

Chapter 31

Fall 1985

Starting to write about my experiences in Europe, I feel the need for clarification on some points. I telephone Reynitz in September 1985.

“Bitte,” he answers in a soft voice.

“This is Horace Hansen. I would like to see you again in October, after Oktoberfest, naturally.”

“Fine. I would enjoy seeing you. I presume you will bring Ruth with you?”

“Yes. We plan to see Vienna this time. We love the Alps, the best part of Europe, we think. We are planning about a month, and to spend half that time with you, before and after Vienna.”

“Good. We’ll have the same beer at the Wachau Hotel, if they have any left.”

We meet Reynitz as planned—same place, same beer, and much reminiscing.

“I have read *Mein Kampf*, about 700 pages of the rambling mess. What do you think of it?”

“More than a mess, it is insane,” Reynitz answers.

“But the leaders in France, Poland, and Russia should have read it and taken seriously his warnings of the war to come,” I say.

“You’re right, and did you notice that from beginning to end it is Jews, Jews, Jews—in international control of finances, control of the press, control of propaganda, mixed in with treachery of all kinds?”

“Yes, Jews dominated his thinking from the beginning to the very end of the war. He was consumed by the subject.”

“Well, that can be the first subject tomorrow morning—if you don’t forget,” Reynitz concludes.

The next day, we start talking about Hitler and the Jews. I record his answers, which expand upon the information I have already gathered:

Hitler’s hatred of Jews started, he said, as a young man in Austria. His hatred grew into a policy of extermination, killing millions. He started with decrees to drive Jews out of Germany. He spaced his persecution by harsher decrees in Germany until Krystalnacht caused great disgust in most Germans. After that and the billion-mark fine, Hitler kept his actions secret. The Final Solution, systematic murder of Jews, started [officially] in 1942 outside Germany, particularly in Poland and Czechoslovakia.

Remember that Hitler was fighting two wars—a war of conquest and a war against the Jews in all of Europe. A war against Jews made his other war more difficult.

It was a paradox that there were skilled Jews in the management of the I. G. Farben chemical factories. Without Farben, Hitler would not have been able to adequately supply his military forces. The company made synthetic oil, gasoline, vehicle tires from coal, and other items critical to the operation of the war machine as well as the lethal and odorless poisonous gas used in the gas chambers at concentration camps, usually built next to the crematories.

The top executives of Farben were prosecuted at Nuremberg as war criminals for the use and murder of slave laborers from foreign countries in the Farben factories. Alfried Krupp, of the Krupp family-operated armament factories, was likewise prosecuted.

When the Russians counterattacked from Moscow in December 1941, it was a great shock to Hitler. From then on the counterattacks increased in fury. He knew then that the war was lost. But in January 1942, at the Wannsee Conference near Berlin, the Final Solution of the Jewish problem was organized. Hitler licked his lips. He was a mass murderer, and not only of Jews.

The two happenings were a month apart, and the third—declaring the war on America that sealed his doom—occurred four days after Pearl Harbor on December 11, 1941.

But the war on Jews continued unabated until the last. He said many times at war headquarters: “People will be eternally

grateful that I have extinguished the Jews in Germany and Europe.” In saying that, he presented himself as an internationalist, a benefactor of humanity, and worker for the Lord. Of course, he was dead wrong. Before Hitler, the Jews in Germany were integrated with society and were good Germans. They were actually Germans first, and Jews second.

An English writer and historian, David Irving, disputes Hitler’s part in killing Jews, saying that Himmler did this on his own. This statement flies in the face of historical facts—Krystalnacht, the huge fine against Jews, Auschwitz, the Wannsee Conference, and [Hitler’s own] statement that *he* had extinguished the Jews in Europe, to mention but a few.

Himmler was totally dedicated to Hitler and would not dare to carry out mass killing of Jews in Europe without direct orders. When the policy became known, it became a lingering embarrassment in West Germany. Konrad Adenauer became chancellor when the new government of West Germany was formed in Bonn in 1949. Adenauer had made several sympathetic speeches and arranged for aid to be given to the struggling new State of Israel.

About the concentration camps:

You realize that these [concentration] camps housed able-bodied men and women, and some Jews were taken by force from Hitler’s conquered countries and made to work against their will. When reminded in a military conference that this was a violation of the Hague Treaty, Hitler said, in effect,

“What of the treaty? We win and who will ask?”

Hitler’s lack of concern about what happened to millions of foreign workers [slave laborers] in these camps is another example of his nihilist view of the value of man. Remember that Hitler said, “If a camp is threatened, clear it out.” And when Albert Speer said, “We don’t have enough trucks.” Hitler ordered, “Then march everyone out. If that doesn’t work, kill the prisoners and bury them.” (See pages 322-23.)

When I learned at Dachau in 1945 how the concentration camps were operated and how it produced armaments and war materials of all kinds, I was surprised at first. But when I saw evidence of the whole pattern, not much surprised me anymore. Hitler and his Nazis followed the principle that the ends justified the means. This is the principle generally used by total dictatorships everywhere.

On Hitler’s penchant for secrecy:

If the German civilians knew about mass killings of Jewish families and the killing of non-Jews in the concentration camps, many would have protested. Thus, Hitler had to keep such actions secret. Secrecy was a fixation in Hitler’s mind.

He repeated many times while I was in his military headquarters that “No one is to have knowledge of any more than is absolutely necessary for him to do his job” . . . Even General Jodl, chief of army operations staff, was surprised to hear about Buchenwald when American troops were advancing toward it. He didn’t know about concentration camps.

Witness to Barbarism



The Nazis photographed this series to show the extermination of prisoners marched from a work camp in Romania. Here the prisoners line up, minus some items of clothing, in a mass grave they prepared for themselves.



Witness to Barbarism



After the Romanian prisoners have been shot, a Nazi officer tromps across them, instructing his soldiers to make sure all are dead.

On Hitler's "Nero order" to destroy all industry and communications:

It was not a rational order. It reminded us of the Roman emperor Nero, who fiddled while Rome burned, hence the sobriquet. Hitler ordered destruction of the means for Germany to rebuild itself after losing the war simply because it did not deserve to survive. He was placing blame for losing the war on his countrymen. He never blamed any defeat on himself, even though he was the dictator and sole director of his war.

Finally Reynitz speaks of the Neo-Nazis:

Here in Germany, they are not significant because they have no Hitler and, of course, there is not a deeply depressed economy. If those two ingredients come together again, we could have a repetition. No doubt the Neo-Nazis are operating in many countries and are spreading hatred. But as I said, the Neo-Nazis cannot get anywhere on hate alone. In the long run, education of youth on the truth about Hitlerism is the best answer for keeping peace and democracy.

What can be done now?

I can only speak of Germany. Here the young people don't want to think about the time of Hitler. I think that young and old, in other countries as well, need to understand the early signs of a trend toward dictatorship. Only then will people have a chance to stop the trend.

Witness to Barbarism



*The last time the author saw
Ewald Reynitz, Munich, 1985.*

Nazism was the worst upheaval in the history of man. It changed the face of Europe and Asia. Its story must be repeated to each generation to keep the memory of its hatred, mass murders, and nihilism alive. Education is indispensable.

Dr. Ewald Reynitz died on November 9, 1993, shortly after the death of Karl Thoet.

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SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS
WILLMAR MINN

DEAR SIR,

WITH DISGUST, I READ THE ARTICLE IN THE ST. CLOUD TIMES ABOUT ONE OF YOUR TEACHERS TEACHING THE INNOCENT STUDENTS ABOUT THE "HOLOCAUST" IN THE HIGH SCHOOL CLASSES.

THIS TEACHER, AGE 40, WAS ONLY A FEW YEARS OLD DURING THE WAR. WHAT DOES HE KNOW?

IF THERE ARE NO SYNAGOGUES IN WILLMAR & AS THE ARTICLE STATES, HE IS OF SCANDINAVIAN DESCENT HE HASN'T BEEN EXPOSED TO THE POISONS OF HE JEW.

DID IT EVER OCCUR TO YOU THAT MAYBE AND I SAID "MAYBE" THAT THE ONE ABOVE SENT HITLER TO THIS EARTH TO TAKE CARE OF THOSE PEOPLE THAT REJECTED THE "SAVIOR" OVER 1980 YEARS AGO?

DOES MR. BORTH TELL HIS STUDENTS ABOUT THE BUTCHERY OF MENAKIN

OPY OF THIS LETTER AND THE ARTICLE IN THE PAPER IS BEING THE NATIONAL ASS'N OF WHITE PEOPLE IN NEW ORLEANS AND S ALSO BEING SENT TO MR. ROGERS IN LAKE WALES FLORIDA OF ILUX KLAN I HOPE THEY PAY YOUR SCHOOL A VISIT.

Willmar's class about Holocaust draws hate mail

WILLMAR (AP) — A Willmar high school teacher who designed and teaches a course on the Holocaust says he is shocked by hate mail he received following publicity about the 13-week course on the extermination of Jews during World War II.

Bill Borth said local response to his course has been positive and that he has received favorable comment from other school systems and instructors across the country.

But he said hate mail has taken some of the joy from the praise. Borth said he received newsletters boosting white supremacy and anti-Semitism, along with notes accusing him of misinforming innocent students.

Hate letters also have gone to the school principal, the superintendent and the student council, he said.

One newsletter, "The Special Report," published in California, claims the Holocaust was a hoax. Jews were not exterminated, the newsletter contends they died instead of a typhus epidemic. And the gases were used only for fumigating barracks.

"Why people go to such great lengths to distort history — that bothers me," Borth said of the publication.

Overall, Borth said, he found the hate mail interesting but shocking.

He believes the hate mail is all the more reason for the class to continue, to educate students about what hatred and prejudice can lead to.

The Willmar School Board agreed, also reacting with surprise that so much hatred exists.

HANSEN, DORDELL, BRADT, ODLAUG & BRADY

ATTORNEYS AT LAW

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(612) 251-8888

June 2, 1985

WILLIAM B. HANSEN
WALTER S. DORDELL
JOHN W. BRADY
ROBERT J. ODLAUG
WILLIAM D. BRADY
DORDELL W. BRADY

J. ROSE CATSON
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JOHN W. GUSTAFSON
CHAS. E. PETERSON
DORDELL W. BRADY
WALT SUT ELLMAN

Mr. William Borth
c/o Willmar High School
Willmar MN

Dear Mr. Borth:

I hope that the "hate mail", as reported in the St. Paul Pioneer Press for May 31 (clipping enclosed) will not discourage you from continuing to teach the history of extermination of Jews by the Nazi Regime during World War II. The Holocaust is so thoroughly documented as to reassure you that your detractors are blinded by their bigotry. The lessons which all of the atrocities committed by the Nazis are so important for this and future generations to understand that it needs periodic review. Perhaps efforts such as yours will contribute to preventing future wars.

Having been involved in the investigation and later the prosecution of war criminals at Dachau, I reviewed the evidence first hand. I have a set of the photographs taken by the Army Signal Corps when the concentration camp at Dachau was overrun by the Seventh Army. For example, these show that at a subcamp of Dachau, where Jews were held, the Nazis set fire to the barracks burning the Jews alive when it was certain that the camp would be taken by our forces. I have other materials which may be of interest to you. Should you find occasion to come by this way, let me know in advance if you are interested in seeing these materials. I will be happy to talk with you, and I encourage you to keep up your classes on this important history.

Sincerely yours,

Horsace R. Hansen

HRH/emb
Enclosure