

Later, Dan, Andy, and Janys again found themselves walking through the compound together, each lost in reverie.

Andy felt so overwhelmed with revulsion that he took absolutely no photos. It seemed like an act of historical voyeurism to indulge his tourist instincts. Besides, one had to *experience* the place, not see it vicariously on slides. Still, Andy knew that the narrow dimensionality of that encounter was exponentially removed from actually living it. His whole being shivered involuntarily, though it was a perfect summer day. The mind's celluloid alone would record the event, and he knew he would never return for fear that the revulsion would be blunted through familiarity.

He suddenly saw all the post-War movies and TV programs in that light: pro-mass slaughter propaganda campaigns to sanitize the unspeakable. "It was a dirty job, but golly gee, somebody had to do it!"

Ordinary citizens just following orders, who at workday's end embraced their kids and took in a Beethoven Concert or other enriching cultural event. "The origins of all human cultures are a founding murder," René Girard taught, whom Andy had read a smidgeon of in a university anthropology class.

Andy realized the Allies were not all that different from the camp guards. The guards were not necessarily monsters, nor were they unduly sadistic. For them, torturing and killing was all in a day's work, like delivering milk. It made good rational sense. The cancerous cells were being removed from the body politic. The scientific men in white coats at the end of the train lines told them to do so. Just as priests and countless religious leaders throughout human history had ever blessed human sacrifices—and still did!

Andy shuddered again as the full weight of the moral equivalency sank in. His mind was pulled back to a single woman in her sixties and her elderly mother that the team had gotten to know that summer. They attended *Hohenstaufenstraße* assembly. Both sparkled with mischievousness at times and were very encouraging of the team's efforts. A rare exception amongst church folk.

Once, after they had treated the whole Team to a delicious meal of *Rouladen mit Rotkohl*, Andy asked a straightforward conversation stopper. "Yes, but didn't you surely *know*?" Elderly Frau Luzie responded simply, "*Nein*." But her troubled eyes said, "Yes." So did those of her daughter.

How could it have been otherwise? Jewish families disappearing from neighbourhoods all over Germany, Jewish businesses boarded up, Stars of Bethlehem as forced apparel. It was known all right, and by everyone!

Yet, in another way, the matriarch was not lying. The average citizen didn't know the true extent of the horror. Then, with a shock of insight, *because they didn't want to know!* Because that knowledge would demand commitment or induce moral dissolution. Because such knowledge, "a little learning," is ever a dangerous thing, as Alexander Pope pointed out.

Was it any different today? Were they, in the comfortable bubble of the West, likewise knowingly ignorant, deliberately uninformed? Until recently, Andy had been wilfully ignorant about Vietnam. What else was going on in the world that benefited him at his end of the market continuum but was sheer terror at the other? Had it ever been any different? Frankly, in that moment *he didn't want to know!*

He was struck by another bolt of sickening insight: Why was the Allied Holocaust never taught in school just like the Nazi one? The answer came with a similar dreadfulness of understanding: Because Holocaust is okay as long as the "Good Guys" perpetrate it. He imagined all those brave Allied airmen embracing their wives and kids after returning from a day's bombing. The moral equivalency was exact. "You have

defeated us Nazis. But the spirit of Nazism has arisen like a phoenix amongst you,” so said one of the Nazi war criminals, Andy could not remember who. Why had no one ever taught *that* in all his schooling? He felt angry. Why did his mind make such associations?

His mind turning to the Vietnam War, Andy recalled how Ho Chi Minh initially had believed the United States would back North Vietnam’s bid for “freedom,” because they were simply aspiring to the same stirrings for freedom that had motivated Americans in their War of Independence. They couldn’t have been more wrong.

Andy recalled what he had read in Hans’s essay about the Bay of Tonkin ruse that launched the Vietnam War in 1964. The claimed attack by the North Vietnamese was complete American fabrication. The first casualty of war is truth. Millions of others, on all sides, are civilians. Andy wondered about Pearl Harbour and what else the American Empire might fabricate in the future to fight a “just war” for Manifest Destiny to... What? Rule the world? Andy thought of the verse in Job that his dad often quoted: “Yet man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward.” If “violence” were inserted for “trouble,” it would be just as true, he was sure.

Jany and Dan had not waited for Andy. He moved on alone into the. The door to each of the ovens stood ajar. He read the specifications: the actual size of each oven, the number of bodies incinerated at one time, the total number of bodies consumed by the four Molochs. Andy closed his eyes, as at Salzburg, and heard the noises, gagged at the reek. As he did, he recalled that the crews of the last American bombers over Tokyo that slaughtered 100,000 innocent civilians in March 1945, had to be fitted with gas masks, because the stench of burning flesh in the consequent holocaust was so overwhelming even at great height.

In his mind, Andy followed the oven-stokers home. Saw them with their wives and kids, accompanied them to family barbecues. A great time was had by all! He flew back to the base with the B-29 bombers, took in the evening movie with them, watched them write love letters to their wives and girlfriends, felt the tenderness of missing their kids, leaders all of next generation America...

Then a realization blasted into his consciousness like the imagined sudden blistering heat of those ovens at full burn: *Dachau is Christendom’s most perfect human picture of hell!*

The parallels overwhelmed. *God is Hitler. The ovens are God’s specially built chambers of eternal conscious torment*, to which human victims by the billions are fed because they refused to take the hand of the feudal lord’s son in marriage. Jesus the Jilted Lover, whose cry of wrath echoed throughout the Corrupted Cosmos. Only unlike Daniel and his companions in Nebuchadnezzar’s fiery furnace, these victims would experience the full suffering of the oven for ever and ever, God be praised, amen! For there even the worm “dieth not.” This was Christendom’s “god.” This was Evangelical’s hell. This was what Billy Graham warned his listeners about, what G. E. holds onto in his evangelistic vision of deity. This was the deep dark open secret about Neal Steinhauer’s, Bill Bright’s, Evangelicals’ “God who loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life.”

“*Nein!*” Christendom, Evangelicals, Christians, Billy declare. But their eyes betray them. Deep down, they all say, “Yes!” This was the fundamental, fundamentalist, Evangelical footnote theology of John 3:16. This was the truth about their god: God is the Ultimate Sadist of the Universe, whom tomorrow, with a smile, they would invite Olympic-goers to meet through a personal relationship with Christ.

“Open House at Adolf Hitler’s from 1:00-3:00 today. Come get to know him, whom to know is to love,” the personal invitations all read, with Neal Steinhauer’s signature at the bottom. The small print reads, “But we’re constrained to say: If you turn down the invitation today, tomorrow it’s into the ovens. Sorry. ‘His

mercy lasts for a moment (two hours to be exact), but his wrath is everlasting.’ Have a nice day and a bright forever—though it may not be quite the kind of ‘brightness’ you imagined...”

Andy was startled from his reverie by Dan Moore’s voice. “I suppose they’re really all on a continuum....”

“What?” replied Andy, shaken by where his train of thought had taken him.

“War, concentration camps, armies, prisons, police,” Dan said.

“What do you mean, Dan?” Andy asked.

Jack and Fiona happened to walk up to them at the same time, barely acknowledged by either Andy or Dan.

“I mean, isn’t something like this really just a question of degree? Sure, we all deplore it. But what was the Six-Day War, if not a mini-Holocaust, with all the Christians cheering on the Israelis, figuring Jesus was coming right behind? Does what happened here make it right for Jews to do the same thing to the Palestinians? We all deplore others’ violence, but *never* our own.”

No comment from the others or from Andy. He thought of that ambiguous passage where Jesus said the Pharisees erected monuments to prophets in the past, letting on *they* would never have treated them as their ancestors had.

“There are two images I cannot put together,” Dan continued, “God telling the Old Testament Jews it’s all-out genocide at times, and Jesus and Paul saying not to resist evil with evil.

“I read that the early Christian Church was largely pacifist until Emperor Constantine gave ‘em a huge embrace by declaring Christian worship legal and hiring Christians to lower court postings. Pretty soon, word got out that to be a Christian was good for your career, and eventually, the only path to success. Thousands of opportunists flooded the churches to get baptized. But who really baptized whom?

“‘Do you betray me with a kiss?’ takes on new meaning when Constantine arguably won over the Church to the exact opposite ethics of Jesus. Without a shot fired or a spear thrust, he turned the Church inside out on all ethical levels: love of enemy, the weightier matters of the law, justice, mercy, faithfulness, forgiveness toward all, especially ‘the least of these’...

“So, argues this one guy I read, the Church quickly moved to ‘do unto others as had been done unto them,’ baptizing violence against all outsiders—including Jews and pagans, just as they had been violated by these groups not so long before. So Jews and pagans began to experience the same kind of alienation and persecution at the hands of the Christians as the early Christians had at the hands of the pagans, as Jesus at the hands of the Jews as... Violence endlessly recycled! This was formalized centuries later into the Inquisition, which demonized the Church’s domestic enemies as ‘religious heretics,’ and the Crusades, which set out to convert or kill the accursed ‘infidel,’ the Church’s foreign enemies.”

“But they were not all real Christians,” Fiona spoke up.

“Unlike the Evangelicals in Texas, Fiona?” Dan shot back, scorn tainting his voice.

Jack leapt to her defence, as usual. “Evangelicals would be totally against this sort of thing!,” he said, waving his arms to take in the ovens.

“So,” Dan took a breath, “these ‘Christians’ *weren’t* the real thing? Did you know that it is precisely conservative Evangelicals in America who most support nuclear armaments and harsh punishments, including the death penalty? In spite of Jesus’ constant emphasis upon ‘love of neighbour’ and ‘love of enemies,’ Evangelicals prove to be the *least* loving of all identifiable religious or secular groups in society.

“Last century, when one converted to Christianity, one understood that ‘loving God’ automatically threw one into some kind of social action on behalf of others, to take up causes such as anti-slavery, rights for women, prison reform. Though even then conservatives quoted their Bibles loud and long to prove the God-given superiority of whites and men.

“Evangelicals bless the current wholesale slaughter of the Viet Cong; napalming entire villages of men, women and children; the enormous destruction of the environment through the use of Agent Orange on countless acres of lush jungle; the dropping of multiplied millions of land mines that destroy or maim anyone stepping on them. But, of course, we must ‘contain the Communist threat,’ and ‘God and country’ as ever soar to the top of the charts. With all due respect: *BULLSHIT!*”

Andy recoiled at the vehemence, then remembered his own.

“I wish, Dan, you’d be more respectful of Fiona,” Jack said, his words edged with steel.

Dan snorted and wandered off on his own.