

Against the Un-German Spirit: Book-Burning Ceremony in Berlin (Image 1) (May 10, 1933)

Abstract

The prelude to the elimination of all “un-German elements” from the entire cultural arena can be found in the National Socialist German Students’ League (NSDStB) action “Against the Un-German Spirit,” which led to a series of public book-burnings in May and June of 1933. The largest of these events took place on May 10, 1933, on Berlin’s Opera Square [*Opernplatz*], where approximately 20,000 books by “Jewish”, “Bolshevik,” and “Socialist” authors were consigned to the flames. Goebbels delivered a speech on the occasion, making the totalitarian goals of the Nazi regime perfectly clear. (His speech also made clear that propaganda would play a considerable role in the realization of these goals.) Goebbels announced: “Revolutions, when they are genuine, do not stop anywhere! Revolutions are the breakthroughs of new worldviews. And when a worldview can really lay claim to this title, then it cannot content itself with thoroughly revolutionizing one area of public life; rather the breakthrough of this worldview must permeate the whole of public life; no area can remain untouched. So, just as it revolutionizes people, it also revolutionizes things! And in the end, the masses, the people, the state, and the nation will have become one and the same.”

Source



Source: Book burning at the Berlin rally “Against the Un-German Spirit” on Opernplatz in front of the university. Photo: Heinrich Hoffmann.

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