

# SCIENCE FICTION NEWS

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## S.F. VINDICATED IN BONN CASE

In Bonn, Western Germany, recently science fiction fought and won an important victory in defence against official thought control.

Magazine science fiction was challenged under local censorship laws of Bavaria. Adverse decision would have stopped publication of Germany's first two magazines, and no doubt held up further attempts in the same direction. Censorship practice is for complaints to be considered by a committee of twelve prominent citizens, which by a two-thirds majority has absolute authority to ban further publication.

Before Hitler, the beginnings of a science fiction tradition existed in Germany, with writers like von Harbou, von Hanstein, Freksa, Gall, Spohr and Dominik; post-war development has been slow, and specialist magazines are still a new idea. There are two, companion publications both titled *Utopia*. One is a 98-page digest featuring imported translations, mainly British so far (Clarke, Bulmer, H. J. Campbell). With a "thin end of the wedge" policy, as in other countries before, popular rather than advanced stories are used, but the standard intended is similar to that of the average U.S. or British magazine. Its companion is a slimmer *Utopia-Kleinband* aimed at the juvenile market, a single-character series subtitled *Jim Parkers Abenteuer im Weltraum* (Jim Parker's Adventures in Space), credited to Alf. Tjornsen. Its equivalent in English does not exist to-day, but can be found in the old *Doc Savage* and *Captain Future*. The senior magazine was under attack.

Three issues were selected for condemnation, the feature stories criticised as "Cruel, sinister, too realistic with atomic weapons . . . full of terrible acts. And they glorify the use of atomic war".

Pacifist editor Walter Ernsting protested: "They do not understand why some of these S.F. novels are so realistic and sometimes 'horrible'—that only realistic description can prevent people ever using such weapons in the future . . . The horrible future is only to be prevented by the realistic picture of it!" He appealed to American science fictionists for support. The Los Angeles S.F. Society, Fantasy Foundation and individuals wrote and cabled protests, while

Forrest J. Ackerman sent a 2,000 word defence which Ernsting had duplicated for perusal of the investigating committee.

Ackerman said in part: "I am indebted to the German science fiction story-tellers who opened my eyes to the wonders of the Universe, to the value of human understanding, to the treasures of peace and co-operation and progress . . . There are great American and English writers, too, bombarding the human brain with thoughts and ideals . . . If sometimes they dip their pens in acid and blood and paint pain-pictures of ghastly atomic horror, it is to crystallise the disastrous results of unholy ambition, twisted reasoning, misapplied science. For every bomb that drops in science fiction, an explosion takes place in the mind of the reader that blows away misconception. For every tower of lies that is toppled a skyscraper of truth is erected.

"I do not wildly claim that every science fiction story is a masterpiece of imagination, morality and inspiration . . . there are some bad—some mighty bad science fiction stories! . . . But rarely 'bad' in the moralistic or philosophical sense. It is too bad, but not too late, that it is coming so late to Germany in a regular, recognised form. I do not doubt for an instant that it is crude and unformed as yet, but you have countrymen capable of quickly remedying that . . . Don't turn your back on science fiction, don't kill the opportunity for a literature that has proven its value elsewhere in the world to live and grow and demonstrate its worth to you. Germany has given much to science fiction—God grant that you will now have the vision to get from science fiction the wisdom, strength and courageous, constructive imagination that are the basic ingredients of this literature".

After deliberating, the censoring committee voted unanimously in favour of *Utopia*. Their report described the American communications received as "veritable bombshells", and went on to say: "We were astonished that science fiction is so important as to arouse this concern".

British science fictionist Julian Parr, who attended the proceedings, said: "It was a very fair trial, science fiction emerging with its position strengthened in the process".

As a result of the incident local readers anticipate rapid growth of interest. Germany's first Science Fiction Club is announced, headed by Walter Spiegl of Niederrhausen, and a Convention is envisaged for 1957.

## BOOKS

Heinemann's new Science Fiction Series made a rather discouraging start with *Utopia 239* by Rex Gordon, *Dark Dominion* by David Duncan, and *Down to Earth* by Paul Capon. But the next three books are a different proposition altogether; they are genuine science fiction of the highest order.

A new edition of *The War of the Worlds* (7/6) by H. G. Wells is the first of these. If there is anyone left who has never read the 57-year-old classic novel of interplanetary invasion, so cruelly parodied on the screen a couple of years ago, it's about time he found out how much he has been missing. Wells' eye-witness account of a Martian attack on southern England around the turn of the century was something completely new and brilliantly original when first published. Now there have been hundreds, perhaps thousands, of invasion stories. Almost every important writer in the field has written one or more, and for dabblers and beginners it has been a standard theme. Some of the best and worst of science fiction has been inspired ultimately by *The War of the Worlds*. And even remembering the contributions of men like Campbell, Heinlein, Williamson and Wyndham, one of the best is still Wells' original.

The next two books are American in origin, appearing here for the first time in book form in Britain at 10/6. *Bring the Jubilee* by Ward Moore is a novel of time travel and an alternate present, giving a compelling picture of a possible world in which the Confederacy won the American Civil War. The Union remained as a backward minor power, overshadowed by the Confederacy, which absorbed the West and then gradually Latin America. The first-person viewpoint is that of a self-educated peasant youth who eventually became a leading authority on military history in his world, an equal of Captain Eisenhower and Field-Marshal Liddell Hart.

*Lost Darknes's Fall* by I. Sprague de Camp also has an alternate time track as its theme, but from a different angle. The initial problem is, how would a modern man fare in 6th-century Gothic Rome? De Camp makes him a classical scholar, accidentally moved back in time and stranded in a situation where he has a chance of immediate survival. From then on Martin Padway's career is an eventful one, as he tries to apply his 20th-century knowledge to advantage, knowing that if he successfully introduces items like printing, gunpowder, Arabic numerals and optical instruments he must change the course of

history. A well-balanced view of how the position could be exploited, presented with de Camp's characteristic dry humour. This was his first novel, first published in a shorter version in *Unknown*, December, 1939, one of his best—and the first published in book form in Britain.

*The Treasury of Science Fiction Classics* is the promising title of a new collection edited by Harold W. Kuebler (Hanover House, \$2.95, 694 pp.). It sets out to present a representative selection of the most important science fiction stories. A single volume could hardly cover much of the field, but a bird's-eye survey of the historically important stories could be a valuable project. There is a huge body of work neither well known nor readily accessible which deserves more attention than it gets. There are the innumerable books and magazine stories published before the very existence of science fiction as such was accepted, now little known except to specialists: *Famous Fantastic Mysteries* did good work in bringing some of it to light, but it made hardly more than a beginning. There are the magazines like *Argosy* and *Blue Book* which regularly featured imaginative fiction for a wide audience earlier in the century, and there are Gernsback's factual magazines with science fiction stories slipped in which led directly to the foundation of *Amazing*. And then there are the first few years of the specialist magazines, with their medley of contradictory trends and rapid evolution. And one could even extend the scope of the enquiry to include some of the revolutionary stories here and there which still occur, which lead to revisions of common assumptions, like Leinster's "Sidewise in Time" and Heinlein's "Universe".

Unfortunately, the present collection seems a poor attempt. J. F. McComas calls it "The most routine of scissors-and-paste jobs, done without any editorial skill whatsoever". (*New York Times*, February 27). While the material is excellent as far as it goes, it is almost all available in other collections of recent years, or in fuller versions. Excerpts from works as well-known as Huxley's *Brave New World* are featured, which seems rather pointless to-day when there is so much science fiction being published and the field is so well known, or should we say notorious?

A book to recommend is Robert Heinlein's *Assignment in Eternity* (Museum, 9/6). It is made up of an odd assortment of four stories with not much in common except their author. None is fitted into the famous Heinlein "Future History", to which the majority of his stories conform. First is the short novel "Gulf", a tough, fast moving future spy thriller; an entertaining pot-boller, mainly of interest as his first appearance in post-war *Astounding* after a gap of six years. The next two are from the early 'forties. "Lost Legacy" appeared in *Super Science* as "Lost Legion". To modern readers there may seem to be

echoes of Dianetics and Shaver; in fact, the connection, if any, would be the other way. This was one of the most important examples in its time of stories based on the notion of potential mental powers, parapsychology and parapsysics—telepathy, clairvoyance, telekinesis, teleportation and all the other hypotheticals now called "Psi" for short. Actually based not so much on Rhine and his cheer squad as on the older popular fallacy about most of the human brain being unused. Mt. Shasta is tossed in for good measure. But read it, anyway, because it's an excellent short novel that manages to carry conviction. "Elsewhen" was called "Elsewhere" in *Astounding* in 1951; parallel time tracks is the theme. Finally, there is "Jerry is a Man", from *Thrilling Wonder* of 1948. An interesting treatment of the problem, what is a person? The problem arises when mutated apes developed as slave labour have the power of speech and start showing an interest in their legal rights. This is a different slant on the problem of *Vectors*' more recent novel *Borderline*, and a far more probable solution.

If you are still reading alarmed and despondent novels exploring the personal life of sensitive souls in grim future police states, another one for you is *The Bright Phoenix* by Harold Mead (Michael Joseph "Novels of To-morrow" series, 12/6). Sooner or later someone will write a good novel along these lines; it's a field wide open for the personally well-balanced writer with good background in the right fields of study who is willing to do some constructive thinking.

From the same publisher is *The Year of the Comet* by John Christopher (12/6). In contrast to Mead's anti-Utopia, this book takes place in a world dominated by a probable social order neither ideal nor unthinkable: the Managerial World Non-State which has figured in various of Christopher's short stories. It would work, it could evolve from present conditions, it could endure extreme stress without disintegrating, and it has both good and bad points which its citizens would recognise. In fact, it has an air of reality. The more so because it's just part of the necessary background of the book, not the centre of interest. This is a novel, not a fictionalised political tract, and its characters do a lot more than blame the system for their troubles. Three cheers for Christopher!

## IN GENERAL

"Favets," otherwise the Fantasy Veterans' Association, held its fifth annual convention in New York on April 17. The Favets (science fictionists who have served in armed forces) began as a charitable body, sending reading matter to fans currently on service overseas, and puts on these shows to raise funds. The gathering

has come to have great interest, however, as a meeting of New York professionals and active advocates of SF.

Sam Moskowitz (late *Science Fiction Plus*) spoke at length, giving his view that the present recession in the field is largely due to its own imperfections rather than economic causes. Pseudo-science and fantasy rather than the real thing, and particularly the extensive use of the "sophisticated" approach popularised by *Galaxy* and its imitators, were the trouble, he thought. "While a sophisticated science fiction story once in a while is enjoyable, as a steady diet they will drive readers away. There is only one *New Yorker*, so why should most of the science fiction magazines use that type of story?"

John W. Campbell, Jr. (*Astounding*) said that his policy would continue to be emphasis on human-element studies, at the expense of the physical sciences.

Other speakers included Damon Knight (*Worlds Beyond* editor and writer) Howard Browne (*Amazing Stories*); Artist Ed Emsh; L. Sprague de Camp; Mrs. Evelyn Gold; Willy Ley, who spoke on his part in the film "Man in Space"; actor Walter Brooke, featured in the film "Conquest of Space"; Theodore Sturgeon. Attendance was 235, and the list included most of New York's notables.

Jules Verne was honoured on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of his death (March 24, 1905) with various celebrations in France. Also, a set of ten commemorative stamps was issued by Monaco. Nine values show scenes from Verne's novels; the tenth, the U.S. Atomic Submarine *Nautilus*, named in honour of that in *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea*.

In the late nineteenth century, Verne wrote dozens of imaginative stories which gripped the popular imagination, and did much to influence the character of later science fiction. He was probably the first to write science fiction consciously and conscientiously, dealing in realities and logical predictions, and certainly the first to write it successfully.

## MAGAZINES

The British editions of *Thrilling Wonder Stories*, *Startling Stories* and *Planet Stories*, mentioned in our last issue as current, actually ceased publication some months ago, the final issues being numbered respectively 104, 18 and 12.

The four magazines published by the John Spencer Co. also finished recently: *Futuristic Science Stories* with No. 15, *Fables of To-morrow* with No. 11, *Wonders of the Spaceways* with No. 10, and *Worlds of Fantasy* with No. 14. These really amounted to only one magazine, as they showed no individual differences and appeared more or less alternately. They were slanted for the ten-year-old market, and as such had a useful function. There should be some-

thing to read as well as comics to gape at. Nothing corresponding to these exists in the U.S.A., probably because publishers don't believe ten-year-olds can read.

It reverted from monthly to bi-monthly schedule from June, 1955. No other changes were made, apart from the revival of a readers' section.

*Thrilling Wonder Stories* and *Fantastic Story Magazines* ceased publication, the titles being "combined" according to the publishers with *Startling Stories* with the Spring 1955 issue. The volume numbering remains that of *Startling*, which commenced publication in 1939. *Thrilling Wonder* was the ultimate descendant of Hugo Gernsback's *Science Wonder Stories*, begun in June, 1929. The magazine had an odd history, going through more changes than any other in the field. Firstly, after a year the word *Science* was dropped from the title. Up to that time Gernsback had published not only a supplementary *Quarterly* as he had previously done with *Amazing*, but also a monthly *Air Wonder Stories* and a *Scientific Detective Monthly*, later issues called *Amazing Detective*. The latter two were incidentally the first attempts at combining science fiction generally with a special interest, and long after they were abandoned *Wonder* continued running air and detective stories now and then.

The magazine's size was changed from the 8in. x 12in. which was usual in the 'twenties, to an untrimmed 10in. x 7in., back again; fewer pages and a lower price (15 against 25 cents) was tried for five issues, then back to full size—then down to 10in. x 7in. again, where it stayed. Price was cut to 15 cents again in 1935, but after a few more issues publication ceased, to be resumed four months later by another publisher, Standard, and with the added word *Thrilling* in the title. For a few issues unheard-of depths were plumbed before there was some improvement. Wartime issues went to far worse extremes, however. From about 1916 onwards there was great improvement, and although a consistent high standard was never maintained for long the magazine was quite worth while for the last few years of its life. Editors included Gernsback himself, David Lasser, Charles D. Hornik, Leo Margulies, Mort Weisinger, Sam Merwin, Sam Mines, Alex Samalman and Pheron Raines.

*Fantastic Story Magazine* was devoted mainly to reprinting stories from its companion magazines, although some from other sources and some new shorts were also used.

The August, 1955, issue of *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction* will contain only new stories, departing from the policy followed since 1949 in 49 issues to date, which has been to assemble a varied group of imaginative stories, including several previously printed. Some treasures have been brought to light, particularly excellent stories lost to view by previous burial in unlikely pages, and long-overlooked historical items. Presumably the all-original issue

is an experiment. Scheduled are Henry Kuttner and C. L. Moore; Mildred Clingerman; Stephen Arr; Gordon R. Dickson; Elizabeth Saxxny Holding; Bob Ottum; Poul Anderson; Patrick Dickinson, Charles Beaumont; Anthony Bucher; and Anderson and Dickson. Incidentally, Beaumont will be contributing a regular film department in future issues.

## ON THE SCREEN

Walt Disney has made *Man in Space* in colour, though most viewers will see it only in black and white; only television release is so far planned. "It's doubtful if so many famous S.F. personalities were ever packed into a theatre before", reported Forrest J. Ackerman of a special preview at the Studio. Most of Los Angeles' numerous writers in the field were there: "All agreed Disney should be petitioned to let the rest of the world enjoy *Man in Space* theatrically".

Long in production, Rick Strauss' *Destruction Orbit* is completed. This brings the space warfare imagined in the 'thirties to the screen, rays and exploding rockets well to the fore.

Monsters are still with us. Master effects man Ray Harryhausen animated the biggest yet, a full scale Kraken that wrecks the Golden Gate and crawls ashore up San Francisco's Market Street in *It Came from Beneath the Sea*. (Get they shorten that title long before release.) This piece of wishful thinking is carrying the traditional L.A.-Frisco rivalry a bit too far, surely.

M-G-M is making *Forbidden Planet*, on a flight to Jupiter. So many new and startling special effects will be introduced in this pic, according to Studio public relations department, that closest secrecy is being observed, entrance to all sets barred to prevent premature exposures.

Bela Lugosi, villain of more horror shows than we'd care to count, is at it again. He makes a come-back in *Bride of the Atom*, now completed.

Poul Anderson and Rickert van Hal-spiegel scripted *Beyond the Barriers of Space*, which brings us into the interstellar range; Space Station and Martian sets are only preliminaries to a faster-than-light trip to another system. It's even made a double star system, giving a dull red and a blue sun in the sky to create colour effects. From then on the picture sounds like taking a corny turn, with a Russian party giving trouble.

Artist Paul Blaisdell, whose fine work appeared on magazine covers in Germany and Sweden before he sold one in the U.S.A., has designed and animated an impressive extra-terrestrial for a future B-class picture. Another of those troublesome Things from Outer Space. (Ackerman wonders why never inner space?).