

# I am going to shoot you, but first, an Essay

by Mike Todaro

On my 12th trip to Germany, these taken over a period of 29 years, December 2010 was my first decision to face the Holocaust directly, with a trip to Dachau, ten minutes from Munich.

Opened in early 1933 and lasting until closed by their defeat in 1945, the history of Dachau is the history of the Nazi party. It began innocently enough.

When he was 13, a German child living in England for 10 years, now a young 21 year old student in Munich who was my guide, came across a passage that said the Nazi's were elected legally. How, he asked his professor grandfather, was this possible? Read these books, he said, then tell me who *you* would have voted for then.

*(you have left Germany, he shouted at them at the gate. You belong to the SS. You have lost your name, your possessions, your identity and I can not wait to kill you. You are pieces of shit and that is how we will treat you. (it was the last time they would ever be that comfortable))*

Dachau is older than Munich, was very well known even in Medieval times, a famous and gorgeous town known for crafts and quality. An old arms plant was there. It was converted. *(did you know 'concentration camp' was invented by the British in S. Africa to allow their prisoners to concentrate on becoming better at being British?)*

It was where it all began, the first one, the place where 16-18 year old kids were brutalized themselves into the worst of the worst and

then dispatched to the 1,700 camps built during these 13 years. When you see these many camps as dots on the map there, you do not see borders. There were none. That was the point of the whole thing.

*(Treblinka set records. OhmyGod. In only 11 months, 900,000 people were 'solved'. Why you know, that's almost an Ohio State Horseshoe full of people a month!)*

It was the economy, the unemployment, the humiliation from the Armistice of WWII, the confusion, and especially the wording they used to turn it all around. Boy, big business liked this a lot. Unemployment in the US remained at over 30% then. There it dropped to 0.4%. Big business was behind this for sure. Eventually even BMW had their own slave factory!

Quickly enough, it became clear, however, that this was really all about offers you could not refuse, allegations you could not contest, arrests you could not understand and acts you would not survive.

*(why, we call this the 'Dachau Spirit'. They were made to be worse and then even worse and worse still until they crossed to the other side and killed and killed and killed. They looked pretty good though. They should have. Their uniforms were designed by Hugo Boss)*

Gypsies, Catholics, Communists, Gays, Jehovah's Witnesses and guys like me never stood a chance, in fact were made to stand until they died. Row upon row. Hours upon hours of counting. One short, count again. Stand - do not move. And then there was that *Jewish* Question.

*(he is wearing lederhosen. He is taller than his guard. His legs are pistons, his chin strong, his gaze straight, his hair full, a watch chain across his tummy, a bag under his arm, a good looking beard and he*

*has no clue he is only minutes away from becoming a piece of shit)*

There are only a few buildings now. The first is the SS building and it is kept locked for eternity. *We will show nothing about them whatsoever.* The vast space is filled with cement outlines of where the barracks stood, full of beds one man could barely squeeze into until they squeezed 8 into them, but then, there was significant 'turn over'.

*(we don't say Volkswagon in Germany, Hitler invented it himself. It was his baby, his design. We call it VW. What you call it is your business. We say 'VW')*

What you see in the museum is the same as in the book you buy in the bookstore. I bought one. The history is there, the names, of course the photos, first person testimonials. I am drawn to page 59, the man with the lederhosen. He would get to keep his shoes. The number he was assigned was only there to quickly be drawn through however.

*(look up Leipziger Messe online, an aerial photo of the layout of the trade show grounds, you are struck by the precision, the little boxes, the long lines and symmetry of it all. At the back of Dachau is a Protestant Church that is also a memorial. It was purposely built with not one right angle in it, thumbing its nose)*

Hitler left 8 minutes early in 1938. The bomb missed him. They caught the bomber and tortured him to reveal who backed him. He swore an oath of silence. In 1945, he was the last man shot at Dachau. OK, he said, I'll tell you, I did it alone. You SS wasted 7 years on me. I did it because despite our centuries of greatness, your 13 years of crime will stamp Germany forever. Then they shot him.

They elected them legally. They were different than communists in

one key way. In a sort of perverse perspective, the goal of Communism could abstractly justify the means to get there. This was not so true in the mission statement, the outcome, the problem the Nazi's wished to solve.

*(I went to the East 8 years after the Wall fell with my West German buddy. I do not know who these people are, he said. This is a Black and White movie. These bastards want a free ride. The joke went then, a black man and a white man are drowning, who do you save. Why, the Black man of course. The White man might be an Ossi ja ja ja)*

I get it. I forgive Germany. I understand now. It was a trick played upon them by the architects of the master race to master the race. The new book BLOODLANDS: EUROPE BETWEEN HITLER AND STALIN goes back over this ground once again. It was the times. Who would you have voted for, his grandfather asked.

They voted for marketing taken to its most murderous, they voted for strength and identity, they voted for jobs and income, they voted for recovery and differentiation, they voted and the machine began to churn alright.

*(I have decided to shoot you. But the rules say I must first write an essay explaining why. This will take several days to write, be reviewed and approved. Then I am going to shoot you. (however, this was quickly replaced by the phrase "shot while attempting to escape" for which there was no report or reason required))*

Dachau is 10 minutes from Munich. It is a Medieval city, known over the centuries for its crafts. And now? Now it is a stop on the train. 10 minutes outside Munich. I picked up 10 stones there. Yes, I know that to leave a stone on a tombstone is to show you were there. But my little stones are for the living. I felt them under my foot through the snow, then looked down and listened as each talked to me I

swear. We are *souls* in here, they said.

and we have *names*

