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Source Exploration

US Urban vs. Rural Newspaper Responses to the Berlin Book Burning

- *Louis P. Lochner, ed., The Goebbels Diaries 1942-43. Washington, DC, 1948, pp. 177-80; The Book Burning: Report by Louis P. Lochner, Berlin Bureau of the Associated Press, 1933.*

Louis Lochner's "Report on Nazi Book Burning" was originally published in Lochner's edit and translation of "The Goebbels Diaries", in 1943. It was later reprinted by the Exeter Publishing press in Jeremy Noakes and Geoffrey Pridham's book "Nazism, 1919-1945, Vol. 2: State, Economy and Society 1933-1939". Lochner documents his observations of what became infamously known as the Nazi Book Burnings. During the Spring and Summer of 1933, the National Socialist German Students' League and the German Student Body joined forces with the SS and SA to conduct a "cleansing" of un-German literature. The most infamous night of book burning occurred on May 10th 1933 after an "inflammatory" speech by Joseph Goebbels. The books that were incinerated fell into categories of Bolshevik, Jewish-democratic or "morally depraved" works of literature¹. Lochner describes the fervor that consumed those who were present for the book burning. They cheered on the evil "Jewish intellectualism" that was being removed and giving way to true "German spirit"².

In the following months, The Third Reich and its "Chamber of Culture" was determined to censor texts and authors who they deemed inappropriate and manipulate the press and literature to exert control over the German people. The Nazi party developed anti-Jewish propaganda and targeted authors and artists from various "red"³ backgrounds including Franz Kafka, Ernst Hemingway, Victor Hugo and Jack London⁴. While the burning did not eradicate all of the books nor their "intellectual heritage"⁵, it sent a strong and symbolic message that

¹ *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.*

² *Louis P. Lochner, ed., The Goebbels Diaries 1942-43. Washington, DC, 1948, pp. 177-80*

³ Palek, Stephanie. "Burning Books." Cambridge University Library, 23 Apr. 2015,

⁴ Palek, Stephanie. "Burning Books." Cambridge University Library, 23 Apr. 2015,

⁵ "Book Burning" Newspapers.com. The Miami Herald, May 15, 1933.

individuals like Lochner and press across the United States documented. The book burnings in 1933 were fueled by “hatred, fears, aspiration”⁶ and caused a “mass exodus of German writers, artists and intellectuals” who fled Nazi Germany throughout the 1930s for fear of persecution.

The United States’ reporting on the book burnings piqued after the May 10th 1933 Berlin burning but varied in coverage and approach. After looking through copious clippings from the History Unfolded database⁷, certain trends in reporting began to emerge. As demonstrated by publications like the *Miami Herald*, *Honolulu Star-Bulletin* and *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, newspapers from more urban areas and cities tended to lean towards a more critical stance on the book burnings. The Miami Herald’s article by Walt Lippman denoted the Nazi regime as “violent in its character” and claimed that the destruction of intellectual property was an ominous sign of the Nazis’ preparation for war. Meanwhile the *Honolulu Bulletin* commented that Hitler’s attempt to eradicate the non-German would be fruitless as similar attempts had failed in other “kingdoms”⁸. Although there were numerous other news clippings, the *Philadelphia Inquirer* is the last chosen example because of its publicity and promotion of a wide-scale protest against the Nazi regime and its book burnings⁹. On the other hand, the trends that appeared in rural and suburban area reporting appeared to be less critical of the Third Reich, instead they were more wary and angered at the burning of American authors. This was seen in newspapers like the *Wilmington Morning News*, *The Ogden Utah Examiner* and the *Evening Herald Courier* of Bristol Tennessee. The Tennessee newspaper described the event in a very straightforward manner, called Goebbels the “minister of enlightenment” and lacked concern for the seriousness of the issue, unlike some urban newspapers¹⁰. Additionally, the Delaware Morning News denoted the behavior of the Germans as “childish”, failing to realize the true insidious nature of the book burning acts¹¹. Lastly, the Ogden Utah Examiner’s primary concern with the 1933 destruction was the burning of American books specifically.

⁶ Yourman, Julius. “Propaganda Techniques Within Nazi Germany.” *The Journal of Educational Sociology*, vol. 13, no. 3, 1939, pp. 148–63. JSTOR

⁷ In History Unfolded: US Newspapers and the Holocaust. United States Holocaust Museum, n.d. Accessed February 15, 2024.

⁸ Newspapers.com. Honolulu Star-Bulletin, May 26, 1933.

⁹ Newspapers.com. The Philadelphia Inquirer, May 10, 1933.

¹⁰ Newspapers.com, Evening Herald Courier, Bristol Tennessee, May 10, 1933,

¹¹ Newspapers.com. The Morning News, May 12, 1933.

In the History Unfolded clippings, most of the reporting occurred immediately after the book burnings themselves. There didn't appear to be much analysis in months following the incidents. However, on May 10th 1943, the *New York Times* published a piece commenting on the irony that only a decade after the book burnings, Germany itself was ablaze because of the Allied Powers. The NY Times article acts as a retrospective analysis on what many didn't realize was a precursor to a regime of propaganda and terror as well. Additionally, both the History Unfolded clippings and New York times article serve as examples of the shift in American reporting towards a more patriotic lens, especially after the US entry into World War II.

Annotated Bibliography in Chronological Order

- Newspapers.com, *Evening Herald Courier*, Bristol Tennessee, May 10, 1933, <https://www.newspapers.com/article/evening-herald-courier/36072523/>
 - Bristol, Tennessee-This newspaper article from the more rural era of Bristol Tennessee discusses the events of May 10th in a matter-of-a-fact way. It calls Goebbels the “minister of enlightenment” and does not seem to be to note the potential concerns or dangers of book burning.
- Newspapers.com. *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, May 10, 1933. <https://www.newspapers.com/article/the-philadelphia-inquirer/49578111/>.
 - Philadelphia-Urban This newspaper fits with the observed trend and even briefly mentions a pro-Jewish protest organized by students that is occurring in opposition to the Nazi book burning.
- Newspapers.com. *The Sacramento Bee*, May 11, 1933. <https://www.newspapers.com/article/the-sacramento-bee/86672573/>.
 - Sacramento, California- Suburban/Urban Area This article mentions Goebbels quote from the night of May 10th, notes the proclaimed end of “Jewish intellectualism” and highlights a cautionary tale. This is written from the perspective of students in University.
- Newspapers.com. *The Morning News*, May 12, 1933. <https://www.newspapers.com/article/the-morning-news/22896089/>.
 - Delaware- Suburban This paper reports on the general foolishness of Nazi book burning and condemns the behavior of this regime as “childish”. It does not

acknowledge the potential discrimination and more disciplines the regime for its behavior.

- Newspapers.com. *The Ogden Standard-Examiner*, May 12, 1933.
<https://www.newspapers.com/article/the-ogden-standard-examiner/36099964/>
 - Ogden, Utah: This is a more rural area newspaper that very briefly highlights the American literature that was burned alongside the other destroyed books. This fits into the trend that less urban areas were less directly critical of the Germany's destructive actions.
- "Book Burning" Newspapers.com. *The Miami Herald*, May 15, 1933.
<https://www.newspapers.com/article/the-miami-herald-book-burning/46811328/>
 - Miami Florida- Urban Area- This reporting by the *Miami Herald* is much more comprehensive and direct in its critique of the Nazi Book burnings. *The Miami Herald* notes that while only a few copies of the widespread amount of books were burned, the message the Nazi regime sent was strongly symbolic. This excerpt articulates the dangers that Hitler and his regime pose and illustrates a cautionary tale.
- Newspapers.com. *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, May 26, 1933.
<https://www.newspapers.com/article/honolulu-star-bulletin/24259031/>
 - Honolulu, Hawaii- Urban Area- This article is similar to the one published in the Miami Herald and discusses the times where previous rulers have unsuccessfully attempted to eradicate literature as well as paints a cautionary tale.
- "Book-Burning Night." *The New York Times*, 10 May 1943,
<https://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1943/05/10/88531922.html?pageNumber=18>
 - This article is one published on the 10 year anniversary of the May 10th 1933 book burnings. It reflects on Germany's position on the world stage a decade later, calls the book burning a "burlesque" and supports the United States and Allied powers as it is involved in WWII.
- Yourman, Julius. "Propaganda Techniques Within Nazi Germany." *The Journal of Educational Sociology*, vol. 13, no. 3, 1939, pp. 148–63. JSTOR,
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https://www.jstor.org/stable/2262307?searchText=&searchUri=%2Faction%2FdoBasicSearch%3FQuery%3DNazi%2Bbook%2Bburning&ab_segments=0%2Fbasic_search_gsv

[2%2Fcontrol&searchKey=&refreqid=fastly-default%3A7ca6d239272aa3000878dac5591eb5f2&seq=1](#)

- This JSTOR article is on the wider topic of propaganda and the rise of censorship but discusses the significance of the 1933 literature/art destruction.
- Palek, Stephanie. “Burning Books.” Cambridge University Library, 23 Apr. 2015, www.lib.cam.ac.uk/collections/departments/germanic-collections/about-collections/spotlight-archive/burning-books.
 - This clipping from the Cambridge archives provides further context and details specific names of which authors and what books were burned. Including Kafka, Hemingway and etc.
- Lochner, Louis P. “Round Robins from Berlin: Louis P. Lochner’s Letters to His Children, 1932-1941.” *The Wisconsin Magazine of History* 50, no. 4 (1967): 291–336. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4634276>.
 - This journal on JSTOR consists of the correspondence between Lochner and his children during the Nazi regime. In his extensive letters to his children Lochner mentions the book burning but rather lightly, a radically different description than the one published in the GDHI report. One can speculate that he changed his reporting to minimize the atrocity and violence and protect his kids.
- United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. “Book Burning” Holocaust Encyclopedia. <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/book-burning> Accessed on [Feb 8, 2024].
 - This website gives additional contextual information on the series of anti-Jewish raids and purges from German literature, art and culture.
- Reed, Betsy. “Nazi Book Burnings in Germany – Archive, 10 May 1933.” *The Guardian*, May 10, 2023. <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2023/may/10/nazi-book-burnings-in-germany-may-1933>
 - This reprint of a Berlin editorial from 1933 also provides further context and details the night and scene of May 10th book burning in Berlin and includes details of which authors/artists were ridiculed and in what ways.