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If the Light Goes Out

My wife and I discussed it and agreed that this crèche needed to be made, and I wanted to be the one to do it... Our country is in a spiritual battle, and I was determined not to be left standing on the sidelines... --D. Bayer

Perhaps few are more concerned about the overreach of government these days than our many naturalized citizens who have fled from repressive and dangerous regimes. One of them, a longtime friend, wanted to help place a crèche in our State Capitol Rotunda at Christmas. His involvement (and his life story) came to the attention of the Allied Defense Fund. They reported:

Dieter was born just outside Dresden, Germany, in 1934. As a child growing up in the Third Reich, a “cub scout” in the Hitler Youth, he had no idea that Nazism wasn’t everything the Fuhrer was cracking it up to be. Occasionally, though, he overheard some of his father’s tailor-shop customers talking about a place called “America.”

“I believe they were Jewish, and they had lived in America, or visited it,” Dieter remembers. “They were always talking about how wonderful America was – not just a ‘land of milk and honey,’ but about all the freedoms. It opened a little window in my mind...”

The war changed everything for Dieter’s family. His father was sent to the Russian front, food became scarce, and three of Dieter’s younger siblings died of malnutrition. Dieter himself contracted scarlet fever, and was lying in a hospital bed when a firestorm of bombs demolished the city, leaving the hospital in ruins.

Dieter’s father, just back from the front, picked up his son from the rubble – one of the few to get out alive. Stumbling home, dodging the still-falling bombs, they passed many scorched bodies. More had died, that day in Dresden, than would die, six months later, in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, combined...

With the end of the war, a few weeks later, came the Russians, and Communism. “We’d heard of the atrocities they were committing,” Dieter remembers, “and people were absolutely petrified.” Suddenly, secret police were everywhere, grilling schoolchildren about their parents, setting traps for anyone whose loyalty was suspect, conspiring with neighbors who might benefit from betrayal.

...Dieter was about 14 years old when, during a school assembly in which faculty were touting the importance of supporting the Communist system with “increased productivity,” he made a loud wisecrack. “How are we supposed to do that when we’re spending all of our time looking for food?” he asked. “That’s just like asking a car to run without gas.” His classmates laughed and cheered—but school officials didn’t. In the principal’s office, Dieter was questioned at length about his family, their beliefs, what they talked about at home. “My silly question jeopardized my family and heightened the fear of that dreaded two-o’clock-in-the-morning knock on the door.”

Too young to grasp the full evils of the Nazis, Dieter now saw all too clearly what was happening under the Communists...if he wanted to escape, time was running out.

...At 17, Dieter was not particularly well-prepared for the life-and-death details of slipping through the Iron Curtain. In fact, he wasn't sure where the border was. But he and a friend gambled on local rumors ... and eventually found themselves on the edge of a huge, plowed field patrolled by sentries with dogs and guarded by machine-gun towers. The frightened boys hid in the bushes for two days. They had no food, and didn't dare sleep. Occasionally, the guards would open fire—whether at people or rabbits, Dieter couldn't tell.

Finally, on the second night, the guards took their dogs and wandered to the far side of the open field. Dieter could hear laughter. Clouds cast strange shadows on the moonlit field as the two boys plunged from the bushes and began crawling on their elbows across the ground ... freezing whenever searchlights swept the area. On the far side of the field, a dark river drifted at the base of a steep embankment. The boys swam it, then—wet, exhausted, hungry – made their way to the first town they could find. They were in West Germany. Safe. Dieter took the first train out; his friend caught a bus. They wouldn't see each other again for nearly 50 years...

California, 1967: Now a citizen of the U.S., Dieter and his wife, Regina, were running a successful import/export business in San Francisco. Eight-and-a-half months pregnant with their second child, Regina was hit by a drunk driver. The child was killed, and the Bayers filed a wrongful death suit that went all the way to the California Supreme Court. There, judges told them that because “the child was within its mother, it was not a person,” Dieter says. Nevertheless, state law required a burial for anything in the womb more than five months. “I asked them what I was burying,” Dieter says. “They didn't answer me.”

The experience sealed the Bayers' fervent commitment to the pro-life movement. They moved their growing family to Idaho, where Dieter became a homebuilder and, eventually, a police officer, and took a growing interest in local politics. His unique perspective—viewing America's challenges through the prism of his experiences under the Nazis and the Communists drew the attention of conservative lawmakers, and they persuaded him to run for office.”¹

Dieter was elected to the Idaho State Legislature. But the most formidable event of his life occurred during the campaign. A pastor invited him to Sunday church to participate in a “Candidates Night.” Dieter, along with other candidates was asked to speak for five minutes or so, but not before the hooker—singing, prayer, and a brief sermon on America's Christian Heritage. He recalls listening politely as the pastor spoke boldly to current issues, framing them in the context of Scripture. It stirred in him, a curiosity about the Bible.

“I have always been a history buff,” Dieter remembers, “but I could never really explain why there is so much evil in the world... so much animosity between people ... all of the slaughter and mayhem. Well, when you read the Scripture, it becomes quite clear what humanity is all about, because God lays it bare.

Interest led him to schedule a lunch appointment with the pastor—and later to a born-again personal relationship with Jesus Christ. When the pastor (a church planter) moved to Southwest Washington, Dieter and his family decided to do likewise. His pastor served on the *Christian Coalition of Washington* pastor-advisory board for some years before moving on. A number of public officials reading this newsletter made their appearance one or more times for “Candidates Night” at Dieter's church.

But Dieter, like so many other naturalized citizens, has a warning for America. “Having lived through Nazism and Communism, I can only tell my fellow Americans that the hour is late... Every day, government is playing a bigger role. They want more and more control of the children, more and more control of the family. They are taking your rights away a slice at a time...”

We hear you, friend. The light is growing dangerously dim in America. If it goes out, the world will not suddenly end. It will just seem like it.

Rick Forcier

¹ [A Winding Trail to the Manger, Truth & Triumph, www.adfruthandtriumph.org/200808/dieter.html](http://www.adfruthandtriumph.org/200808/dieter.html)