

Another Point of View Look Away, and It Just Didn't Happen

Last month, Pope Benedict XVI revoked the excommunications of four schismatic bishops who had been excommunicated from the Roman Catholic Church in 1988. The four are members of the Society of St. Pius X, which the French archbishop founded Marcel Lefebvre in 1970 as a protest against the modernizing reforms of the Second Vatican Council, also called Vatican II. In 1988, Archbishop Lefebvre made these four men bishops in unsanctioned consecrations in Switzerland, which prompted Pope John Paul II to excommunicate all five. Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre died in 1991.

On the surface, it seems that the revocation action by the Pope was to ease tensions between the Vatican and its ultra-conservative fraction. Under normal circumstances, it would strictly be a Vatican issue having little impact on the outside world. However, one of the reinstated, Richard Williamson, a British-born cleric, has previously given interviews that he denied the extent of the Holocaust. In 1989, during a speaking tour in Canada, he said Jews were "the enemies of Christ" and had fabricated the Holocaust as part of a plot to secure the creation of the state of Israel.

Just two days before the revocation, a prerecorded interview with Williamson was released in which he insisted that no more than 300,000 Jews died in Nazi concentration camps, "not one of them by gassing in a gas chamber." Most credible historical accounts estimate that 6 million Jews were killed during the Holocaust. When the Vatican announced that Pope Benedict XVI had lifted the excommunication of these four bishops, including this English Holocaust denier, there was an outcry from around the world, especially from the Jewish community.

As an American soldier, I lived in Germany for eight years, and I have seen the camp at Dachau, and I have seen for myself what evil men can do. I have watched the actual films of the liberation of the camps, and I have seen for myself what evil men can do. I have spoken to those who lived in Germany during that time and some who have survived the camp, and I have heard for myself what evil men can do. To deny it had happened or to support those who deny it is nothing less than supporting the evil that man can do.

In 1939, a shipload of German Jews was allowed to leave Germany to seek asylum in Cuba, but they were refused entry by Cuba, Canada, and, to our shame, the United States. The ship was forced to return to Europe, where the United Kingdom, France, Belgium, and the Netherlands accepted the refugees. Of the original 939 Jewish passengers, 227 died when the Nazis invaded France, Belgium, and the Netherlands. All that happened almost seventy years ago—people believed if we just looked away, it didn't happen. How could the Vatican look away from what happened? By supporting Richard Williamson, they have.

To the south of us, in the province of Darfur, in the country of Sudan, on the continent of Africa, man has once again shown the depths of evil into which it can sink—genocide. For five years since the genocide in Darfur began, half a million people have been slaughtered, and millions have been forced from their homes and their country. The United Nations has issued mandates, and a token force has been sent, but little has

changed, and the slaughter continues. The situation is complicated, to say the least. First, there are the warring rebels (principally the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM), along with its fraction groups, and the Sudan Liberation Army (SLA) and its many groups. Second, there is the corrupt Sudan government, which, after the peace treaty of 2005, developed governments in North and South Sudan. And third, there is the Sudan government-supported Janjaweed militia, which the government denies supporting, that the United Nations has accused of attacking and killing civilians.

To complicate the situation even further, Chad, Sudan's (Darfur) western neighbor, has accused Sudan's Janjaweed militia of attacking 200,000 refugees who came to eastern Chad after fleeing violence in Darfur. Sudan has accused Chad of backing Darfur's rebels as they carried out cross-border raids. Sudan's neighbor to the south, the Central African Republic (CAR), has accused Sudan of backing the rebels within their country who have seized towns in CAR.

Meanwhile, millions of innocent civilians have been victimized by all sides. Estimates that nearly a half million people are dead, two million have fled the country, and, according to a study by the Kenya-based Rift Valley Institute, some 11,000 young boys and girls were seized (by Janjaweed) and taken across the internal border into southern Sudan where they have been forced into slavery. The Sudanese government has armed the Arab militias (Janjaweed), who terrorize the southern population solely to distract rebel forces from attacking government targets. The area is in chaos, and it is no coincidence or surprise that the waters off the coast of Sudan are the center of operations for the resurgence of pirates. These pirates seize even super tankers and hold nations hostage.

There are times for diplomacy and times for definitive action. I am not inclined to sanction the use of might, but when such depravity exists, we must use all our power to end it.

Some people would say that Darfur is not our problem; we have too many problems to face, but I have another point of view. If we just look away, it didn't happen; it isn't an epitaph that we can leave for our children or the people of Darfur. This isn't a ship we can turn away from our shore. This is a ship for which we need to provide a port of safety.

I'll have Another Point Of View in two weeks.

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