

Chicago Professor Linked to Anti-Semitic Past

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CHICAGO, Nov. 27 — Events of a half century ago have become a center of controversy at the University of Chicago, where a visiting professor has been accused of writing anti-Semitic views as a young woman in Nazi Germany.

In the August 1991 issue of the monthly magazine *Commentary*, an article by Leo Bogart entitled "The Pollster and the Nazis," accuses the professor, Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann, of including anti-Semitic remarks in her dissertation, as well as in an article about Jewish control of the media in *Das Reich*, a Nazi newspaper.

Although Professor Noelle-Neumann does not deny making the comments, which were published in 1940, she says her writing should be judged by the circumstances of the time. She declined to comment further. Professor Noelle-Neumann is a leading German opinion researcher who sometimes advises Chancellor Helmut Kohl.

In a letter to the editor of *Commentary*, which was circulated throughout the University of Chicago political science department and is scheduled to be published in January, Professor Noelle-Neumann wrote, "Anyone who has dealt with texts written under a dictatorship knows that certain

phrases serve an alibi function and are a necessity if one is to be able to write what is in fact prohibited. I am terribly sorry if any hurt was caused by what I wrote 50 years ago," she said. "I certainly can say that when I wrote that passage at the time, I had no intention of doing any harm to the Jews."

Faculty members and students throughout the university are debating the criticisms of Professor Noelle-Neumann and her response. Many professors in her department are demanding a more complete apology.

"What upset me is the conditional nature of her response," said Bernard Silberman, a political science profes-

sor.

John Mearsheimer, chairman of the department, said: "Knowing what we know now about the Holocaust, there is no reason for her not to apologize. To ask somebody who played a contributing role in the greatest crime of the 20th century to say 'I'm sorry' is not unreasonable."

Defense From Student

But a graduate student in her public opinion class, which Professor Noelle-Neumann has taught as a visiting professor since 1978, said he was satisfied with her response. "I'm not sure what Professor Mearsheimer expects more than that," said the student, Foster Marshall, a political science graduate student.

Norman Bradburn, director of the National Opinion Research Center at

the University of Chicago, and a friend of Professor Noelle-Neumann for more than 20 years, said: "I would take her reply to *Commentary* as a type of apology, at least of recognition."

Professor Noelle-Neumann, who was born in 1916, says she joined a student group so she could be an exchange student at the University of Missouri in 1937-38. Mr. Bogart, a sociologist, says she belonged to at least two national socialist organizations as well.

At Missouri, she wrote, an article about the Nazi party for the student newspaper, *The Missourian*, saying, "National Socialism is opposed to the mixing of the races because it sees herein a danger to the maintenance of national character, since history shows sufficient examples that the downfall of great nations has set in with the mixing of the races."

Mr. Bogart wrote, and Professor Noelle-Neumann confirms, that after returning to Germany in 1938 she wrote a dissertation that included anti-Semitic remarks like, "Since 1933, the Jews, who have monopolized a great part of America's intellectual life, have concentrated their demagogic abilities on anti-German agitation."

In a recent interview, Mr. Bogart said he wrote the *Commentary* piece because Professor Noelle-Neumann's involvement with the Nazi party could be reflected in her research, and because she would not acknowledge what he felt were anti-Semitic beliefs. "She is an authority on public opinion and she worked for the Nazi propaganda machine, which had on its agenda the corruption of public opinion," he said.

Professor's Own Nazi Past Accuses Her

To the Editor:

A propaganda machine that tightly controlled the minutiae of the press was as integral to Nazi totalitarianism as its killing installations. Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann in her Dec. 14 letter describes Jewish editors happily practicing their profession on a "liberal" newspaper in wartime Germany. This preposterous depiction shows contempt for truth and an assumption that today's Americans are ignorant and bored with the subject.

She has been consistent. In 1940 she described most Americans as latently a seething street mob, in the sense described by the French social psychologist Gustave Le Bon: "Atrophy of known personality, orientation of emotional experiences and thoughts in the same direction through suggestibility and contagion, authoritarianism and intolerance, simplicity of the whole inner life, and in particular uniformity of behavior in spite of individual differences."

In 1944, when her husband was propaganda aide to the Gauleiter of Dresden, she wrote of the United States as a "pseudo-democracy," controlled by "the money power," virtually on the verge of revolution.

The "accusations" of anti-Semitism to which her letter refers are quotations from her own writings. Her résumé of May 15, 1939, lists her activities as a cell leader of the Arbeitsgemeinschaft Nationaler Studentinnen in Munich and as a mem-

ber of the Gaustudentenführung in Berlin, the Nationalsozialistischer Deutscher Studentenbund and the Nationalsozialistische Studentenkampfhilfe. These affiliations, like her writings of that period, are insignificant next to her failure to acknowledge them and their relevance to her career in public opinion research.

LEO BOGART
New York, Dec. 14, 1991

The writer is author of "Premises for Propaganda."

Apology Sought

To the Editor:

Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann's Dec. 14 letter, responding to your Nov. 28 news article, confuses the issue.

She has admitted she was not hostile to the Nazis before 1940. She says she was anti-Nazi after 1940, but has produced no evidence that she criticized the Nazis then. She wrote anti-Semitic words in 1938-41, and there is no evidence she was compelled to write them. Queried on her anti-Semitic writings, she told me: "I have never written anything in my life that I did not believe to be true."

Professor Noelle-Neumann's criticisms have merely asked for a straightforward apology for writing hateful words about Jews in Hitler's Germany. Her refusal has caused this controversy.

JOHN J. MEARSHEIMER
Prof., Political Science, U. of Chicago
Chicago, Dec. 16, 1991