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UCSB HIST 133B Source Exploration

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### **An American Journalist's Impression of Berlin Book Burning**

- Louis P. Lochner, Introduction to *The Goebbels Diaries 1942-1943*. Edited and Translated by Louis P. Lochner. (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1948. Reprint, Westport: Greenwood Press, 1970), 17-18.

The whole civilized world was shocked when on the evening of 10 May 1933 the books of authors displeasing to the Nazis, including even those of our own Helen Keller, were solemnly burned on the immense Franz Josef Platz between the University of Berlin and the State Opera on Unter den Linden. I was a witness to the scene.

All afternoon Nazi raiding parties had gone into public and private libraries, throwing on to the streets such books as Dr. Goebbels in his supreme wisdom had decided were unfit for Nazi Germany. From the streets Nazi columns of beer-hall fighters had picked up these discarded volumes and taken them to the square above referred to.

Here the heap grew higher and higher, and every few minutes another howling mob arrived, adding more books to the impressive pyre. Then, as night fell, students from the university, mobilized by the little doctor, performed veritable Indian dances and incantations as the flames began to soar skyward.

When the orgy was at its height, a cavalcade of cars hove into sight. It was the Propaganda Minister himself, accompanied by his bodyguard and a number of fellow torchbearers of the new Nazi *Kultur*. "Fellow students, German men and women!" he said as he stepped before a microphone for all Germany to hear him. "The age of extreme Jewish intellectualism has now ended, and the success of the German revolution has again given the right of way to the German spirit. . . . You are doing the right thing in committing the evil spirit of the past to the flames at this late hour of the night. It is a strong, great and symbolic act - an act that is to bear witness before all the world to the fact that the spiritual foundation of the November Republic has disappeared. From these ashes there will arise the phoenix of a new spirit. . . . The past is lying in flames. The future will rise from the flames within our own hearts. . . . Brightened by these flames our vow shall be: The Reich and the Nation and our Führer Adolf Hitler: *Heil! Heil! Heil!*"

The few foreign correspondents who had taken the trouble to view this "symbolic act" were stunned. What had happened to the "Land of Thinkers and Poets?" they wondered.

Louis P. Lochner (1887-1975) witnessed the May 10, 1933 book burning in Berlin when he was stationed there as head of the Associated Press Bureau, a position he held from 1921 to 1941. He was awarded the 1939 Pulitzer Prize for his reporting from Germany. When war

broke out between the United States and Germany, he was held at Bad Nauheim for five months with other Americans, some also correspondents.<sup>1</sup>

The report listed above is extracted from his introduction to the 1948 publication of *The Goebbels Diaries 1942-1943*, which he edited and translated. Although an eyewitness account, it is not a report sent to the AP at the time of the event. As recorded by Joy Schaleben in her monograph, Lochner was under orders from the AP to report truthfully, but to word his reports carefully so that the Germans would not expel him from the country.<sup>2</sup> The references Lochner makes above to Goebbels' "supreme wisdom," "beer-hall fighters," "veritable Indian dances" and calling Goebbels "the little doctor" would not have been sent over the wire. Earlier on the evening of the book burning Lochner attended a gathering for foreign press at the Russian embassy, which was near the bonfire location, so he may not have attended the bonfire with the purpose of filing a report.<sup>3</sup> The AP's official history of its operations in Germany reports that Lochner witnessed the book burning in Berlin but does not specifically state that he reported it.<sup>4</sup> A search of multiple newspaper archive databases has not found a story on the topic with Lochner's byline.

Although Lochner refers to the students as being "mobilized" by Goebbels, later research has shown that the burnings, of which there were many across Germany, were organized independently by student groups. In his biography of Goebbels, Helmut Heiber writes that the burnings "seem to have occurred on the initiative of students who had been egged on by Nazi propaganda," and that "In his struggle to attain the throne of brown culture Goebbels could not refuse to give high praise to the youthful comrades and to consecrate their act by his presence, albeit belated and fleeting."<sup>5</sup> J.M. Ritchie writes in "The Nazi Book-Burning" that the burnings were the work of students and that "the Reich Propaganda Ministry seems to have agreed to participate only at a fairly late stage."<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Joy Schaleben-Lewis, *Getting the story out of Nazi Germany: Louis P. Lochner* (Austin, TX: Association for Education in Journalism, 1969). 4.

<sup>2</sup> Schaleben-Lewis, *Getting the story out*, 7-21.

<sup>3</sup> *Journalist at the Brink*, ed. Morrell Heald, (Philadelphia: Xlibris, 2007). 126-127.

<sup>4</sup> "The AP and Nazi Germany: 1933 – 1945," AP, 2017, p.24, <https://www.ap.org/about/history/ap-in-germany-1933-1945/ap-in-germany-report.pdf>.

<sup>5</sup> Helmut Heiber, *Goebbels* (New York: Hawthorn, 1972), 172.

<sup>6</sup> J. M. Ritchie, "The Nazi Book Burning," *The Modern Language Review* 83, no 3. (1988), 627-643.

Lochner's letters reveal that he visited the "students' house" (dormitory) where the materials for the burning were collected. Both Lochner's letters and newspaper accounts make particular note of items seized from an Institute of Sexual Science. The *London Times* noted that "The destruction of books on sex by Dr. Magnus Hirschfeld and other books classified as 'obscene' and 'trash' will cause no regret to the great majority of Germans."<sup>7</sup> The *New York Times* mentions photos and pamphlets from Dr. Hirschfeld's "so-called Institute of Sexual Science."<sup>8</sup> In a letter to family Lochner only reports on the photos from Hirschfeld's institute, which were "of lads and ladies who forgot to put their clothes on." He writes that the students would "study them most intently – but then after having feasted their eyes on the sight, they'd suddenly, with a disgusted shrug of the shoulder . . . throw the pictures back on the pile."<sup>9</sup>

This excerpt from his introduction to the *Diaries* is currently posted on the German History in Documents and Images website and has been published in college textbooks in Great Britain and America.

### Annotated Bibliography in Chronological Order

"'Un-German' Books Destroyed." *Times*, 11 May 1933, p. 13. *The Times Digital*

*Archive*, <http://tinyurl.galegroup.com/tinyurl/93UQS6>. Accessed 7 Feb. 2019.

Newspaper account from *The London Times*, from "Our Own Correspondent." Describes book burning by "Nazi-led students," lists types of books burned. Notes that students were led to a microphone by Nazis and recited couplets referring to the type of book burned. Reports that Goebbels spoke against the "filth" of the Jewish "asphalt-literati."

Frederick T Birchall. Wireless to THE NEW YORK TIMES (1933, May 11). "NAZI BOOK-BURNING FAILS TO STIR BERLIN". *New York Times (1923-Current File)* Retrieved from <https://search-proquest-com.proxy.library.ucsb.edu:9443/docview/100683048?accountid=14522>.

<sup>7</sup> "'Un-German Books Destroyed," *Times*, 11 May 1933, p. 13, *The Times Digital Archive*, <http://tinyurl.galegroup.com/tinyurl/93UQS6>

<sup>8</sup> "Nazi Book-Burning Fails to Stir Berlin," *New York Times*, 11 May 1933, *New York Times (1923-Current File)*, <https://search-proquest-com.proxy.library.ucsb.edu:9443/docview/100683048?accountid=14522>.

<sup>9</sup> *Journalist at the Brink*, ed. Morrell Heald, (Philadelphia: Xlibris, 2007). 126-127.

Long, descriptive newspaper account. Reports crowd of 40,000 students and 5,000 participating in a parade to the bonfire. Quotes some of Goebbels' speech. Mentions "students' house" (dormitory) in Oranienburgerstrasse where books were collected. Ends with "A lot of the old German liberalism – if any was left – was burned tonight."

"BOOK-BURNING DAY". (1933, May 11). *New York Times (1923-Current File)* Retrieved from <https://search-proquest-com.proxy.library.ucsb.edu:9443/docview/100680692?accountid=14522>.

Opinion piece. States that bonfires are "not a passing freak of schoolboys," and that "Although the Government has been trying to withdraw from it as an official act, the mad enthusiasm so far got out of hand that interfering with it would be thought a political mistake."

Joy Schaleben-Lewis, *Getting the Story Out of Nazi Germany: Louis P. Lochner* (Austin, TX: Association for Education in Journalism, 1969).

Monograph based in part on Louis P. Lochner Collection at the Wisconsin State Historical Society, Madison, and two interviews with Lochner in 1966-67. Details difficulties of self-censorship required to report stories without being expelled by the Nazi government, how Lochner maintained rapport with officials and how he used "spies" and the "social game" to get information. Does not mention book burnings.

Helmut Heiber, *Goebbels-Reden Band 1: 1932-1939* (Dusseldorf: Droste, 1971).

Has Goebbels May 10, 1933 speech in full, in German, p. 108-112. Cites source as DRA [Deutsches Rundfunk-Archiv in Frankfurt am Main] Nr. C 1144 (15' 15").

Helmut Heiber, *Goebbels* (New York: Hawthorn, 1972).

Biography of Goebbels. States that the May 10, 1933 book burnings

Egbert Krispyn, *Anti-Nazi Writers in Exile* (Athens, GA: The University of Georgia Press, 1978).

Discusses background of book burnings. States that as reported in the *Neuköllner Tageblatt* of May 12, 1933 the parade of students in Berlin was led by newly appointed "professor of political pedagogy" Alfred Bäumler, after his inaugural lecture. In the lecture Bäumler noted that "students had a vital role to play in the implementation of the fascist ideals." Lists the couplets recited by the students, such as "Against the

overevaluation of instinctual urges that destroy the soul, for the nobility of the soul! I surrender to the flames the writings of Sigmund Freud.” pp. 20-21.

*Die Bucherverbrennung Zum 10. Mai 1933*, ed. Gerhard Sauder (Munich: Carl Hanser, 1983).

In German. Gives details of book lists, book burnings throughout Germany, and an appendix of photographs.

*Nazism 1919 – 1945* Vol 2. Edited by J. Noakes and G. Pridham (Exeter: University of Exeter, 1984).

Documentary reader of the Nazi era. Uses Louis P. Lochner “Book Burning” and also gives “fire incantations.” Says that students developed list of books with the help of Dr. Wolfgang Hermann, “a Nazi who had been given the task of ‘reorganizing the Berlin City and People’s Libraries’ by the Association of People’s Librarians.” pp. 401-402.

*Sources of the Western Tradition* Vol II. Edited by Marvin Perry, Joseph R. Peden and Theodore H. Von Laue (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987).

Book of primary sources for college courses. Uses Louis P. Lochner “Book Burning” in section titled “Nazification of Culture,” and says Lochner “gave an eyewitness account of the scene in the German capital in *The Goebbels Diaries 1942-1943*.”

J. M. Ritchie, “The Nazi Book-Burning,” *The Modern Language Review* 83, no. 3 (1988): 627-643.

Provides background of findings that the burnings were the work of students. Refers to Gerhard Sauder (see above listing) as the most thorough researcher of the book burnings.

“When Books Burn.” University of Arizona Library, 2002. Accessed 2/21/2019.

<http://www.library.arizona.edu/exhibits/burnedbooks/indexpage.htm>

Web exhibit on book burnings. Includes text of Goebbels’ speech in German as reported by the *Völkischer Beobachter* (newspaper of the Nazi party) on May 12, 1933 and translated into English by Dr. Roland Richter.

Matthew Battles, “Knowledge on Fire,” *The American Scholar* 72, no. 3 (2003): 35.51

Quotes part of Lochner’s “Book Burning.” States that although “Lochner saw the bonfires as the public expression of the personality of Joseph Goebbels” they were in fact the work of a student group. States that the “incantations” Lochner refers to were “called

*Feuersprüche*, or ‘fire speeches,’ [and] lent a quasi-religious air to the proceedings.” Battles writes of Goebbels that “When word reached him of the burning in Berlin, he rushed over to address the mob in Franz Josef Platz.” This would imply that Goebbels was only made aware of the plan at the last moment, although Battles gives no support for this statement. Battles then gives quotes from Goebbels’ speech “as Lochner reports him saying.”

*Journalist at the Brink: Louis P. Lochner in Berlin, 1922-1942*, Edited by Morrell

Heald. (Philadelphia: Xlibris, 2007).

Based on The Louis P. Lochner Papers housed at the Wisconsin State Historical Society, Madison. The introduction contains biographical information. In a letter to family dated May 28, 1933 Lochner refers to the May 10 event. He jokes that he should have gotten his “pacifist book on the Ford Expedition” on the index so that it would become a best seller in America. He also relates that he “and the Hearst man” went to the dormitory to see the books that were collected for burning. He then reports that most of the foreign correspondents spent the evening as guests at the Russian embassy, only seven minutes from the burning site. He writes sarcastically “I took in the whole show. Now I know at last what authors I must shun hereafter (p. 127).”

“The AP and Nazi Germany: 1933-1945.” AP, 2017. Accessed 3/18/2019.

<https://www.ap.org/about/history/ap-in-germany-1933-1945/ap-in-germany-report.pdf>

This report introduces itself as “an official AP history of AP operations in Germany in the years 1931-1945.” It focuses extensively on Lochner.

Pinfield, Nick. *Democracy and Nazism: Germany, 1918-1945*. Edited by Michael Fordham and David Smith (Cambridge University Press, year not given).

[https://www.cambridge.org/us/files/4414/5501/8572/A\\_Level\\_History\\_for\\_AQA\\_Democracy\\_and\\_Nazism\\_Germany\\_1918\\_-1945\\_-\\_Sample\\_Chapter\\_4.pdf](https://www.cambridge.org/us/files/4414/5501/8572/A_Level_History_for_AQA_Democracy_and_Nazism_Germany_1918_-1945_-_Sample_Chapter_4.pdf).

Lochner’s Book Burning used in A /AS Level History for AQA Student Book textbook as discussion exercise, p. 126.

Holocaust Encyclopedia, “Book Burning.” United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

Accessed 2/21/2019. <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/book-burning>

Information on book burnings including map and two videos of Berlin event.

“1933 Book Burnings.” United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. Accessed 2/21/2019.

<https://www.ushmm.org/collections/bibliography/1933-book-burnings#h16>

Explanation of book burnings with bibliography for background information.

“Nazi book burnings.” Wikipedia Accessed 2/6/2019.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nazi\\_book\\_burnings](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nazi_book_burnings)

Description of student organization of burnings, short quote from Goebbels’ speech, photos of burning and memorials of burning, list of authors and types of literature banned.

“Louis P. Lochner.” Wikipedia. Accessed 2/6/2019.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Louis\\_P.\\_Lochner](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Louis_P._Lochner)

Biography and list of works.

“The Book Burning: Report by Louis P. Lochner, Head of the Berlin Bureau of the Associated Press (May 10, 1933).” German History in Documents and Images. Accessed 2/5/2019.

[http://ghdi.ghi-dc.org/sub\\_document.cfm?document\\_id=1575](http://ghdi.ghi-dc.org/sub_document.cfm?document_id=1575)

Lists source used as:

Source: Louis P. Lochner, ed., *The Goebbels Diaries 1942-43*. Washington, DC, 1948, pp. 177-80; reprinted in Jeremy Noakes and Geoffrey Pridham, eds., *Nazism, 1919-1945*, Vol. 2: *State, Economy and Society 1933-1939*. Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2000, pp. 207-08.

This is a different edition than the one used for this essay. The GHDI excerpt does not include Lochner’s final lines regarding the foreign correspondents being “stunned.”

There are also two differences in wording between the two editions. The Greenwood reprinting used for this exploration reads “a cavalcade of cars *hove* into sight” and

“Fellow students, German men and women!” he [Goebbels] *said* as he stepped before a microphone. ..” The GHDI quotes read “a cavalcade of cars *drove* into sight” and

“Fellow students, German men and women!” he [Goebbels] *cried* as he stepped before a microphone. ..” (Italics mine.) There may also be an error in page numbers in the GHDI citation, as the relevant excerpt is on pages 17-18 in the Greenwood edition, but listed by GHDI as 177-80 in their source, which are similar digits but would be much further into the volume.