

8/2005

Re: Explaining Evil

Dear Editors,

Should we try and explain evil? Andrew Pine (letters, 8/14/2005) suggests that there is no point in attempting to understand the mind-set of individuals such as Nazis, who commit such evil acts. But I think it would be a useful exercise to explore how the average, normal German citizen of the 1930's could blindly support their leaders and participate in the invasion and bombing of other countries, in addition to the imprisonment and torture of innocent people who committed no crime against them. Maybe then we can understand today how normal, average people still blindly follow their leaders and justify supporting and participating in all kinds of invasions and atrocities.

I wonder if geological history had somehow been different, if the primordial swamps and shifting sands had never produced any significant oil under the Middle East, how things would be different today? I don't know, but I suspect that we (and the British) would never have meddled in Iran and installed an oil-company friendly dictator there, we would never have supported and armed Saddam Hussein, we would never have built military bases in oil-rich Saudi Arabia, supported a despotic royalty and fueled Wahhabist fundamentalism there. In that case, I suspect we would not have been attacked on 9/11, we would not have invaded Iraq, we would not have arrested, tortured and killed many innocent Iraqi people, we would not have suicide bombers and roadside bombs killing our young men and woman, and we would not now be asking ourselves why these people are so evil and full of hatred for us.

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