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# Bundy, Free Speech and the 'Toothless' Nazis

A Commentary  
By Nicholas von Hoffman

Coming as they do now, after almost 25 years of silence, the accusations must have a horror movie-like aspect to them for McGeorge Bundy, the head of the Ford Foundation. In the 1950s Bundy was the dean of the faculty of arts and sciences at Harvard, and the accusations that recently broke surface in the New York Review of Books are that, during the McCarthy era, Bundy was a clandestine ideological bouncer who kicked ex-Communists who wouldn't rat on their friends out of the university.

"I was summoned to the office of McGeorge Bundy," writes Robert Bellah, now a professor of sociology at Berkeley, of the events in the summer of 1954. "Bundy told me that an 'officer of the university' had informed him of my political past and that I had an obligation of complete candor; as he put it, to confess my activities and to name all of my former associates to the FBI or to any other duly authorized body. . . . One week after meeting Bundy I was picked up on the street by two FBI agents and taken to the Boston office for interview."

In 1964 Bellah was in the midst of trying to get a job at Harvard as was

Sigmund Diamond, now professor at Columbia University, who writes, "Bundy told me that to talk only about myself was not good enough, that under those circumstances he would not go through with the appointment that had been agreed upon."

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but if I were prepared to name the names of those I had known, he would put forward my appointment."

While agreeing with some but not all the facts as alleged by Bellah and Diamond, Bundy puts a wholly different construction on his act: "The unfairness of these accusations . . . reflects the mixture of animus and self-pity, and also the assumptions of conspiracy, that can recapture so many ex-Communists still when they review their Communist and post-Communist experiences."

More interesting than the degree of Bundy's culpability is that all of this was about EX-Communists. Diamond joined the party in 1941 and resigned toward the end of the decade. Bellah was a member as an undergraduate for two brief years. Thus, we're not even talking about dissenters but the cases of two who had had once, some years before, subscribed to a dissent-

ing doctrine. Apparently everybody agrees that having an actual, practicing, card-carrying Commie on the faculty would have been unthinkable. Yet perhaps one of the reasons that Harvard men contributed out of proportion to the disasters of the 1960s was because they surrounded themselves with so many thinkalikes. Maybe if Bundy had had access to a few more kooks and Commies he would not have gone to Washington to play a role under Kennedy and Johnson that won him the reputation of being one of the worst of the brightest.

If Bundy had acted otherwise, he doubtless would have gotten the same treatment Bellah and Diamond did. Only in fair times will you find administrators who will agree with William Schaper, fired from his professorship at the University of Minnesota in 1917 for his opposition to the war: "Who is the real patriot anyhow, the man who waves the flag and shouts on the side that will profit him the most, or the man who risks the loss of old and dear friends, the ill-will of his superiors, the abuse of the press, and finally his only source of income to keep his country out of the most awful war in all history?"

Schaper was reduced to selling washboards for a living, but that was wartime and wartime like McCarthy-

time offers the excuse of hysteria. But what about now? What about the Nazis, for instance, who want to march in the heavily Jewish suburb of Skokie, Ill., and have been effectively prevented from doing so by the courts since April?

Hateful as the Nazis are, they are as toothless as a young Harvard Ph.D. who spent two undergraduate years as a Communist.

The American Nazi Party simply is not a threat and yet the latest of the court rulings in this case says they can march but not display their swastikas. The Illinois Appellate Court ruled that "The evidence conclusively shows that at least one resident of Skokie considered the swastika to be a personally abusive epithet . . . likely to provoke a violent reaction in him . . . If the swastika would naturally offend thousands of Jewish persons in Skokie, then it must be said that it would offend all those who respect the honestly held fate of their fellows, including the ordinary citizen." Ergo if you say something which might antagonize me and a lot of other people agree with me, you have to shut up.

So be warned, if you hover unclear thoughts during the next great crisis, free speech remains an unprotected right for which there is no Equal Opportunity Commission.