

Office of Special Investigations

Agency set up in the United States Department of Justice to investigate and take legal action against Nazi war criminals living in the United States. It was created in 1979 after information came to light that hundreds of Nazi war criminals had immigrated to the US after World War II.

American courts are not allowed to put people on trial for crimes committed outside the US unless they were committed against American citizens. The OSI circumvented this by prosecuting Nazi war criminals for lying about their wartime activities during the immigration process. Had those activities been revealed, the war criminals would not have been permitted to enter the country.

During its first twenty years, the OSI investigated hundreds of cases which led to the removal of 48 Nazi war criminals from the US. Most of these cases involved ethnic German, Latvian, Lithuanian, and Ukrainian collaborators. The war criminals were divided into various levels of categories, ranging from top-level decision-makers to German scientists who used concentration camp prisoners as forced laborers in special projects. Two special inquiries were made at the request of the American government, regarding Klaus Barbie and Josef Mengele. (see also Barbie Trial.)