

I will add, in closing, that my co-authors and I worked very hard to get our facts straight and to weigh all the relevant factors of this troubling case as carefully—and objectively—as possible. That was our mission. We have done our best, I think, under very trying circumstances. We invite those interested in the controversy to read our book, *The Case of the Nazi Professor*, and to draw their own conclusions.

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To the editor:

Regrettably, David Oshinsky's letter fails to address the substantive issues of our Fall 1990 article ("The Confrontation with Nazism at Rutgers"). Instead of debating these issues, he attacks those who disagree with him. Similar attacks (against *Home News* reporter Peter Parisi, his paper, and others) prompted Professor Richard Challener to call the epilogue of the Oshinsky committee's book "unfortunate," saying it gives the "impression of wagons being circled . . . to defend Rutgers." (*New Brunswick Home News*, 29 Jan. 1989). But our role (and even that of Oshinsky's committee) is a secondary matter. *The subject of our article is the Bergel case*. And its central issue is: Why was Lienhard Bergel dismissed? On this question Oshinsky is silent.

1.) The thrust of our article is that, in the 1930s, an avidly pro-Nazi chairman created an entirely pro-Nazi German department by firing its single anti-Nazi faculty member on the pretext of "incompetence." We contend that when Rutgers officials found the incompetence charge insupportable they substituted administrative reasons for the firing (budget, enrollment, and a personnel rule). We demonstrate that the pro-Nazi chairman could not tolerate disagreement, and we reveal private memoranda and other evidence that contradict crucial testimony by Rutgers officials. But Oshinsky's letter does not mention our evidence.

2.) Oshinsky further avoids debate by citing notices of his committee's book by the local press. *But reviews cannot substitute for evidence*. Moreover, reviewers relying on the book would have been unaware that it omits the memoranda and other evidence that impeach crucial testimony in the case. Nor would they have known from the book that, in five days as a witness, the pro-Nazi chairman failed to mention the administrative reasons that are central to the Rutgers case. The reviewers also would have been unaware that the personnel rule essential to that case was not uniformly enforced at the time. And they would have held a severely distorted picture of the career of anti-Nazi instructor Lienhard Bergel.

3.) In terms of fairness and accuracy, the treatment of Bergel's career by Oshinsky's committee is revealing (*The Case of the Nazi Professor*, 84). First the committee asserts: "[Reporter] Parisi wrote that Dr. Bergel 'went on to a distinguished career in comparative literature' and retired 'after helping to establish the graduate school of the City University of New York.'" Then the committee negates: "He [Bergel] published perhaps a dozen articles in his forty-year career. Our committee could find no evidence that Dr. Bergel helped to establish the graduate school at CUNY, although he did teach there as an adjunct professor in the 1970s."

But the committee's negation (being erroneous or misleading on several counts) amounts to a gratuitous disparagement of Bergel's distinguished career. For Bergel's colleagues, CUNY records, and the Bergel archives at Columbia University, give the following picture: Bergel "played a *major role* [emphasis added] in the establishment of the doctoral program in comparative literature" at CUNY; he was a *full* member of the graduate faculty there until his retirement, when he was named an adjunct; he was awarded three separate Fulbright research fellowships; he was elected (national) chairman of the comparative literature section of the MLA; he was also elected (national) chairman of the German 5 (modern literature) group of the MLA; he published more than 40 articles and a book, as well as numerous reviews, translations, and bibliographies; and his scholarly work won critical praise from such luminaries as Thomas Mann, Benedetto Croce, and Rene Wellek. Still, despite our earlier revelation of these facts, Oshinsky's committee has not announced a retraction.

4.) While linking us to the late Alan Silver, Oshinsky continues to attack him. But a *New York Times* editorial (8 Sept. 1985) credited Silver with the reopening of the Bergel case, and the Rutgers AAUP honored him for this achievement. One of us (M.G.) mentioned his friendship with Silver in a book review (*History of Education Quarterly*, Spring 1990, 127), but our friendship has no bearing on the substantive issues of the Bergel case. However, our Fall 1990 article clearly reveals that we believe an injustice was done, and that it must be righted; in this sense, we are unmistakably "partisan." In any event, we are confident that readers of this journal will judge our article on its evidence.

5.) Oshinsky wrongly accuses us of imputing motives to his committee, alleging that we charged it with "set[ting] out to exonerate Rutgers at all costs," and, of course, he cites no quotation to support his accusation. He also misses our point concerning the partisanship of his committee. What makes its lobbying against Bergel unseemly is its official status as appointee of the Rutgers administration to adjudicate the Bergel case.

6.) Oshinsky is correct, however, in noting the brevity of our reference to the Rutgers AAUP interest in the Bergel case. Had our article possessed a different focus, it would have cited the following press accounts to explain why the words “academic freedom” were omitted from the award for courageous conduct given to Bergel by the Rutgers AAUP:

[Academic Freedom Committee chairman Daniel] O'Connor said the group was persuaded by historians David Oshinsky and Richard P. McCormick that the lack of explicit academic freedom protections . . . made it inappropriate to rule on that point. . . . Oshinsky contended Friday the AAUP had to be careful not to set an awkward precedent. . . . The question becomes, do you, years later, investigate these academic freedom cases? . . . Oshinsky said this was part of the argument he presented to O'Connor. (*New Brunswick Home News*, 19 April 1987)

O'Connor had said that the faculty union could not allow itself to become an arena for differences of opinion among its members . . . University spokeswoman Jose Steinbock noted recently that it would be difficult for the AAUP to take a stand critical of the historians, who were AAUP members and distinguished faculty members. . . . [O'Connor said] “*I'm telling you now his academic freedom was violated* [emphasis added], but there was no mechanism, no due process, no grievance procedure.” (*New Brunswick Home News*, 17 April 1987)

The readiness of Rutgers officials to cooperate with their Nazi chairman in purging the lone anti-Nazi from the German department exposes issues of profound import for their time: the ambivalent and contradictory attitudes towards facsism; the pervasiveness of anti-Semitism in the United States; and the fragile nature of academic freedom. But these issues have been accorded cursory notice, or none at all, by two official committees (the second being Oshinsky's), selected by Rutgers (fifty years apart) to investigate the Bergel case—because both times the original verdict was affirmed almost entirely on the testimony of Rutgers officials who engaged in documented deceptions and other “questionable activities.” Our article is an attempt to begin addressing these issues. Hopefully, future discussions will focus on such critical aspects of the Bergel case and avoid irrelevant asides or *ad hominem* attacks.

We join David Oshinsky in inviting “those interested in the controversy” to read his book. But, having done so ourselves, and having searched the archives as well, we must caution readers not “to draw their own conclusions” until they have reviewed the book's omitted data, and other errors, that are disclosed in our Fall 1990 article.

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Editorial note: Letters are printed verbatim.