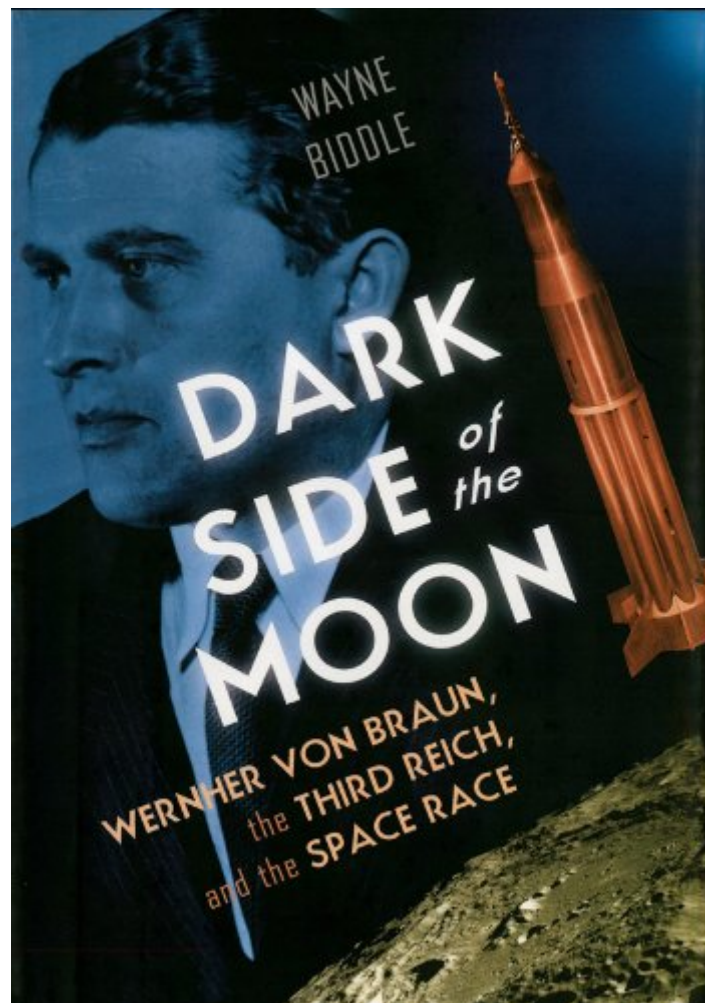




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Dark Side Of The Moon: Wernher Von Braun, The Third Reich, And The Space Race



Synopsis

A stunning investigation of the roots of the first moon landing forty years ago. This illuminating story of the dawn of the space age reaches back to the reactionary modernism of the Third Reich, using the life of "rocket scientist" Wernher von Braun as its narrative path through the crumbling of Weimar Germany and the rise of the Nazi regime. Von Braun, a blinkered opportunist who could apply only tunnel vision to his meteoric career, stands as an archetype of myriad twentieth century technologists who thrived under regimes of military secrecy and unlimited money. His seamless transformation from developer of the deadly V-2 ballistic missile for Hitler to an American celebrity as the supposed genius behind the golden years of the U.S. space program in the 1950s and 1960s raises haunting questions about the culture of the Cold War, the shared values of technology in totalitarian and democratic societies, and the imperatives of material progress.

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Customer Reviews

fascinating account of the Nazi developer of the American space program

An honest, meticulously crafted journey, that captures the clandestine and dichotomous legacy of an icon. This book illuminates in our hearts, what our pride yearns to reconcile, the real component cost of greatness, however it manifests.

"Dark Side of the Moon" discusses the life of Wernher von Braun, predominantly as it relates to his knowledge about the atrocities of the Third Reich. Having grown up in a privileged family, he got fascinated and entangled in the idea of space travel as a young boy. Even without the meticulously researched interaction of von Braun with the leadership of Nazi Germany, it is inconceivable that he did not know about the crimes against humanity ordered by the highest ranks and executed by the SS and other organizations. Von Braun was a member of the SS, he had repeated contact and presentations to Hitler, Himmler and other senior Nazi leaders and, above all, his research facility was directly connected and depending on the KZ Mittelbau-Dora. After von Braun emigrated to the United States, the US government was ignorant to his Nazi past. He remained steadfast that he had no knowledge about the dark side of Nazi Germany and both, the administration and the public at large accepted this. While a lot was at stake for the US with the war in the Pacific still not decided and the tension with communist Russia intensifying which eventually led to the Cold War and the space race, about six million Jews died during the Holocaust. This should have prevailed over the usefulness of von Braun to advance the US space program. The author fails to discuss in detail the US government's involvement in the cover up. This would have been more interesting than proofing in great detail that he must have had known about the genocide as this is unquestionable. The author also questions Wernher von Braun's qualifications. He portrays him predominantly as a gifted communicator with some show star qualifications but the true brain power was with many unnamed young scientist. In principle, the author claims that von Braun took repeatedly credit for work of others. The language used to describe his skill set, or the lack of it, is at times almost personal and it remains unclear why the author displays hostility against his scientific qualifications, in particular as the book is largely fact based. In that context it is interesting to note that the author is not naming the sources who stated to him that von Braun was not the brain behind many of the achievements credited to him. As much as there cannot be a doubt about von Braun's knowledge about the Nazi crimes, it seems unlikely that he was not as skilled as he is publicly known. I find it hard to believe that the US government would have covered his shady past if it would not have been for his exceptional skills as an aerospace scientist."

This book does an excellent and enlightening job of portraying the social and political environment out of which von Braun emerged, and placing his meteoric career in both Hitler's Germany and the US into far more understandable context than any previously published work that I have encountered. von Braun's split personality and identities is well worth study, but unknown to the general public, partly because of his effectiveness in re-inventing himself to suit dramatically changed and changing socio-political circumstances. None of this gainsays his acknowledged effectiveness in leading extraordinary rocket developments, from the first extra-atmospheric ballistic missile (the V-2) through the Saturn V lunar rocket, the greatest rocket achievement of all time to date. A chapter in my book, REFLECTIONS ON FAME and Some Famous Men, written before DARK SIDE OF THE MOON, includes much of the remarkable, while morally puzzling, aspects of von Braun's careers as a darling of both Hitler and the US Congress.

A very disturbing book showing just how Von Braun and his cronies got away with their lives with the duplicity of the US government under Truman. It's always been assumed that Von Braun was not that bad compared to a lot of the other Nazi thugs and psychopaths. This book dispels this myth once and for all. Von Braun was a devoted Nazi through and through and knew fully well about the murderous slave work force supporting his rocket programme. After reading this book Von Braun will come across as opportunist mercenary thug he really was. A brilliant mind he may have had, but he wasn't the national hero he was made out to be. Eisenhower saw right through his charade to the point he refused to shake hands with Von Braun and had very little to do with him. The same can't be said for Truman and his administration. I would advise reading Operation Paperclip to understand the full duplicity and covering up of how people like Von Braun found their way into the USA and were protected from the justice they so rightly deserved. Not a glorious page in the history of the USA sadly.

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