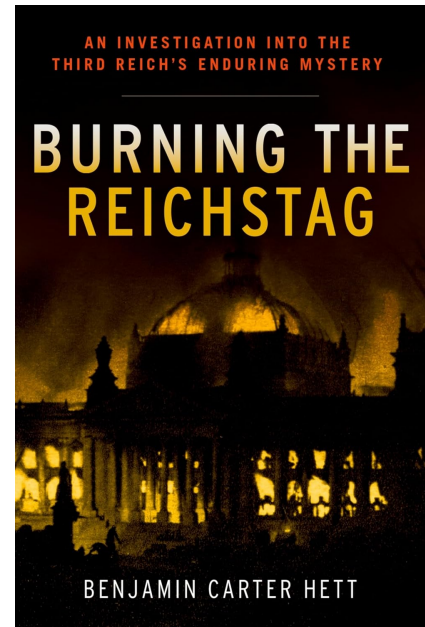


2014 Hans Rosenberg Book Prize Laudatio

Benjamin Carter Hett, *Burning the Reichstag: An Investigation into the Third Reich's Enduring Mystery* (Oxford University Press, 2014)

Benjamin Carter Hett's *Burning the Reichstag* is a major work that changes how we think about a key moment in the early days of the National Socialist regime, the Reichstag Fire of February 27, 1933. Hett's book is really two works in one, and in that double focus lies his true achievement. He advances compelling new evidence that casts serious doubt on the standard view that the Dutchman Marinus van der Lubbe acted alone in setting fire to the Reichstag. He also shows persuasively how and why the 'single-culprit' theory nonetheless became the standard version of what had happened. As Hett makes clear, arguments about the Reichstag Fire were never arguments just (or even mainly) about the fire itself, but were always embedded in larger political debates. Indeed, his richly sourced account uses the afterlife of the fire to enrich our understanding of both the Third Reich and the politics of the Federal Republic as they relate to the Nazi past. At the same time, his book comes as close as we are likely to get to answering the question of who set the fire by exhaustively discussing the available archival evidence. *Burning the Reichstag* is based on research in more than twenty archives in four countries.



Powerfully argued and elegantly written, it is a tour de force of historical writing that affirms the scholarly value of revisiting old questions anew.

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