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Published by Gary Brown,
4930 Haverhill Commons Circle,
Apt. #23,
West Palm Beach, Fla. 33417

Telephone: (H) 561-687-5084;
(W) 561-820-4824.

E-mail: garyb98294@aol.com

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HAT COULD THEY have been thinking about? Was it a serious attempt to not offend anyone in the entire universe?

Was it an anti-Semitic plot?

Was it the thinking of a nervous, untrained “editor?”

Or, was it plain stupidity?

The Washington Post article Saturday that detailed a really silly error of omission by DC Comics was shocker. appeared on the front page of *The Palm Beach Post* mostly because we have a large and vocal Jewish readership.

The article is printed in full below and continued on the next page.

No doubt, the powers-that-be at DC Are trying to figure a way out of this one as I type this. Do another series of stories in which the word Jew is mentioned in every panel? Portray all Germans as devils? What could they do.

As bad as this makes DC look. As silly as the “editor” must feel. I believe it is a mistake. One of those “errors on the side of

—continued—

DC issues Super apology

DC Comics apologizes for omission of Jews in current super-hero tale

By Michael Colton, *The Washington Post*

Anything can happen in comic books — including, apparently, a Holocaust without Jews.

After receiving criticism from Jewish groups, DC Comics is apologizing for omitting the word “Jews” from a current time-travel story line in which Superman battles Nazis in 1940s Poland.

“DC Comics did not intend to imply that Jews did not suffer from the Holocaust, and we apologize to people to whom we gave that impression,” says Martha Thomases, publicity manager for the company, a division of Time-Warner.

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In *Superman: The Man of Steel* Nos. 81 and 82, Superman and Lois Lane are in the Warsaw Ghetto, witnessing mass murder and helping oppressed refugees escape a train bound for a concentration camp. The refugees wear yarmulkes and have names like Moishe and Baruch, but the word “Jew” is never used. Neither are “Catholic” or “German.”

According to Thomases, the issue’s editor “didn’t want kids who were reading the comic book, and maybe learning about the Holocaust for the first time, to go outside and start play-acting it and calling each other names. He didn’t want people using those words as insults. (He) didn’t want to instill these negative stereotypes into children.”

But Myrna Shinbaum, a spokeswoman for the Anti-Defamation League, says DC’s attempt to be sensitive backfired. “We found it extremely offensive, that in what was to have been a positive teaching lesson, Jews were not mentioned,” she says. “You can’t be general when you talk about victims of the Holocaust. To rob the victims of their identity — when they became victims solely because of their identity, the fact that they were Jews — is just misguided on their part...”

“We don’t believe that there was any malice involved or anything sinister,” she says. “They started out with very good intentions and it just went awry. It’s like taking politically correct to the nth degree.”

The writer, Jon Bogdanove, originally used the words, but his editor, Joey Cavalieri, deleted them. Instead the stories refer to “the target population of the Nazis’ hate” and “the murdered residents” of a bombed-out village.

“They didn’t want me to use the word ‘Jewish,’ “ Bogdanove told the *Jewish Week*, a New York newspaper. “They wanted to avoid using buzzwords.”

DC editors may have been especially sensitive about the content of the books because of the nature of Superman’s audience.

“DC does a lot of comics for sophisticated kids, or teens or even adults,” says Tom Spurgeon, the editor of *The Comics Journal*. “At the same time, they’re working with hugely profitable characters and licenses — Superman, Batman, Wonder Woman — that have appeal over a much wider audience skewing younger.”

Superman was created 60 years ago by two Jewish teenagers, Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster. On Krypton, Superman’s native planet, his name was “Kal-El,” which can be loosely translated from Hebrew as “God of all” or “voice of God.” The character has fought in World War II before: In a similar story in a 1991 issue, titled “The Warsaw Ghetto,” the word “Jew” was used frequently.

Several of DC’s superhero characters are Jewish as well. “I remember as a kid when I found out that Colossal Boy in the Legion of Super Heroes was Jewish,” says Thomases, “which meant that there were still Jews in the 30th century, and I was thrilled.”

caution” mistakes that not just hurts the individual responsible, but is most reflective of the corporation involved.

We live in a time when a sneeze is grounds for litigation or public outrage. So, it is not unusual for a multi-media giant like Time Warner Turner to make sure its editors and supervisors understand that they can create a firestorm of criticism by showing the least bit of prejudice, misunderstanding, omission or lack of knowledge.

When you get down to an issue editor like Joey Cavalieri, he’s probably more concerned with making a mistake than leaving something out.

I don’t know how this all worked out. Whether it ultimately was Cavalieri’s decision or he received instruction from his bosses.

But essentially, DC took the stance that it’s better to rewrite history than to have some group be offended. Let’s not call the Warsaw ghetto people “Jews” or “homosexuals,” but just leave them as scruffy, helpless people.

Let’s not call the country Germany or the political group in charge Nazis.

If the story had been written that way — similar circumstances, but the names and faces have been change, etc. — then that’s a legitimate literary device. But to CHANGE the story the way DC did, well, that’s asking for trouble.

Truth is, you’d be hard pressed to FIND a super-hero comic book without a Nazi villain. Now, they and other racial and ethnical stereotypes don’t exist?

Corporations don’t have balls. They rarely will stand up for creative rights or back the efforts of a storyteller — unless it makes a LOT of money. They are good at finding someone to blame.

No doubt, someone will be the fall guy for this. The result will be more knock-down, drag-out fights and less social commentary in the pages of Superman, Batman or other DC books.

What it should be is a good lesson to writers and editors of any publication that you got to walk the fine line between being sensitive and standing up for what you believe in.

Otherwise, you look stupid. Like DC does.