

Harry elmer barnes



**ASSIGN
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Harry Elmer Barnes

In 1952, Harry Elmer Barnes wrote a timely article, "How 'Nineteen Eighty-Four' Trends Threaten American Peace, Freedom, and Prosperity" as the final chapter of the classic revisionist anthology, *Perpetual War for Perpetual Peace*. Barnes analyzed George Orwell's classic novel as a work of prophecy and sounded the alarm to reverse the "1984" trends prevalent in the America of his day. Barnes argued that propagandists and "court historians" were fashioning a present, based on a falsified and inaccurate telling of the past, that was designed to meet Establishment desires to participate in world wars. Ironically, Barnes' article was omitted from the first edition the collection.⁽¹⁾

Barnes may be best remembered as the author of the generally accepted definition of "revisionism,"

"Revisionism means nothing more or less than the effort to correct the historical record in the light of a more complete collection of historical facts, a more calm political atmosphere, and a more objective attitude." ⁽²⁾

Barnes had discovered that a more nearly accurate version of the history of the First World War was only possible after the fighting had ended and the emotional excesses had lessened. He was unable to predict that similar corrections of Allied propaganda and popularized conceptions of the methods of warfare in the Second World War would meet even sterner resistance.

Today - half a century after the conclusion of the Second World War - it would be fair to expect a less emotional environment, one in which

historians, researchers and writers were free to examine the actual causes of the war as well as the atrocities committed by both sides in the conflict. However, those and other topics are more forbidden than ever with the greatest taboo surrounding analysis of the fate of Europe's Jews and others in what has come to be known as the Holocaust.

In 1950, three years prior to Barnes' article concerning "1984" trends another author, Ray Bradbury, set out a foreboding vision of the future in a short story titled, "The Fireman." Later, Bradbury's story would be renamed Fahrenheit 451 after the temperature at which paper burns. Fahrenheit 451 describes a horrific future in which millions of books are banned and firemen set fires instead of extinguishing them. In order to maintain a society of brainwashed, "happy" people, the firemen kick down doors and burn the hated volumes along with the homes that housed them.

Barnes would never have suspected how fast the world would progress from the "1984" trends he identified to the trends Bradbury identified in Fahrenheit 451(3). In our time, we see the events of Bradbury's science fiction novel coming to pass every day.

Custodians of our peace of mind

Bradbury explained the origins of the book burnings in Fahrenheit 451 through his fire chief, Captain Beatty:

"It didn't come from the Government down. There was no dictum, no declaration, no censorship, to start with, no! Technology, mass exploitation, and minority pressure carried the trick, thank God. Today, thanks to them,

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you can stay happy all the time, you are allowed to read comics, the good old confessions, or trade journals" (4)

Contemporary America is similarly undergoing a period of " political correctness" that has touched us on every societal level. The impulse not to " offend" has resulted in the censorship of thought which breaches the limits of recently defined " good taste." The solution to politically incorrect thought is obvious in Bradbury's nightmare world. In the words of Captain Beatty: " Colored people don't like Little Black Sambo. Burn it. White people don't feel good about Uncle Tom's Cabin. Burn it. (5)

One of the first examples of a Fahrenheit 451 trend was an arson-attack on The Historical Review Press (HRP), a publisher of revisionist books in Britain. On November 5, 1980, " firemen" destroyed the office, warehouse and printing plant of the HRP. Damage was estimated at 50, 000 pounds.(6) HRP rebuilt only to have the " firmen" return in September 1996. The offices were once again badly damaged by the " firemen's" flames.(7)

HRP was not the only revisionist publisher to meet a fiery fate. On July 4, 1984, " firemen" paid a call on the Institute for Historical Review (IHR) in California. IHR publishes revisionist histories of the Second World War and has dared to question elements of the orthodox " Holocaust" story. The " firemen" chose to attack IHR's warehouse and burn tens of thousands of books that they feared people would read. Among the books burned was Barnes', Perpetual War for Perpetual Peace. (8)

On May 8, 1995, " firemen" in Canada brought their form of censorship to Ernst Zundel, a small independent publisher. Zundel had run into trouble with the authorities in Canada for publishing a slender volume which dared to pose the question, Did Six Million Really Die?. After years of state

ensorship, Zundel's home and office were severely damaged by fire after an unknown assailant doused the building with gasoline and set it ablaze.

Witnesses reported seeing what Bradbury readers would have to call a "fireman" carrying a red gasoline canister to the front of Zundel's home, "gingerly like a bomb," and setting the fire.

The damage was extensive; many books and files were destroyed. The blazing roof collapsed into the building. What wasn't ruined by the flames was damaged by the water of the official fire brigade which flooded the lower floors. (9)

The message was loud and clear: Publications that inspire thought on certain controversial topics are not allowed.

Setting the Structure to burn the books

Sometimes, the "firemen" are able to carry out their objective - Preventing books from being read - without actually consigning volumes to the flames.

In 1996, St. Martin's Press decided to publish a biography of Hitler's propaganda minister, Joseph Goebbels written by David Irving, a popular albeit controversial British historian.

St. Martin's Press publisher Thomas Dunne issued the following angry statement after receiving dozens of protests against his plans to publish Irving's Goebbels: Mastermind of the Third Reich .

``A number of the calls we have received have expressed fury that we would

publish a book by 'a man like David Irving' and have questioned our moral right to do so. I can only say that Joseph Goebbels must be laughing in hell. He, after all, was the man who loved nothing better than burning books, threatening publishers, suppressing ideas and judging the merits of ideas based not on their content but by their author's racial, ethnic or political purity. That is indeed a sad irony."

The campaign to ban the book built for several weeks. Initially, St. Martin's editors stood by their decision and insisted they found nothing wrong with Irving's book. However, the pressure increased - now including death threats from the "firemen" - and Thomas McCormack, chief executive officer of St. Martin's finally gave in and reversed the company's earlier position.(10) St. Martin's decided not to publish Irving's volume. Far from being widely condemned, the St. Martin's surrender was upheld by numerous American newspapers.

Presumably St. Martin's Press would have acquiesced in a literal as well as a figurative incineration. Submitting to such tyranny is always simpler than standing up to it. In Bradbury's novel, *Fahrenheit 451*, a retired professor says, "I saw the way things were going, a long time back. I said nothing. I'm one of the innocents who could have spoken up and out when no one would listen to the 'guilty,' but I did not speak and thus became guilty myself. And when finally they set the structure to burn the books, using the firemen, I grunted a few times and subsided, for there were no others grunting or yelling with me, by then." (11)

Fahrenheit 451 trends are perhaps most prevalent in Germany. Gunther

Deckert, a school teacher translated into German a work of American execution consultant, Fred Leuchter, titled The Leuchter Report. The report is Leuchter's 1988 analysis of the alleged gas chambers of Auschwitz and Majdanek. Deckert, who was very familiar with Leuchter's work interpreted at a meeting at which Leuchter spoke in Weinheim in November of 1991.

For those actions, Deckert was dragged into court and given a one-year suspended sentence. Owing to protests over that "lenient" penalty, he was retried. This time, in a Karlsruhe court, Judge Eva-Marie Wollentin sentenced him to two years imprisonment - in what has been described as "the freest state in German history."

The Neue Osnabruecker Zeitung spoke for many of Germany's modern editors in an editorial, intoning that it was a just sentence. "There was no reason to suspend the sentence passed on the rightwinger," it declared. "Deckert showed not the slightest repentance" In that, the newspaper was correct. When accused of having shared Leuchter's views, Deckert told the court: "I stand unconditionally by what I said." (12)

Burn It!

Fahrenheit 451 trends become most apparent after Germar Rudolf published an anthology titled, Grundlagen zur Zeitgeschichte: Ein Handbuch ueber strittige Fragen des 20. Jahrhunderts (Foundations of Contemporary History: A Handbook on controversial questions of the Twentieth century). Rudolf, forced to use pseudonyms after publishing Das Rudolf Gutachten (The Rudolf Report), his own scientific analysis of the purported Auschwitz gas chambers, suffered numerous raids on his home by the German state "firemen." In

March of 1995, the " firemen" raided a German publisher and seized all available copies of Grundlagen zur Zeitgeschichte.(13)

In May 1996, Judge Burckhardt Stein ruled that Rudolf had to be arrested without delay for his part in publishing the book. On June 15, 1996, the judge ruled that all copies of Grundlagen zur Zeitgeschichte must be burned. The " firemen" no longer had to operate under the cover of darkness - they were now given official authority to carry out their murder of ideas. Not content to simply burn the words of Rudolf and his co-authors, the " firemen" sentenced Rudolf to 14 months imprisonment. He has so far eluded his captors and today writes in exile.(14)

In Bradbury's novel, Captain Beatty discovers that Montag, the novel's hero - and a renegade firman - had hidden books in his home. For that infraction, the " firemen" visit Montag's home and Beatty orders Montag to burn his own books.

" I want you to do this job all by your lonesome, Montag. Not with kerosene and a match, but piecework, with a flame thrower. Your house, your clean-up."(15)

As Montag burns his home and precious books, Beatty declares not unlike Judge Stein,

" When you're quite finished... you're under arrest." (16)

These are not isolated cases. In February 1995, after receiving numerous complaints, a German publisher ordered the " recycling" of John Sack's An Eye for an Eye which recounts the story of Jewish revenge against the Germans after World War II. Citing information from Germany's Federal Archives, Sack, who is himself Jewish, maintains that 60, 000 to 80, 000

ethnic Germans were killed or otherwise perished between 1945 and 1948 in camps run by the Polish communist regime's Office of State Security.

The German cultural establishment launched a bitter assault. The book was denounced as a sensationalist, " vile docudrama" and a " gift to neo-Nazis." Soon, the book's publisher, R. Piper found itself deluged with complaints.

All 6, 000 copies of the German edition were stacked in a Stuttgart warehouse when Piper publisher Viktor Niemann decided to destroy them. On February 13, the publisher announced, " They will be recycled." (17) In December of 1996, German authorities ordered all copies of Carlos Porter's *Not Guilty at Nuremberg: The German Defense Case* to be destroyed along with the means of reproducing it. Porter resided in Belgium at the time of the German order. Porter's troubles with the German thought police began in August 1996 when he sent several copies of his book, along with a cover letter to several people in Germany.

In Munich, a certain Judge Zeilinger ruled that Porter had violated the German law against " defamation and desecration." He was fined 6, 000 DM for writing and distributing his book, which is a revisionist analysis of the Nuremberg trials. Zeilinger, also directed, in her " Order of Punishment," that all copies of *Not Guilty at Nuremberg* be confiscated, including copies in Porter's personal possession. Zeilinger wrote: " It is also ordered that all means for the production of this published work be confiscated, including any plates, forms, templates, negatives, or matrices."

Zielinger charged that various passages from Porter's revisionist analysis

denied or minimized the tales of the " Holocaust."(18)

Striking the Match

One of the most moving scenes in Bradbury's novel is the raid on an old woman's home when neighbors tip off the authorities that she has built an illegal library. The " firemen" squirt their kerosene over the books. Montag later explains to his wife, " We burnt copies of Dante and Swift and Marcus Aurelius." (19) When the " firemen" attempt to drag the old woman from her house, she refuses to cooperate. The woman is too proud to give in to the " firemen" and instead carries out the final act of rebellion by striking a match and immolating herself.

" On the front porch where she had come to weigh them quietly with her eyes, her quietness a condemnation, the woman stood motionless. Beatty flicked his fingers to spark the kerosene. He was too late. Montag gasped. The woman on the porch reached out with contempt to them all and struck the kitchen match against the railing."(20)

In April 1995, Reinhold Elstner, a former Wehrmacht soldier, chose the same miserable fate. He wrote in his final letter:

" A Niagara of lies and defamations inundates us. Since I am now 75 years old, there is not much left for me to do - but I can still seek death by self-immolation; one last deed that may act as a signal to the Germans to come to their senses. Even if through my deed only one German will awaken, and because of it will find the way to the truth, then my sacrifice will not have been in vain. I felt I have no other choice once I realized that even now, after 50 years, there seems to be little hope that reason would gain the upper hand." (21)

Elstner went to the Feldherrnhalle memorial hall in downtown Munich and

poured gasoline over himself and struck a match. Authorities have banned the publication of his letter and have even made it illegal to leave flowers for Elstner at the site of his immolation. Many wonder how long it would have been before Germany's " firemen" visited Elstner had he not preempted them.

Conclusions

Today authors around the world are finding publishers afraid to touch their manuscripts. Brave publishers are finding printers shutting down their presses to controversial volumes. Published volumes are being consigned to sanctioned burnings by the " firemen."

Around the world, news of immolations like Elstner's are blacked out. We are supposed to occupy our minds with sports on big-screen TV's, video arcades, fast food, cellular telephones to occupy our minds while traveling, lap top computers and even on-flight computer games. Computerized " chat rooms" that enable us to " speak" to faceless strangers are all the rage. How far are we from Bradbury's broadcast TV " families"? Montag's wife exclaims, " If we had a fourth wall of wall-size TV screens, why it'd be just like this room wasn't ours at all, but all kinds of exotic people's rooms." (22)

When war is declared in Fahrenheit 451, people are not over concerned. It will be a " quick war. Forty-eight hours, they said, and everyone home. That's what the Army said." (23) Recall President Clinton's promise that American troops would be home from Bosnia by September 1996! No one seems to mind that they have yet to return. Actual thought is indeed rare today, perhaps because it is so frowned upon.

How many readers of this article have hidden their books and journals? Have you established a secret library yet? Are you afraid of your friends and loved ones? Guy Montag hid his books:

" He reached up and pulled back the grille of the air-conditioning system and reached far back inside to the right and moved still another sliding sheet of metal and took out a book."(24)

Such hiding places are something that each of us should consider if the Fahrenheit 451 trends prevalent today are not reversed.

Ironically, Bradbury mentions censorship of his book on censorship in the " Coda" of Fahrenheit 451.

" I discovered that, over the years, some cubby-hole editors at Ballantine Books, fearful of contaminating the young, had, bit by bit, censored some 75 separate sections from the novel." (25)

Let there be no mistake - the " firemen" are actively at large and active. Our future depends on truth and intellectual freedom rising phoenix-like from the ashes of the present.