



ART BUCHWALD REPORTS

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## 'Subversive' Inquiry Begins at Library

WASHINGTON — The most important thing to remember this year is not to look back: Because Big Brother is catching up to you.

The latest Orwellian news to hit the American public is that Treasury Department agents representing the IRS are visiting public libraries to check on what books readers are taking out.

The investigators are interested in anyone who has borrowed books on explosives, but their interest also includes anyone who might be checking out "militant and subversive" publications as well.

The checks have been confirmed by the IRS, and a spokesman, when asked about it, said, "As far as I know it's just routine. The only thing special is some librarian complained about it."

It's good to know the IRS is concerned with the rights of its citizens. But at the same time it's going to make those of us who use the public libraries think twice before we take out a book.

I CAN IMAGINE a scene at the Maplewood County Public Library.

"Miss Philpott, my name is Spangle and I'm a treasury

agent with the Internal Revenue Service. Have you noticed anything suspicious around here lately?"

"Suspicious?"

"Anyone taking out any funny books?"

"Let me see. Someone borrowed Robert Benchley's collection yesterday."

"I don't mean that kind of funny. I mean books about explosions, stuff like that."

"Come to think of it, Harold Flemingheimer took out 'Chitty Chitty Bang Bang' and hasn't returned it yet."

"'Chitty Chitty Bang Bang', huh? What does this Harold look like? Does he have long hair?"

"Oh yes."

"Sloppy dresser?"

"I should say so. He comes in here without shoes on."

"You don't have a duplicate of his library card do you, Miss Philpott?"

"Yes, I do. He lost his and we had to issue him a new one. We found the old one. Here it is."

"Hmmm, very interesting. He took out 'The Little Red Fire Engine' on May 6, 'Three Little Pigs' on May 20, and 'Joan of Arc' on June 12. Has he ever talked politics with you?"

"Not really. He's only 9 years old."

"WELL, KEEP AN EYE on him. Do you mind if I go through your files? Who is this Philip Crestwood who took out 'The Guns of Navarone' on April 12?"

"He goes to Columbia University."

"He does, does he? I notice on July 1 he took out 'Gone With the Wind.'"

"Is there something wrong with 'Gone With the Wind'?"

"Don't you recall the burning of Atlanta?"

"Of course. I never did like Philip Crestwood. He forgot to return 'Thunder Out of China' last winter and he was fined 14 cents."

"Well, Mr. Crestwood is going to go into our little computer. These people always make tiny mistakes that trip them up. Being a member of the public library might result in Mr. Crestwood's downfall."

"Are you going to go through all the cards?"

"If you don't mind, Miss Philpott. Unbelievable as it may sound to you, Trotsky learned everything he knew from the Odessa Public Library Branch No. 2."

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