

Ecce homines – Fellow citizens! Look at these people!

by Dr Stefan Nold,* Germany



Stefan Nold. (Picture soft-control.eu)

“Is this some kind of Christ thing?” a young guy asks me as I walk through Darmstadt-Arheilgen on a Monday evening, a large poster with “12 commandments for peace” around my neck. There are only a few of us. A fitter from Berlin, a master craftsman, a retired vocational teacher and a

few others. An emeritus maths professor holds up the white flag. “Put up passive resistance, resistance wherever you are, stop this war machine from continuing before it’s too late,” said *Petra Kelly*, one of the founders of the Green Party, in 1983.¹

She is dead, just like *Rudi Dutschke* and *Antje Vollmer*; her party now sings in favour of the arms lobby. The peace movement has died and *Alexander Gauland*, *Walter Wallmann’s* former under secretary, who made his new party big by stirring up nasty resentments, is giving speeches in the Bundestag on the war in Ukraine² that *Willy Brandt* would have given in the past. I no longer understand the world.

“How did you manage to stay alive?” A man who has had his leg shot off asks a comrade who is on furlough and visits him. It’s a scene from *Giulia Caminito’s* novel “One day will come”³ about the fate of destitute villagers completely at the mercy of the “padres” and “padrones” in the Adriatic hinterland near Senigallia between 1900 and 1920. That’s exactly where I played happily on the beach with

my parents as a child and saw the sea for the first time.

At the beginning of 1945, my father was a straggler on his way to the Eastern Front. To get to his unit, he had to cross a river that had turned into a raging torrent due to flooding. Only the top part of the railing was visible from the bridge. With his typical sober sarcasm, he described his situation: “As I stood there alone, I thought to myself: if the flood takes me now, I will also be one of those who died for the Führer, the people and the fatherland.”

No heroic deeds but hopeless forlornness in the maelstrom of war awaits the ordinary soldier. That is why noble goals are held up to people like a carrot to a donkey, when, all it is concerning is “a bit about that vulgar thing called money”⁴ (*Heinrich Böll*). Demonising the enemy has also always been part of the repertoire when you want to “let the dogs of war off the leash”.⁵ As they did a thousand years ago, the warmongers shout to the poor devils from a safe distance: “May your peace be a victory.”⁶ “Ecce homines!” Fellow citizens! Look at these people! Look at the people who are dying on the battlefield in blood, pain and filth!

A feisty US senator says with a satisfied smile that the war in Ukraine is the best investment the USA has ever made (“the best money we’ve ever spent”).⁷ For a Ukrainian soldier, this is like the vinegar poultice that was pressed into the face of the dying Jesus on the cross.

When we get back to the town centre, a father and his two small children are looking at the posters one of us has put up by the lion fountain. He is a Muslim. “Without God, there is no stopping,” he says. I agree with him, but in hindsight I have my doubts. Isn’t it precisely the belief in the good cause that has always led people to commit the most barbaric atrocities, loudly cheered on by good citizens enthusiastically waving their flags, so that the distraught chronicler asks himself: “Ecce! Homines sunt?” Look at them! Are they really people? Where is

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the feeling breast among all these "larvae"⁸ that finally puts an end to the cruel game and begins to negotiate while there is still something to negotiate?

Source: <https://overton-magazin.de/top-story/ecce-homines-mitbuenger-schaut-auf-diese-menschen/>
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(Translation "Swiss Standpoint")

- ¹ Petra Kelly. Leistet passiven Widerstand. In: Klaus Staeck (Hrsg.) *Verteidigt die Republik*, P. 109. Steidl Verlag. Göttingen 1983
- ² Alexander Gauland, contribution to the debate in the Bundestag on the motion by the MPs Dr Alexander Gauland, Tino Chrupalla, Matthias Moosdorf, further MPs and the AfD parliamentary group: Deutschlands Verantwortung für Frieden in Europa gerecht werden – Eine Friedensinitiative mit Sicherheitsgarantien für die Ukraine und Russland (Tagesordnungspunkt 9), <https://dserver.bundestag.de/btp/20/20085.pdf> page 10104C. See also on video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VtKSdi7SLQ8> minute 0:50 – 4:40 Phoenix Digitale Medien Bonn 9 February 2023
- ³ Giulia Caminito. Ein Tag wird kommen. Übersetzt von Barbara Kleiner. Wagenbach. Berlin 2020. P. 192. Originalausgabe: *Un giorno verra*. Bompiani editore. Milano 2019
- ⁴ Heinrich Böll. Ein paar Worte nur über ein paar Wörter, die ich in ihrer Wörtlichkeit beim Wort zu nehmen versuche. In: Klaus Staeck (Hrsg.) *Verteidigt die Republik*, P. 109. Steidl Verlag. Göttingen 1983.
- ⁵ William Shakespeare. (1599) *Julius Caesar*. 3rd Act, 1st scene. L.L. Schücking (Hrsg.) *William Shakespeare Complete works, English and German* (Translation by A.W. von Schlegel) 3rd Volume. Weltbild Verlag under licence by Tempel-Verlag. Darmstadt 1995. P. 384/385. Original text: "and let slip the dogs of war» (translated by Schlegel: "und des Krieges Hund entfesseln." His own translation was chosen, to reach the nearest possible image of the English original.
- ⁶ Friedrich Nietzsche. *Vom Krieg und Kriegsvolke*. In: *Also sprach Zarathustra*. (1883). Karl Schlechta (Hrsg.) *Friedrich Nietzsche Werke in 3 volumes*, 2nd Volume, P. 312. Carl Hanser. München 1955
- ⁷ Lindsey Graham, cited by Reuters: "Dismissing Russian criticism, U.S. Senator Graham praises Ukrainian resistance." Original: "the best money we've ever spent". <https://www.reuters.com/world/russia-condemns-us-senator-grahams-comments-death-russians-2023-05-28/> Thomson Reuters. New York. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ArpfuJfKCs>, 29 May 2023
- ⁸ Friedrich Schiller, (1797) *Der Taucher*. In: Paul Stapf (Hrsg.) *Schiller Werke*. Bd. II *Gedichte*. Tempel Verlag. Darmstadt 1967. P. 196.