

Against the Un-German Spirit: Book-Burning Ceremony in Berlin (Image 2) (May 10, 1933)

Abstract

The Nazi “coordination” [*Gleichschaltung*] of German culture and literature began soon after Hitler became chancellor. Art was to be rid of all “un-German” elements and used as an instrument in the ideological and racial awakening of the national community [*Volksgemeinschaft*]. In May and June of 1933, in the context of its operation “Against the Un-German Spirit,” the National Socialist German Students’ League (NSDStB) organized a nationwide “purification campaign” directed at public and private libraries. “Un-German” writings by a range of authors, such as Karl Marx, Heinrich and Klaus Mann, Erich Maria Remarque, Sigmund Freud, Carl von Ossietzky and Kurt Tucholsky were subsequently burned in bonfires in a number of university cities. The largest of these events took place on May 10, 1933, on Berlin’s Opera Square [*Opernplatz*], where approximately 20,000 books were consigned to the flames. Within the framework of its “purification campaign,” the NSDStB also drew up a long “blacklist” of writers, books, and other sorts of publications and banned them from that point on.

Source



Source: Book burning at the rally “Wider den undeutschen Geist” (“Against the Un-German Spirit”) sponsored by the German Student Union. Enthusiastic students and SA men with writings destined for destruction on Opernplatz in Berlin in front of the university. Unknown photographer. bpk-Bildagentur, image number 30005292. For rights inquiries, please contact Art Resource at requests@artres.com (North America) or bpk-Bildagentur at kontakt@bpk-bildagentur.de (for all other countries).

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