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Project Paperclip,

German Scientists and the Cold War

Clarence G. Lasby, Atheneum, 1971

At the close of World War II, Premier Joseph Stalin was outraged to learn that his soldiers hadn't captured even one of the foremost German rocket experts. "This is absolutely intolerable," he complained to one of his generals. "We defeated German armies; we occupied Berlin and Peenemünde; but the Americans got the rocket engineers. What could be more revolting and inexcusable! How and why was this allowed to happen?" The answer to Stalin's question is the subject of *Project Paperclip*.

Amidst the chaos of the collapsing Third Reich, a host of American Intelligence teams competed with their counterparts from England, France, and Russia in a race for "intellectual reparations"—including the roundup of German scientific experts. The United States acquired 642 of them. The resulting program, code-named "Project Paperclip," made only faltering headway which civilian and military authorities deliberated for seven years over the necessity, legality, morality, and means of importing and exploiting their former enemies. Not until 1958 did Project Paperclip reach fulfillment, when Dr. Wernher von Braun and his rocket team placed in orbit the first American satellite, Explorer I.

For his definitive study, Professor Lasby interviewed and corresponded with more than 200 participants in Project Paperclip, and studied thousands of classified documents in the secret files of the Departments of the Army, Air Force, Navy, and Commerce. The result is a detailed coverage of one aspect of postwar history that has long required careful definition—an account that is as compelling as it is comprehensive.

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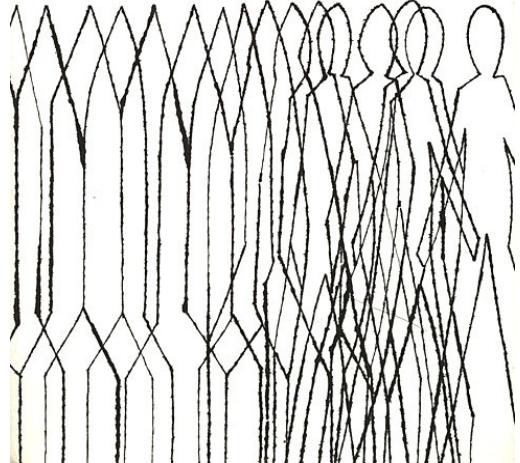
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By far the most important group of displaced persons were the V-2 experts from Peenemünde. In 1932 a young artillery captain, Walter Dornberger, had recruited an even younger scientist, Dr. Wernher von Braun, to experiment on military rockets for the German Army. During the 1930's the two directed an expanding team of scientists in the development of a series of rockets, beginning with the A-1, a short projectile weighing 330 pounds, and culminating in the A-4 (V-2), a 50-foot-long, 13-ton projectile which seemed to be the ultimate in artillery weapons. After Germany went to war, they assembled upwards of 200,000 people for their project at the world's most advanced experimental station on the Baltic seacoast, and continued to perfect the A-4 through 65,000 modifications. But the war bedeviled their work. Shortly after the British raid of August 1943, Professor Albert Speer, Reichminister for Munitions and War Production, met with General Dornberger to prepare for the dispersion of functions throughout the

Project Paperclip

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BY CLARENCE G. LASBY



Reich. The main assembly facilities went to a network of tunnels in the Harz Mountains in central Germany near the small town of Nordhausen. On New Year's Day 1944, with the benefit of ten thousand slave laborers and convicts under the control of the S.S., the Central Works produced its first three perfected V-2's.

At the end of January 1945, more than four thousand personnel still remained at Peenemünde, and due to the approach of the Russians, S.S. General Hans Kammler ordered their evacuation to the Harz Mountains. Kammler, brutal and treacherous, was an engineer who had to his credit the construction of numerous concentration camps, including Auschwitz, and had served as the dedicated tool of Heinrich Himmler to win control of all armaments programs. He was responsible for injecting slave labor into the rocket program; he was instrumental in the arrest of von Braun* for failing to make a clear distinction between space travel and weapons development; and, by virtue of sinister infiltration, he finally gained control of the secret weapons projects. His order to disperse was one of the few that met with the approval of von Braun and his staff; their preference, bolstered by the tales of Russian brutality told by the melancholy parade of refugees, was to surrender when necessary to the British or the Americans. General Dornberger quickly moved his headquarters to the village of Bad Sachsa; Dr. Kurt Debus, director of the test stands, took his team to Cuxhaven on the North Sea; and during February the entire organization moved with its documents and equipment to the cotton-mill town of Bleicherode, twelve miles from Nordhausen.

*In March 1944 the Gestapo learned that von Braun had expressed in public a defeatist attitude about Germany's chances in the war, and a desire to design a spaceship rather than a weapon. Voracious in their demand for control of the V-2 program, the S.S. leaders used this information, together with a trumped-up charge that von Braun had Communist leanings, to imprison him for two weeks in a Gestapo cell in Stettin.

Under the code-name "Mittlebau Construction Company," the rocket experts made an attempt to install their laboratory equipment and continue their work, but conditions allowed for little more than meetings and discussions. Even those ended on April 1; in response to a rumor that American tanks were in the vicinity, Kammler ordered Dornberger and von Braun to hide the technical data and move with 450 of the best personnel to Bavaria. Von Braun entrusted the documents to an aide, Dieter Huzel, who buried them in an abandoned mine shaft in the mountains. Fearing extinction from the S.S. guards, most of the scientists scattered to nearby villages. Von Braun joined Dornberger at Oberjoch near the Adolf Hitler Pass, and on the rainy afternoon of May 2, the two leaders surrendered with five of their associates—Magnus von Braun, Hans Lindenberg, Bernhard Tessmann, Dr. Herbert Axster, and Dieter Huzel—to American authorities near Reutte.²⁰

During the next several weeks, the Americans assembled four hundred Peenemünde personnel for interrogation at the beautiful ski resort of Garmisch-Partenkirchen. After a preliminary interview, approximately half of them—designated by von Braun as of lesser importance—were released and returned to their homes. The others remained in detention for several months. The AAF officer in command, Lieutenant Colonel John O'Mara, provided them with technical lectures and an excellent library; the captives formed orchestral and theatrical groups for their own amusement; and numerous teams conducted

investigations. In view of the conditions, the questioning was necessarily brief and usually disorganized, but the Germans were noticeably eager to discuss their achievements. They spoke not only of the V-2, but of many other projects, some only concepts on the drawing board, others in the test stage. They mentioned the tiny rocket Taifun, only 75 inches long, designed for massive use against aerial targets, and the A9/10, a two-stage intercontinental ballistic missile which would reach New York from western France. They talked about their role in the development of the anti-aircraft missiles—the Schmetterling, a subsonic weapon launched by two auxiliary rockets; the Rheintochter, a two-stage missile using solid fuel for the take-off and liquid fuel for flight; and the Enzian, propelled by a 3,530-pound-thrust Walter engine to an operational height of 8 1/2 miles. They described a test in 1942 in which they fired rockets from a U-boat at a depth of 40 feet, and a more recent and very secret project to attack England and the United States with V-2's launched from a floating container behind a submarine. And they told of more wondrous possibilities for the future—a manned earth satellite, an observation platform in outer space, weather control by a space mirror, and a moon rocket.²¹

Meanwhile, Navy Lieutenant Commander Maurice Biot captured the former Peenemiinde wind tunnel specialists, headed by Dr. Rudolph Hermann, who had moved in early 1944 to the lakeside village of Kochel, twenty-five miles south of Munich. At the Aerodynamics Ballistics Research Station, the staff of two hundred had installed their powerful wind tunnel, capable of testing the flight qualifications of missiles up to 4.4 Mach number (4.4 times the velocity of sound), and made all of the calculations for the V-2 and the Wasserfall. When Biot arrived, he found the installation in as unmolested a state as any in Germany; the scientists had conveniently disobeyed orders from the S.S. to destroy the equipment and documents.

20. Irving, *The Mare's Nest*, 143-145, 204-206; Ernst Klee and Otto Merk, *The Birth of the Missile: The Secrets of Peenemünde* (New York, 1965), 69, 103, 109; Dieter Huzel, *From Peenemünde to Canaveral* (Englewood Cliffs, 1962), 127-188.

21. *Peenemünde East: Through the Eyes of 500 Detained at Garmisch*, no date, AFM; Huzel, *From Peenemünde to Canaveral*, 189-199.

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Colonel Ranger decided to remove sixty specialists and their families to Heidelberg, and helped them resume their research activities in an empty schoolhouse.³⁴

The officers' uncertainty about the legality of the evacuations was understandable in view of the absence of well-defined policies to govern the first months of the occupation. The Big Three had agreed at Yalta to establish an Allied Control Council to define

common policies, and subsequently appointed General Eisenhower, Marshal Zhukov, and Field Marshal Montgomery as members. But at the first meeting of the group on June 5, Zhukov insisted that the council could not function until the armies had retired to their respective zones. In effect, this left the commanders with absolute authority over the areas which they then occupied. Furthermore, the declaration to the German people which emerged from the conference gave implicit approval to the continued acquisition of military materiel; it ordered them, among other things, to surrender all research records and equipment to "the Allied representatives, for such purposes and at such times and places as they may prescribe." For the Americans, still at war with Japan, necessity demanded that they seize and utilize all materiel and personnel which might be of future military value.³⁵

They did so up until the last moment. During the first three days of July, the American forces withdrew to their zone of occupation. The First and Third Armies, as they rolled back along the highways over which they had fought some three months before, transferred several hundred industrial and academic experts to scattered locations in Greater Hessa. The Seventh Army removed twenty-three aircraft engineers from Halle to Darmstadt, and two hundred university professors to Zell-am-See near Salzburg. The advanced guards of the Russian army, according to a prearranged plan, followed the American withdrawal at a distance of three to five kilometers. When the commander of the Soviet 129 Rifle Corps arrived in Merseburg, he learned that the Americans had given permission to Krupp to remove a synthetic fuel plant. He was in time to stop the removal of the equipment, but reported that "all the principal technical staff had been taken away." His experience was general. The Russians found the fertile countryside of Saxony and Thuringia plentiful with crops and cattle, but most of the men who had staffed its universities and industries were gone.³⁶

8.

The global wits of 1945 quipped that in the final determination of the zones of occupation, England received the industry, Russia the agriculture, and the United States the scenery. The scientific bonanza harbored within the cities and hamlets of the Alps was itself enough to belie this judgment; and the last-minute removals to the American zone made it preposterous. For with no especial concern about politics but with a great sensitivity for spoils, the technical intelligence officers had amassed a scientific treasure, and, in the words of one participant, "put it into good safe American territory for future distribution."

On June 28, as if in celebration of the achievement, Ordnance Colonel John A. Keck made the first public disclosure concerning the unique "war booty." At a news conference in Paris, he spoke with pride about the capture and interrogation of twelve hundred "top-line" scientists, and told his audience of some of their most fantastic projects: a "sun-gun" that might harness the sun's rays to demolish nations from a platform 5,100 miles in the sky; a cannon with a 400-foot barrel and a range of 82 miles; an apparatus that would fire rockets from under the sea. After relating that "Hitler almost made it" in his attempt to raise warfare to a new scientific plane, he offered a glance into the future. "These men of extremely practical and keen minds," he reported, were "putting science ahead of nationality and volunteering to move to the United States and Britain to continue their work."

Among those present at the news conference was a staff correspondent for the *Baltimore Sun*, Philip Whitcomb, who was ending six years of continuous on-the-spot reporting of the war. Reflecting on Keck's disclosures, he acknowledged "how vital was the speed with which General Eisenhower drove his armies . . . until they made their most important capture of all—not of forts, guns, and soldiers, but of scientists." Yet as he pondered the broader implications, he deduced that the enemy's industrial potential, lack of remorse, and apparently unending crop of excellent scientists posed a "triple threat" to the peace. He was particularly concerned that the United States had no detailed plan to control scientists, and was convinced from his own experience that the military government was operating on a day-to-day basis. "We are certainly right in taking time to make up our minds," he warned the American people, "but we must not wait too long. While we are busy interrogating our 1,200 classified scientists, as Colonel Keck calls them, another 12,000 may be busily preparing new atomic bombs which can be made in grease-paint factories and which, when they are put into use by 80,000,000 unrepentant Germans, will make the V-2's as out of date as tomahawks."³⁷

These divergent viewpoints with respect to the enemy scientists—the colonel's excitement and the reporter's apprehension—had already found expression in Washington. For months the policy-makers had been deliberating about the scientists' future. By the end of June they were close to a decision.

34. Personal letter, August 12, 1960.

35. Foreign Relations, *European Advisory Committee; Austria; Germany*, 1945, Vol. III (Washington, 1968), 212, 323-330.

36. Foreign Relations, *The Conference of Berlin, 1945*, Vol. II (Washington, 1960), 907.

37. *New York Times*, June 29, 1945; *Baltimore Sun*, June 30, 1945.

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1.

It is impossible to assess precisely either the extent or the nature of the opposition. There are some suggestive characteristics. It was relatively short-lived, restricted to the year 1947, and in its significant public expression, to the winter and spring of that year. It was widespread in sentiment but limited in impact, partly because many of the organizations made their protests to governmental authorities without publicity. As to its political orientation, it was almost exclusively an outburst of American liberalism. In many ways it was also closely akin to traditional American nativism. It contained more than a hint of war-heightened nationalism; it strongly expressed a fear of disloyalty, and vividly limned the potential threat to the nation; it comprised, in short, an intense opposition to an alien group on the basis of its "un-American" connections. It differed from the earlier reactions in a significant respect: it substituted an anti-Nazi theme for the anti-Catholic, anti-Semitic, anti-Oriental, and anti-radical themes of the past. Despite the repeated and emphatic official statements that none of the Paperclip personnel were ardent Nazis or alleged war criminals, the critics assumed the Fascist nature of their past behavior and affirmed their guilt. This basic assumption characterized the spirit and molded the pattern of the domestic opposition.

In the only expression of national opinion, a Gallup poll of December 11, 1946, the American people disapproved of the general concept of importation. The questionnaire asked: "It has been suggested that we bring over to America one thousand German scientists who used to work for the Nazis and have them work with our own scientists on scientific problems. Do you think this is a good or bad idea?" The respondents considered the proposal a "bad idea" in a ratio of about ten to seven. There was a definite correlation between their replies and educational background. Those who had the greatest amount of formal education—at least some college training—favored the plan by a substantial majority. In contrast, those with an elementary school education, or less, lined up heavily against it. There was also a split along urban-rural lines. Cities with a population over 500,000 were in favor by a great majority; farm areas and towns of under 2,500 people disapproved by a great majority. Two sections of the country—New England and the Pacific Coast—gave their strong endorsement to the program; the South, which would eventually gain the most benefit from it, registered its disapprobation by a vote of two to one.

The opponents in the poll believed that the Germans were still Nazis and could not be trusted; that they might influence our people to think as they did; that they might gain knowledge from us and use it against us someday; and that the nation did not need them.

Those in favor said the United States could profit from their ideas and research; that Germans are leaders in science; that such an arrangement would contribute toward better understanding between the two nations; and that it was better to have the scientists here than in Russia. The vast majority of those who said "yes" to importing the Germans also thought the government should make it possible for them to become citizens.³

Although most Americans apparently disliked the idea of using enemy experts, their antipathy was not active. At the end of December 1946, however, a group of forty distinguished individuals including Charles S. Bolte, Evans Clark, Albert Einstein, Rev. John Haynes Holmes, Philip Murray, Richard Neuberger, Dr. Norman Vincent Peale, A. Philip Randolph, Dr. Rufus B. von Kleinsmid, and Rabbi Stephen S. Wise recorded their "profound concern" in telegrams to President Truman and Secretaries Byrnes and Patterson, the text of which they released to the press:

We hold these individuals to be potentially dangerous carriers of racial and religious hatred. Their former eminence as Nazi Party members and supporters raises the issue of their fitness to become American citizens or hold key positions in American industrial, scientific, and educational institutions. If it is deemed imperative to utilize these individuals in this country we earnestly petition you to make sure that they will not be granted permanent residence or citizenship in the United States with the opportunity which that would afford of inculcating those anti-democratic doctrines which seek to undermine and destroy our national unity.

Other protests appeared in the liberal press. Joachim Joesten, an experienced writer on foreign affairs and a long-time contributor to the *Nation*, wrote a February "memo to a would-be war criminal," in which he denounced in bitter terminology the incongruous treatment accorded politicians, military officers, industrialists, and scientists: "If you enjoy mass murder, but also treasure your skin, be a scientist, son. It's the only way, nowadays, of getting away with murder. It isn't safe any longer to be a warmongering politician. If you lose, they'll hang you. If you are a general and lose, they'll shoot you. If you are an industrialist, you'll go to jail. If you are a scientist, you will be honored regardless of who wins. Your enemies will coddle you, and compete for you, no matter how many of their countrymen you may have killed." Some months later in the *New Republic*, feature writer Seymour Nagan denounced "Project X" as a "great and growing threat to national security" by making our most vital defense secrets available to the eyes and ears of Nazis. Furthermore it had done a disservice by antagonizing American scientists at the very time when the military services were trying to "coax" them into their laboratories. Quoting the opinion of two physicists that the Germans were equivalent to high-class radio hams, or at best to clever military engineers, he relayed their resentment at having to work alongside such people "who they looked down on as scientists and despised as men."

In one of the most angry statements, Saul Padover, a former psychological warfare officer who had served in Germany in 1945, deplored the scientists' expedient willingness to serve their conqueror-masters. He had been irked by a New York *Times* article which

stated: "What spurs them on, we are told, is the hope for an ultimate revenge on Russia." Writing in the New York *PM*, the high-minded liberal tabloid, he discussed the brutality of the German regime, especially against the Russians. "And now *they* want revenge! Now they sit in American laboratories, working on weapons that would, they hope, bring more destruction on the Russians. The Nazis haven't had enough, it would appear." After noting that the Soviet Union was also employing Nazis, he concluded that neither power would have any difficulty with them: they would obey the orders of any power, as they had for centuries.* But he censured the United States government's use of them as an example of its unjustified hysteria toward Communism, and, incidentally, for granting the Germans the satisfaction to "know their day is coming." ⁴

* In an accompanying cartoon by Eric Godal, a sly, evil-looking person sits at a desk with the name-plate "Nazi Scientists." In his right hand he is holding a "Secret Blueprint for US War Department" on which is written "supersonic weapons, guided missiles, atom power, jet propulsion, bacteriological warfare." In his left hand he is holding the identical list headed "Secret Blueprints for Russian War Department." The smiling "Nazi" says: "Anything I can do to help you kill each other?"

Those Americans with a primary interest in the imposition of a hard peace upon Germany added their voices to the swell of protest. The most voluble such expression came from the Society for the Prevention of World War III, an organization of several thousand members founded in 1944 and dedicated to the prevention of all future wars by "whittling down Germany's war potential in all fields of activity." The society's advisory council included some of the nation's best-known writers, scholars, and members of the "intellectual" community: Emil Ludwig, Clifton Fadiman, Mark Van Doren, Christopher La Farge, Douglas Freeman, Lewis Mumford, Allan Nevins, Louis Nizer, Quentin Reynolds, William Shirer, Darryl Zanuck, Walter Johnson, and Walter Wanger. Convinced that there was no distinction between "Nazis" and the "German people," and that the German determination to conquer the world was an eternally dangerous force, it advocated a postwar platform which included such features as the permanent separation of East Prussia, Silesia, the Ruhr, the Rhineland, and the Saar from Germany; abolition of all heavy industry; reparations in kind; conscription of German labor to rebuild the free nations; and relief for the people of Germany only after relief was accomplished for all of the liberated countries.

As early as July 1946, having learned that a long-range exploitation plan was contemplated, the society protested to the Secretary of Commerce the "tragic irony" of placing ourselves in a position under which the Germans could invigorate their fifth column activities in our country, and recommended that the government obtain their knowledge without "fanfare and delay," and return them to Germany where they should be held for investigation in connection with their share in the preparation and execution of plans for world conquest. In January 1947, after reading that Washington had proceeded with its plan, the society's journal—*Prevent World War III*—exhorted Americans to contact the War Department in order to obtain the return of the specialists, whom it depicted as follows:

These German "experts" performed wonders for the German war effort. Can one forget their gas chambers, their skill in cremation, their meticulous methods used to extract gold from the teeth of their victims, their wizardry in looting and thievery?

As late as May, the society was calling upon citizens to protest in order to "prevent the resurgence of a German fifth column...."

Opposition to Paperclip out of concern over a German revival also appeared at a meeting in March of approximately fifty prominent citizens convened as the "National Conference on the German Problem." The group met at the Waldorf Astoria Hotel in New York City at the invitation of Mrs. Franklin Delano Roosevelt and Edgar Ansel Mowrer, a liberal internationalist who had been very active in the fight for the United Nations. Many of its sponsors were also members of the Society for the Prevention of World War III—La Farge, Ludwig, Mumford, Nizer, Shirer, Van Doren—but there were important new faces: Henry Morgenthau Jr., Sumner Welles, Albert Einstein, and Helen Gahagan Douglas. The "conference" formulated a program that looked toward crippling the German economy, reducing her territory, and punishing a "great mass" of war criminals. It advised the United States government to suspend the immigration quotas from Germany for twelve years, excepting victims or exiles from the Hitler regime, and recommended that it send those scientists already here back to their homeland as soon as possible.⁵

A number of organizations involved in the struggle on behalf of civil rights and against domestic Fascism also took action. In April the American Jewish Congress presented a thorough study of Paperclip to Senator Homer Ferguson of Michigan in an attempt to enlist his support for a congressional investigation. The report argued that "all of these men actively participated in the Nazi war effort," and that "all have been exposed to the un-American propositions of 'master race' and 'Aryan superiority' which they have absorbed in varying degrees." It claimed that many of the United States' eminent scientists looked upon the Germans as minor technicians who had little or nothing to contribute, and that the danger of their learning defense secrets was great. Finally, it recommended a congressional determination of policy rather than self-initiated, secret, executive agency action.

At the same time. Rabbi Stephen S. Wise, the revered president of the American Jewish Congress, informed Patterson and other officials that the wife of one of the specialists at Wright Field was a former official of the Nazi Party *Frauenschaften*, or women's subsidiary, and therefore automatically a "major offender" under the denazification laws. This "particularly outrageous aspect" proves that the "War Department 'screeners' are entirely incapable of performing this important task," he wrote. But Rabbi Wise's anger was directed less at the woman at Wright Field than at the men in the nation's capital. "This operation is all the more deplorable at a time when officials of our government find every possible reason for failing to fulfill the declared policy of President Truman to rescue as many victims of the Nazi terror as our immigration laws permit. ... As long as we reward former servants of Hitler while leaving his victims in D.P. camps, we cannot even pretend that we are making any real effort to achieve the aims we fought for."

A variety of other organizations, each with its particular interest in the civil rights or

civil liberties field, supported the general effort to wreck Paperclip. The Council Against Intolerance in America, devoted to "combating prejudice by calling attention to American ideals, heroes, and traditions," organized opposition to the program, and its president, James Waterman Wise, spoke in a number of cities to kindle the wrath of the local citizens. Other dissidents-were the Committee of Catholics for Human Rights and the Methodist Federation for Social Action, both unofficial advance guards in social affairs for their respective churches; the Friends of Democracy, an anti-Fascist, anti-Communist group which published a news summary of totalitarian activities, and sought to expose the antics of demagogues and hatemongers; the Southern Conference for Human Welfare, which had been struggling since 1938 to rid the South of Jim Crow laws, the poll tax, and the Ku Klux Klan; and the Progressive Citizens of America, a collection of many progressives and some Communists who were battling for supremacy of the liberal movement with the Americans for Democratic Action, and who had gathered around Henry Wallace.⁶

Although these disturbed liberals made known their dislike of Paperclip to the American public and its officials, they exerted little influence on either. Most of their countrymen could not share their fear of native Fascism, nor of a resurgent Germany overseas. And, too, their efforts lacked persistence. Largely as a result of demands upon their time and energies by postwar problems of greater import, they did not press the issue; for the most part, they protested and lapsed into silence. But they did have allies within a distinctive group of American scientists; the latter were more concerned, more determined, and more influential.

2.

The reaction of American scientists against the importation of their wartime competitors was fashioned almost entirely by their conviction of the moral turpitude of those who worked for the cause of Hitler and the Third Reich—a conviction greatly accentuated by the mere presence of highly respected refugee scientists. There were, to be sure, other ingredients: a virtually unanimous denigration of their scientific preeminence and technical abilities; a skepticism about their value to the nation and their dedication to peace; a prevalent distaste at the prospect of working with them; and an honest concern for security. But the nexus of their response was a keen sensitivity to the meaning of guilt, and a reluctance to condone such ironic retribution as that envisaged by Paperclip.

The outcry sprang from the small but exceptionally prestigious Federation of American Scientists (F.A.S.), organized in the autumn of 1945 by that group of atomic scientists who fought the military's May-Johnson bill for domestic control of atomic energy. During the next year the F.A.S. expanded to site associations across the country and a membership of approximately three thousand. It extended its commitment to the international control of the atomic bomb, the promotion of studies of the long-range implications of atomic power, the education of the public to the dangers of atomic

warfare, and the creation of a new spirit of international cooperation that would lead ultimately to world government. The federation was unique among scientific associations. Its members had a deep and urgent sense of social responsibility, and a dedication to transfer that responsibility into political action. Throughout 1946 they educated, they pleaded, they lobbied in Congress; they became preachers and then politicians. They courted public attention through the news media, through Hollywood, through books and articles, protects and conferences, and through their unofficial organ, the *Bulletin of Atomic Scientists*, which by 1947 was dispatching its high-level discussions to sixteen thousand readers. They failed, however, in bringing about international control of the atomic bomb. In December 1946 the Soviet Union indicated its displeasure with the United States plan, and in March 1947 rejected it outright. The Soviet action deprived the F.A.S. of a definite program and a sense of direction, and led to pessimism, uncertainty, disagreement, and waning enthusiasm among its members. It was during this time of crisis and reappraisal that they came to consider the merits of Project Paperclip.⁶

The federation took account of the importation program following the War Department's publicity campaign in November 1946, and its delegates at a general business meeting deferred action. But they could not ignore the ferment within the scientific community. At the annual meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science in December, participants denounced the military's "unbalanced" sense of ethical values and their exaggerated buildup of mere "technicians." On the day before Christmas six faculty members at Syracuse University protested the military's attempt to place the Germans in academic institutions. In a letter to the *New York Times*, they wrote: "We object not because they are citizens of an enemy nation but because they were and probably still are Nazis.... We consider it below the dignity of scientists to work together with willing servants of Hitler, Goering, and Himmler." This letter was the spark that mobilized the F.A.S. On January 8, the federation's executive secretary, William Higinbotham, solicited the advice of the chapters.

The excitement suddenly quickened among the members of the site association in Washington, most of whom were government employees. A committee of social sciences and humanities began collecting information and invited outside speakers to lead forums on "The Hiring of German Scientists." Dr. Francis Joseph Weiss, a natural and social scientist who had left Austria just ahead of the arriving German army, warned that a mass importation of such conscienceless persons would be equivalent to placing "intellectual atom bombs" throughout the country. They would mix freely with the university population, who, lacking political indoctrination, would easily fall prey to their subtle techniques. But Dr. Douglas M. Kelley of the Bowman Gray School of Medicine at Wake Forest College, and an official psychiatrist at the Nuremberg trials, cautioned that the only way to make sound judgments about any group of people was to study each member individually. To support his point he reported on the different psychotic and neurotic conditions of some of the Nazi leaders whose cases he had studied: "Rosenberg and Streicher were probably paranoid personalities; Hitler was neurotic, not psychotic, and had conversion hysteria in his stomach; Goering was a frustrated extrovert; Himmler was a sadist; and Goebbels had an inferiority complex, which he compensated by viciousness."

In closing, he stressed that only psychiatrists, cultural anthropologists, and sociologists were competent to judge whether the Germans were dangerous to our culture.

The study group at Washington ignored Dr. Kelley's teaching.* For them the issue had become a cause; they prepared a letter for the F.A.S. National Council, meeting in New York City on February 1, which asked President Truman to deny citizenship to the Germans, keep them out of the industrial and academic institutions, and return all of them to Europe as soon as possible. "Certainly not wishing to jeopardize the legitimate needs of national defense, and not advocating a policy of hatred and vengeance toward our former enemies," the letter assured, "we nevertheless believe that large-scale importation of

* The emotional feeling against the Germans among certain members of the Washington Association of Scientists was very strong. Penciled on the file copy of a questionnaire asking for information about the specialist is the statement: "The German scientist is a stupid bestial individual who speaks a harsh, guttural language." One member, unable to attend a meeting of the Study Group, sent his opinion to the Executive Secretary: "Certainly any person who can transfer loyalties from one idealology [sic] to another upon the shifting of a meal ticket is not better than Judas!"

German scientists . . . during this critical postwar period of national and international adjustment is not in keeping with the best objectives of American domestic and foreign policy." The letter defined the program as a "drastic step in the search for military power" which compromised the fundamental principles of America's democratic society and cast doubt on the nation's sincerity toward the United Nations. The National Council approved the letter and sent it to Higinbotham for disposition to the President and the press.⁸

The executive secretary, however, had second thoughts. Higinbotham was an accomplished politician with experience in many legislative battles. A friendly, easy-going person, he had an exceptional feel for politics—and for prudence. He was aware that the abrupt action of the F.A.S. Council did not represent the unanimous desire of the membership. He determined, too, that the federation could be "tremendously more effective" if it prepared case studies to point up the inconsistencies of Paperclip. To that end he sent a questionnaire to the member associations requesting data on individual German specialists. "Accurate information of this type, carefully obtained by reliable persons," he explained, "is indispensable in formulating and implementing policy on this important, and potentially explosive, issue." He also wanted more information himself, and wrote to the State, War, and Navy Departments asking for clarification of policy. In the meantime he mailed the letter of protest to the White House, but withheld it from the press.⁹

While Higinbotham delayed, nuclear scientists discussed the importation program in the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*. Dr. Hans Bethe, a 1933 refugee from Germany and a brilliant contributor to the Manhattan Project, joined with his Cornell colleague, Dr. Henri Sack, to ask his fellow scientists a series of questions about Paperclip. Was it wise, or even compatible with our moral standards, to make this bargain, in light of the fact that many of the Germans, probably the majority, were die-hard Nazis? Did the fact that the Germans might save the nation millions of dollars imply that permanent residence and citizenship could be bought? Could the Army put any trust in them when they would have

in mind the interests of a nationalistic Germany? Could the United States count on them to work for peace when their indoctrinated hatred against the Russians might contribute to increase the divergency between the great powers? Had the war been fought to allow Nazi ideology to creep into our educational and scientific institutions by the back door, to antagonize American scientists and poison the atmosphere of friendly cooperation? Finally, asked Bethe and Sack, "do we want science at any price?"

The opposition of Hans Bethe was important in that he was highly respected, not only for his exceptional abilities as a scientist but also for his objective and dispassionate approach to all issues. His protest was qualified; he admitted it was difficult to get an exact picture of the situation, that it was not wholesome to "have rumors going around," and asked his colleagues to request, above all, an end to the mystery. It was consistent with the standards of the *Bulletin* that the editor tried to dispel some of the rumors by printing a companion letter by Samuel Goudsmit, the former chief of the Alsos Mission. Goudsmit knew more about the motives and activities of the Germans than any American scientist, and he had more right than most to judge them—his parents had died at the hands of the Nazis. He advised that the problem was more complex than the opponents seemed to realize; that it was immaterial that the so-called scientists were only specialists; and that it would serve the nation's best interests to use their skill and knowledge. After discussing the issue in a "rather cold materialistic way," Goudsmit turned to its "human side." He cautioned that the majority had been in agreement with their nation's imperialistic aims, and commented that "it is sad indeed to observe that the few surviving victims of Nazism are mentally and morally starving in Displaced Persons Camps, while these 'Heil' shouting scientists are offered privileged positions in our country." But he gave precedence to his knowledge over his feelings, and concluded that the Germans could fill a need, and if absorbed gradually, would be quite harmless.¹⁰

When the F.A.S. National Council met on March 15, the protest movement was in disarray. The member associations had failed to submit any objective data, while at the same time the government had dispelled the vision of Nazis flocking easily into the country. The War Department wrote Higinbotham that the Germans would be subject to the immigration laws as would any other aliens, and Dean Acheson assured him that "no commitment has been made to permit any of these scientists to remain in this country indefinitely." * But the National Council did not alter its position, and on March 24 the executive secretary issued the letter of protest to the news media. Throughout the nation the American people read that the most distinguished body of scientists in their country disapproved of Project Paperclip.¹¹

* Acheson was technically correct in that no scientist had received his "first papers" for immigration. The military and the State Department, however, had made a moral commitment regarding citizenship.

By publicizing their discontent, the F.A.S. Council released much of the tension that had built up among certain of the physicists. They did not succeed in creating a wave of

resentment against the War Department. At the national meeting in May, Higinbotham reported to the contrary that there had been unfavorable reaction from those within the organization who looked upon the statement as a contribution to reviving wartime hatreds and an expression of fear of foreign competition. On the following day, in a pensive letter to a colleague, he offered some observations on the politics of the entire episode. Noting that there was disagreement and confusion among scientists on all subjects directly related to national foreign policy, he opined that the federation might be representing the views of its liberal wing as against the broader membership. "Leadership tends to fall into the hands of a certain type of individual who makes time for group activities," he admitted. "This group tends to be nonrepresentative of the whole in one direction or another. The agreement of the council on the German scientists letter and the misunderstanding by many members shows the dangerous position we may get into if we are not careful."

If the letter to the President did not precisely represent the views of the F.A.S. membership, it probably reflected even less accurately the attitudes of the country's many other scientific organizations, only one of which—the twelve-hundred-member American Association of Scientific Workers—tendered its endorsement. The federation, in the aftermath of all the meetings, the resolutions, the questionnaires, and the study sessions, stood alone, racked by internal discord and doubt. The National Council chose at its meeting in May to be politic; it voted to drop the issue.¹²

2. Chief, Intelligence Gp, WDGS to CG, AAF; Chiefs of Ord, Engineers, CWS, QMC, SC, and TC, September 20, 1946, Subj: "Implementation of Revised Paperclip Program," AIF; Under Secy of War to Secy, GS, May 28, 1945, Subj: "German Scientists," RSI.

3. Gallup poll statistics from the Roper Public Opinion Research Center, Williams College, September 27, 1960.

4. New York *Times*, December 30, 1946; Joachim Joesten, "This Brain for Hire," *The Nation* (January 11, 1947), 36-38; Seymour Nagan, "Top Secret: Nazis at Work," *New Republic*, 117 (August 11, 1947), 24-26; New York PM, August 26, 1947.

5. "Our Platform for Defeated Germany," *Prevent World War III*, 8 (March-April 1945), 5-6; Ltr, Secy, Society for the Prevention of World War II to Henry Wallace, July 22, 1946, OTS; "Welcome to 1,000 Nazis," *Prevent World War III*, 18 (December 1946-January 1947), 3; see also "German Scientists," *Prevent World War III*, 19 (February-March 1947), 3; "National Conference on the German Problem," *Prevent World War III*, 20 (April-May 1947), 18-19; Ltr, Edgar Ansel Mowrer, Chairman, National Conference on the German Problem to Secy of War, March 11, 1947, AIF.

6. Ltr, Midwest Regional Director, Commission on Law and Social Action, American Jewish Congress to Executive Secretary, Federation of American Scientists, April 7, 1947, UCL; Ltr, Stephen S. Wise to Secy of War, Atty Gen, Under Secy of State, Alexander Wiley and Earl

Michener, April 14, 1947, AIF; Lt. Robiczek to Col. Putt, December 26, 1946, Subj: "Miscellaneous Activities and Operations," RSI; Ltr, American Association of Scientific Workers, Association of New York Scientists, Church League for Industrial Democracy, Committee of Catholics for Human Rights, Council for Democracy, Friends of Democracy, League for Fair Play, Methodist Federation for Social Action, Progressive Citizens of America, Society for the Prevention of World War III, and Southern Conference for Human Welfare to Averill Harriman, February 19, 1947, OTS.

7. Alice Kimball Smith, *A Peril and a Hope: The Scientists Movement in America, 1945-1947* (Chicago, 1965).

8. Memo to Chapters, January 8, 1947, in Ltr, W. A. Higinbotham to author, November 3, 1958; Albert Deutsch, "Scientists Shocked by U.S. Efforts to Place Nazis in School Jobs Here," New York *PM*, December 31, 1946; New York *Times*, December 24, 1946; "January 14 Meeting," *W.A.S. Bulletin* (January 1947), 3, UCL, Ltr; William G. Schlecht, Chairman, Committee on the Social Sciences and the Humanities, W.A.S., to Dr. Douglas M. Kelly, January 22, 1947, UCL; "Hiring of German Scientists," *W.A.S. Bulletin* (February 1947), 5, UCL; W.A.S., Rough Draft of Letter for Comment and Criticism, UCL; Minutes of the Council, F.A.S., New York, February 1-2, 1947, UCL.

9. Telegram, W. Schlecht, R. Emberson Brown, W.A.S. to Higinbotham, February 1, 1947, UCL; Memo, Higinbotham to member associations, February 14, 1947, UCL; Memo, Higinbotham to member associations, February 21, 1947, UCL; Ltrs, Higinbotham to Secy of War, GC, AAF, Atty Gen, Secy of State, Secy of Navy, February 14, 1947, UCL.

10. H. A. Bethe and H. S. Sack, "German Scientists in Army Employment," *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, 3 (February 1947), 65-67; S. A. Goudsmit, "German in Army Employment," *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, 3 (February 1947), 64.

11. Ltr, Public Relations Division, WD to Higinbotham, March 7, 1947, UCL; Ltr, Acheson to Higinbotham, March 13, 1947, UCL; Minutes of Meeting, F.A.S. Council, March 15-16, 1947.

12. Minutes of Meeting, F.A.S. National Council, May 12, 1947, UCL; Ltr, Acheson to Higinbotham, March 13, 1947, UCL; Minutes of Meeting, F.A.S. Council, March 15-16, 1947, UCL.