

## 9. *Neue Freie Presse*



place Fichtegasse 11, I Innere Stadt  
time May 14, 1933, 6:00 a.m.

Fig. 27, p. 75

Fig. 120, p. 280

In its Sunday edition on May 14, 1933, available from 6 a.m., the *Neue Freie Presse* publishes an essay under the title of “Humbug, Bluff, and Ballyhoo: From Barnum to Bernays.” The writer and theater director Arthur Rundt describes a historical “transformation of the American spirit” on the basis of **two experts on public opinion**: “At the beginning is the name of the great adman and showman Phineas Taylor Barnum, at the end that of the analyst of the mass psyche Eduard L. Bernays [...]”<sup>94</sup> Before the piece appeared in Vienna’s most important bourgeois newspaper, located at **Fichtegasse 11**, it had come out in the April issue of the Berlin journal *Der Querschnitt*.<sup>95</sup> It was based on an article on the “science of ballyhoo,” which John T. Flynn had published a year previously in *Atlantic Monthly*.<sup>96</sup> For both writers, Barnum’s great bluffs were a thing of the nineteenth century; contemporary America, however, was under the thrall of scientific public relations as practiced by Bernays, a nephew of Sigmund Freud.

Barnum’s career as a showman began in 1835, when he bought an old, blind slave and claimed she was Joice Heth, George Washington’s wet nurse. In actual fact, the woman was not 161 years old but only half that age, as was established after her death. “Humbug, bluff, and ballyhoo” was also staged for the American Museum in New York, which Barnum took over in 1841. The article in the *Neue Freie Presse* mentions, for instance, “General Tom Thumb”: Barnum taught a five-year-old little person to impersonate historical figures such as Hercules and Napoleon and presented the boy’s performances in his

94 Arthur Rundt: “Humbug, Bluff und Ballyhoo. Von Barnum bis Bernays,” in: *Neue Freie Presse* (Vienna), May 14, 1933 (morning edition), pp. 25–26 [our trans.]. The following short references relate to this source.

95 See Arthur Rundt: “Humbug, Bluff und Ballyhoo. Von Barnum bis Bernays,” in: *Der Querschnitt* (Berlin), 13/4 (April 1933), pp. 265–269.

96 See John T. Flynn: “Edward L. Bernays. The Science of Ballyhoo,” in: *Atlantic Monthly* (Boston), 149/5 (May 1932), pp. 562–571.



Phineas Taylor Barnum



Edward L. Bernays

die Meister der amerikanischen Reklame

Fig. 27: P.T. Barnum and Edward Bernays, printed in *Der Querschnitt* (Berlin), 13/4 (April 1933), before p. 265. The caption reads: "Phineas Taylor Barnum / Edward L. Bernays / the masters of American advertising." Source: Austrian National Library, 560198-C.

cabinet of curiosities.<sup>97</sup> As the show proved very successful, the two of them toured Europe, where General Thumb even performed before the queen of England and the Russian czar. After the American Museum burned down, Barnum founded a traveling circus. The main attraction, an African elephant, set off a wave of "Jumbomania" in the USA.<sup>98</sup>

In contrast to Barnum, who called himself the "Prince of Humbugs,"<sup>99</sup> Edward Bernays preferred to manage his campaigns from the background. In the *Neue Freie Presse*, Rundt considered him the "most interesting and intellectually most serious representative" of ballyhoo, in other words of indirect

97 See Rundt: "Humbug, Bluff und Ballyhoo," pp. 25–26.

98 See Susan Nance: "Elephants and the American Circus," in: Susan Weber, Kenneth L. Ames, Matthew Wittmann (eds.): *The American Circus*, New Haven/London: Yale University Press 2012, pp. 232–249, here pp. 238–239.

99 Phineas Taylor Barnum: *Barnum, the Yankee Showman and Prince of Humbugs. Written by himself*, London: Piper 1855.

“advertising with a diversion via psychology.”<sup>100</sup> Edward had been born in Vienna in 1891 as the son of Sigmund Freud’s sister Anna and her husband Ely Bernays, the brother of Martha Bernays, Freud’s wife. The family emigrated a year later to the USA, where Bernays studied agriculture according to his father’s wishes but then jobbed as a journalist. During World War I, he worked for the Committee on Public Information, set up by President Woodrow Wilson as an American propaganda bureau.<sup>101</sup>

III.3.3 In 1919, Bernays opened his first agency in New York as a “**public relations counsel**”—a term occasionally used by the well-known publicist Ivy Lee.<sup>102</sup> Unlike his predecessors, the young PR man did not try to promote his clients’ opinions and products by direct means, however, but aimed to establish circumstances that carved a trail for them. “Modern propaganda,” Bernays wrote in his programmatic book from 1928, “is a consistent, enduring effort to create or shape events to influence the relations of the public to an enterprise, idea or group.”<sup>103</sup>

## 10. Schönbrunn Palace Gardens



place Schönbrunner Schloßstrasse, XIII Hietzing  
time May 14, 1933, 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

III.2.1 &  
Fig. 28, p. 79

The Austrian Homeland Protection (*Heimatschutz*) holds a “Turks Deliverance Celebration” (*Türkenbefreiungsfeier*) in the gardens of Schönbrunn Palace on May 14, 1933. Members of the paramilitary **Home Guards** (*Heimwehren*) arrive on chartered trains from all over the country, setting out in the early morning from the stations to the former imperial residence and grouping in the Baroque gardens by 9 a.m. Depending on the political standpoint of the source, the participant numbers

- 100 Rundt: “Humbug, Bluff und Ballyhoo,” p. 25 [our trans.].
- 101 See Larry Tye: *The Father of Spin. Edward L. Bernays and the Birth of Public Relations*, New York: Crown 1998, pp. 18–19 and 115–120.
- 102 See Tye: *The Father of Spin*, p. 260.
- 103 Edward L. Bernays: *Propaganda*, New York: Horace Liveright 1928, p. 25.