our government doing the similar things in the name of fighting terrorism?

39:29 Eric Lichtblau: I, I have thought about that and, and clever segway to try and get me to talk about current political events, which I'm sure Bill will like. Well, first of all, I need to say that, the questioner and I just met, although we've known each other for years online because his name is Erich Lichtblau. And so, we've never met he came down just for this talk - although his his first name is e-r-i-c-h - so we sometimes get each other's emails and, and I think he's claimed credit for some of my stories. He's, he's a lawyer and I've tried to claim some of his judgments, but that hasn't, hasn't worked out. So, I got to meet the other Erich Lichtblau for the first time tonight. Uh, so you know, are we doing this in the name of terrorism? I, I fear that that we'll find out in, in 10 or 20 years that that we have done that, um, that certainly we know that there are, um, well the last 10 or 12 years Al Qaeda operatives that we have developed as informants you know with horrible hideous pasts in, in the Middle East mainly, ISIS. That is probably going on now, you know, we, we just don't, we just don't know about it. Um, and I think there is, there is certainly this mindset you know, going back to, to Allan Dulles, you know, that if you are fighting the enemy - whether, whether it's, whether it's the Soviets after the war in the Cold War or the war on terror - that sometimes you get your hands dirty and you need to, to, um, you know, have some unsavory cohorts to win the war. And there's certainly some truth to that. Uh, the lengths that that they went to in, in the Cold War with the Nazis, I, I found grotesque. And, and to be honest, um, completely, as, as I said in my remarks, completely unhelpful in the Cold War. Um, sometimes counterproductive. So, um, yeah sometimes you have to get in bed with bad guys. But, you know boy, I hope that we, I hope that someone's not writing a book like this one in in 10 or 20 years about guys we're using now from in the War on Terror.

41:32 Erich Lichtblau: Thank you.

41:33 Eric Lichtblau: Thank you.

41:34 Speaker 1: So, I have a question.

41:35 Eric Lichtblau: Yes.

41:37 Speaker 1: You talked at the beginning of the book about the the similarities you see within the Syria the Syrian refugees and the Jewish refugees.

41:42 Eric Lichtblau: Yes.

41:43 Speaker 1: So, I'm going to play Devil's advocate with you for a second.

41:46 Eric Lichtblau: Sure, go for it.

41:47 Speaker 1: Okay, um, you were talking also about the the the Balkan States and how there was - it was very easy for people, the Nazis, and the people in the Croatia, and Lithuania - for them to sneak in.

42:01 Eric Lichtblau: Hundreds of thousands, not even sneaking. I mean, you know, get get visas because we...

42:05 Speaker 1: Right.

42:06 Eric Lichtblau: We wanted them the Nazis to sneak in among them.

42:08 Speaker 1: So, don't you think that, at the same time, it's easy for ISIS people and people like that to sneak in within the refugees of the Syrians at the same time that, that they're doing that?

42:20 Eric Lichtblau: That, that is the fear. Sure, I mean, you know that's what we're going through now with the litigation over the Muslim, Muslim ban.

42:27 Speaker 1: As a Devil's advocate, I'm not saying -

42:30 Eric Lichtblau: No, no I - look that's that is a legitimate fear, um, a legitimate concern. Uh, you know, we have all sorts of vetting measures. The reality, I think, is that that, that, um, has hardly ever happened. In the first place, for all you know, we've had a whole string of terror attacks in in Europe, unfortunately. We've had going back what a year and a half or so here. We've had Orlando, and San Bernardino, um, and, uh, Times Square, and a few others. Not as bad as Europe lately, knock on wood but almost none of those attacks were carried out by Syrian refugees. I don't have the data at my fingertips but there George Washington University has has a good model on this and, and, um, uh, Fordham University also has studied it. I mean it's, it's the overwhelming majority of the, of the

terrorists - no, no. It's a legitimate - no look - none of us none of us want, you know, the ISIS operative to get in as a Syrian refugee.

42:29 Speaker 1: I'm not talking here. I'm just thinking all over Europe and -

43:31 Erich Lichtblau: Sure, sure and that's why we've, that that's a main - if not the main - reason that we've seen, you know, Brexit and what's going on in Europe with harsh crackdowns. There is a, an understandable fear. Bombs go off and we get scared. That's human nature. And what do we do to stop it? Unfortunately, the reality is that many of these - almost all of these cases - again I don't have the data my fingertips in both the US and Europe have been, you know, this breed of homegrown terrorism who are either, either born in the United States.

44:03 Speaker 1: Or second generation.

44:05 Eric Lichtblau: Yeah, or, or have come here at a young age. You know, these aren't the guys at a, at a displaced persons camp right now in Turkey trying to get out of Syria because, first of all, they're not getting in at all. I mean, you know, if you remember, what, a year or two ago, um, Obama proposed allowing 10,000 which, which seems like, you know, a drop in the bucket obviously when you're talking about millions of refugees. And even that didn't go through. That was blocked by Congress because of the fear and and maybe some legitimate some Islamophobia-driven that -

44:39 Speaker 1: It's not, I hear rumblings in the -

44:42 Eric Lichtblau: No, no, no, no no - you ask, you ask a real and legitimate question. Yes and I think everyone worries about that. I think certainly, are there those in Washington, where I work, who have fanned the flames, you know, for political ends? You know, yes. I, I think the answer's obvious - that yes that, that, that they have made that fear into much more than it is in in reality, in terms of the danger. Yes.

45:06 Speaker 1: Of course they have. Yes.

45:08 Eric Lichtblau: Yeah, so but that's an excellent question, thank you.

45:13 Speaker 2: You know I find your discussion of the impact of the Cold War and anti-communism on what happened very interesting. When we brought the lawsuits for the victims of the slave-enforced labor situation against the big German corporations like BMW, Volkswagen, Daimler-Benz, Bayer, and the others, we discovered that when the war ended many of the big executives and directors were imprisoned in Germany initially and were going to be prosecuted and there was going to be restitution made to a lot of the workers. And the Cold War just overwhelmed all of that. There was a need to re-industrialize and strengthen Germany and a lot of these very perpetrators, they not only didn't suffer any

penalty, they were put back in those corporations and led big respectable lives. So, it's part of your same narrative.

46:12 Eric Lichtblau: Yes, well, and, and along those lines, the irony is that, that some of the first real prosecutions came in the late 1960s, and early [19]70s by the East Germans - by the communists. You know, the bad guys, the enemies. And they went after - obviously Nuremberg, immediately after the war, was the huge one - but then there was a lag of, of 20, 25 years when really nothing was done against any of these perpetrators who had gotten away. They went to Argentina or Bolivia or the United States and then the East Germans went after a bunch of them on the the business side. People who had financed, um, you know, the death centers - the the operatives, etc. And that was seen by the U.S. as just sort of political, um, political persecution because these were the communists going after the anti-communists, whenever. And, and even then in the 1970s and [19]80s, when the U.S. started finally going after some of these guys, that was inevitably the offense, was that these were being, these people were people being politically persecuted because they were anti-communist and, and, not really, not really Nazis.

47:17 Eric Lichtblau: So the, the Cold War politics hung over, you know, really hung over all, all of this for years. In fact, uh, the the East Germans, um, considered prosecuting Wernher von Braun. And on the eve of the moon landing in 1969, he had to give an affidavit. The East Germans had gotten, had subpoenaed him because they wanted to know what did you do at that, at that, uh, rocket slave-labor factory at, uh, at Nordhausen, um, with, uh, with, with Arthur Rudolph. This is Arthur Rudolph who ran the, the program at the, uh, the V-2 factory - the slave-labor camp. And they wanted to talk to von Braun because von Braun had been there, had toured the site over and over again. He was the guy, you know, von Braun, on the one hand - for those of you all don't remember, was on Sunday mornings on Disney as the man who was going to take us to the Mars. He was this dashing, good-looking man. Do I have a photo of Von Braun? I guess I don't have von Braun. You know, who, who talked about taking us to space. But in 1969, just as we were about to land on the moon, the the East Germans improbably got the authority to subpoena him and force him to talk about what he knew. And the U.S. fought this. They did not want their star scientists subjected to this kind of scrutiny and they managed to avoid making him go to, to, uh, to East Germany - which is I think where they originally wanted to do it. Instead, he did in New Orleans. That was considered the safe ground. That was the safe haven and so, of course, he said you know I knew nothing. That's always the defense.

48:43 Eric Lichtblau: In closing, you know, I don't want to leave, um, I don't want to leave someone out of the, uh, out of my story because I have so many villains. But one of my heroes was this guy Chuck Allen who I'd never heard of before I started my, my research. And I, I really found him an inspiration. He was a left-wing journalist in the 1960s. That's not why he is - the left-wing part is not why he is inspiration - I

don't want you to get the wrong idea. Uh, but he was writing about Nazis in our midst - you see right there in the headline - way before anyone else even knew it was a thing. In the early 1960s, he produced this 42-page pamphlet for, for several left-wing publications, communist publications, Jewish publications, naming names. He named a cardinal in Chicago who had banned the Jews in, um, I believe in Czechoslovakia. You know, he, he had essentially dossiers. He had war crimes files from Nuremberg and was not only a journalist but, but an activist.

49:51 Eric Lichtblau: You can see on the right, there is a poster from a rally that he helped organize in 1963. There were three of them, one was in Brooklyn, I believe, one was in LA [Los Angeles], and this one maybe Chicago. Um, and he led the rallying cry, and not only didn't it do any good - maybe he's a hero - but he's sort of a Don Quixote hero if you remember your literature who was, who was, kind of tilting at windmills. He not only didn't have much traction or success in drawing any attention to this problem, but the thanks he got from the US government was that J. Edgar Hoover and the FBI wiretapped him and followed him for years because they believed he was a communist plant since a lot of the information he was getting was coming from Soviet-side files. A lot of the worst, the worst atrocities happened in what became parts, parts of what became the Soviet Union. Those files were behind the Iron Curtain and he was able to get those files. And, of course, the U.S., people in the U.S. always say, oh those are forged. That's just the communists, and he would find ways to document them and authenticate them. But the U.S., you know, had a secret, uh, espionage warrant out on him and made his life miserable for most of the the 1960s and the 1970s. But, I think, without him, there never would have been actions in Congress at the Justice Department throughout the country in the 1980s. He basically lit the, lit the fuse for that and it took, took a while to get there. But, I think, it was in large part thanks to, thanks to Chuck Allen that there finally was some, some justice and, and some sense of morality. He he died, uh, in the 1990s, never had any real fame or recognition. You know, in left-wing circles he was known - oh yeah Chuck Allen, he's that digger - you know he got all that stuff - but most people just sort of ignored him. So, the FBI left him alone by the end of his life, so I guess that was a good thing. So. Thank you very much.

52:04 [The Nazis Next Door / June 7, 2017]

52:11 [Featuring / Eric Lichtblau / Author, / "The Nazis Next Door: / How America Became a Safe Haven for Hitler's Men"]

52:16 [Presented by / The Holocaust Living History Workshop / Deborah Hertz, PhD / Director, the Jewish Studies Program / UC San Diego / Susanne Hillman / Program Coordinator / The Holocaust Living History Workshop]

52:22 [UC San Diego Library / The Audrey Geisel University Librarian / Brian E.C. Schottlaender / Director of Communications and Outreach / Dolores Davies]

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