

THE BARBARIANS ARE IN THE GATE

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Last fall when the Catholic League protested the "Sensation" exhibition at the Brooklyn Museum of Art, we were accused of censorship. Leading the way was Joan E. Bertin, executive director of the National Coalition Against Censorship.

In the fall of 1998, Bertin got so uptight with us for protesting the Terrence McNally play, "Corpus Christi," that she not only accused us of censorship, she signed a statement—endorsed by all of New York's major artists—commending the Manhattan Theatre Club for putting on the play. Now she's back again, although this time we can hardly hear her voice.

Bertin is a bit miffed at those who are now complaining about the Whitney Museum playing host to a trivialization of the Holocaust; a German-born artist is comparing Rudolph Giuliani to Hitler because of the New York mayor's protest of "Sensation." The "Sanitation" exhibition by Hans Haacke features a row of garbage cans that blare out the sound of marching troops and sports a wall lined with passages from Hitler that are contrasted to statements made by Giuliani and others. Bertin defends Haacke, but ever so gently.

The reason Bertin is easy on those who are railing against the Whitney is because she's on the left. In her mind, the left "is traditionally anti-authoritarian." This is odd given that the left perfected oppression, especially in the 20th century. Don't the names of Lenin, Stalin, Mao and Pol Pot mean anything to her? Does she think Castro's a reform Democrat?

In any event, what Bertin will not do is write a statement in

support of the Whitney for braving the “censors” at the ADL who oppose “Sanitation” and then get every single major artist in New York to sign it. But that’s exactly what she did when the Catholic League protested “Corpus Christi”—she got the arts establishment to sign a statement in support of the Manhattan Theatre Club and against the Catholic League.

In other words, when we exercise our First Amendment right to freedom of speech by calling attention to works of art that offend us, we are barbarians at the gate who must be stopped. Now what do you think would be the reaction among elites if real barbarism took place? Let me rephrase this: what would be the reaction among elites if the barbarians were those “anti-authoritarian” ones on the left? I won’t keep you guessing for long.

Consider what happened recently in Montreal, as reported in Canada’s newest national daily, the *National Post*, and the *Montreal Gazette*.

On March 7, 15 people wearing ski masks spray-painted graffiti with the words “Religion—A Trap for Fools” on a pillar outside Mary Queen of the World Cathedral in downtown Montreal. Inside, they painted “No God, no masters” on one of the altars. They overturned flowerpots and stuck sanitary napkins—some soiled—to pictures and walls. Condoms were thrown around the cathedral, the missal was stolen and hundreds of hymn and prayer books were destroyed. There was an attempt to overthrow the tabernacle as well.

The group, Collectif Autonome Féministe, was celebrating International Women’s Day in Montreal, and when they barged into the church they cursed religion and said they were claiming the right to abortion and freedom of speech. In a written statement, they denounced the Catholic Church’s teachings on abortion, homosexuality and sex education. They were not charged with a hate crime because the authorities concluded that there wasn’t enough evidence to make the charge

stick. So they were charged with “unlawful assembly.”

What is absolutely amazing is that one week after this outbreak of fascism, not one U.S. newspaper reported on what happened, though the *New York Times* did run a story on March 14 on the controversy in Quebec over whether Pokemon cards should be issued in French.

Moreover, AP ran a story on March 8, 1999, on a synagogue that was vandalized in Siberia, but said nothing about the March 7, 2000 desecration of the Montreal church. But AP did address another issue in Montreal on March 14: the story was entitled “U.S. Files Complaint against European Union on Jet Mufflers.”

In Montreal at least, the barbarians are inside the gate. What’s worse is that the media in the U.S. and Canada could care less. But if vandals hit a synagogue in Siberia, that’s news.

In this topsy-turvy world of political correctness, Catholics who protest anti-Catholicism are censors, and feminist fascists who use Nazi-like tactics to terrorize a Catholic church are guilty of “unlawful assembly.” So now you know what the reaction of elites would be if the left engaged in barbarism. Nothing. Surprised?