

Hitler's Munich to Verdun's Killing Fields

August 2015



August 17 to October 31 we're on La Grande Tour, starting in Munich, and following the red line into France.



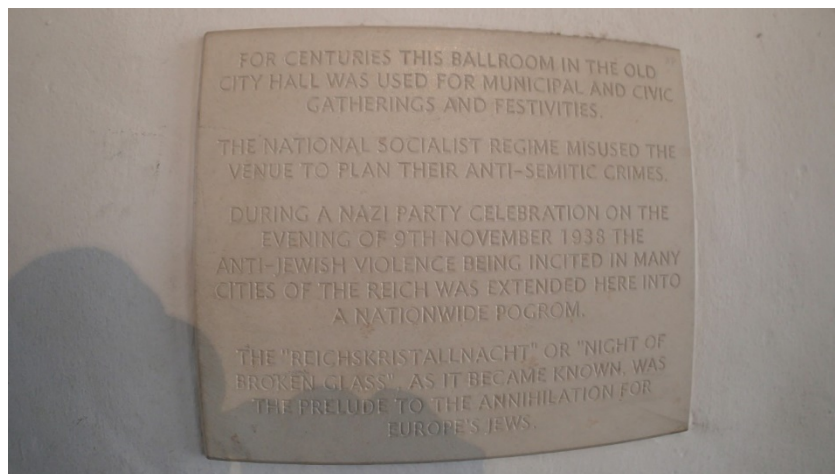
Home – the Frogmobile. 2015 Citroen. As I have a bit of Frog blood trickling through my veins I always wanted to drive one. In '73 a long forgotten girl friend and I bought a '62 Morris Minivan in London and drove it across Europe, selling it in Rome. We slept in it. Uncomfortable as hell but it was the best way to see Europe on a shoestring. This time we have hot shower, kitchen, the whole nine inches. The current girl friend is a much improved model too, but then she's Japanese and they manufacture the best of everything.



We must be starting in Munich. The bald Kraut is advertising tours of Dachau. There are Third Reich tours too, a la Hollywood stars home in LA. (That's the *rathaus* behind them. Don't Krauts have the perfect name for city hall?)



It plays the life-sized glockenspiel three times a day, themed on jousting and the Middle Ages. When I was here last I was startled to hear *Wooden Heart* and realized this is where Elvis picked up the tune during his army days. This time it was something contemporary.



The Krauts have come to terms with their evil past, something Japan still avoids except when forced to, and only for and because of international considerations. Then it vacillates. Germany doesn't try to hide its past. Rather, if after a slow start (Nazis ran the country post war), it faced it head on and purged it from its soul. (Skinheads have no soul or anything else.)



Lost in the labyrinth trying to find the Hofbrauhaus I asked this chap. Turned out he's Mexican and head of a hotel's banquet division and kindly took us.

Snowback: "I was here last in '74. I quite liked Munich."

Wetback: "It's a great city. There's only one thing wrong with it."

Snowback: "What's that?"

Wetback, laughing: "There's too many Germans."

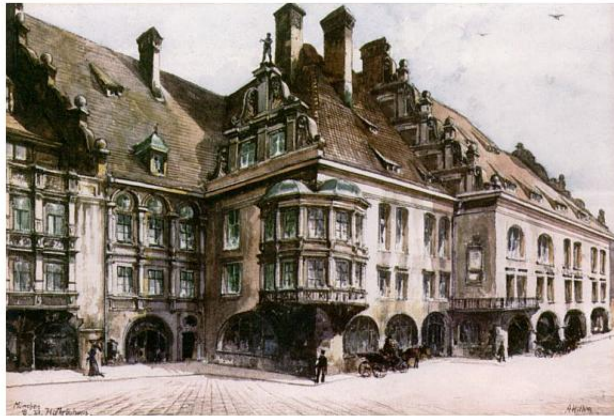
I could tell it was an in joke among expats.

Wetback, continuing to laugh: "Actually, that's the problem with Germany. It's a beautiful country but there's too many Germans."

The Krauts I met in the '60s were often ignorant and arrogant but the culture now has globalized and the ones we met were ordinary, nice, helpful folk, I'm happy to report. I could write a thesis on how Krauts have evolved since the early '60s.



Actually many members of the master race look more like this today. Koran thumpers of every color fill the streets. Adolf must be turning even faster on his special spit in one of the hotter furnaces in hell.



Adolf Hitler: Hofbräuhaus München

Early Nazi history is tied to the Hofbrauhaus. Hitler drew this watercolor. He was a pretty damned good artist, despite what distractors say. I like his style.



Many of his early important speeches were aired here.



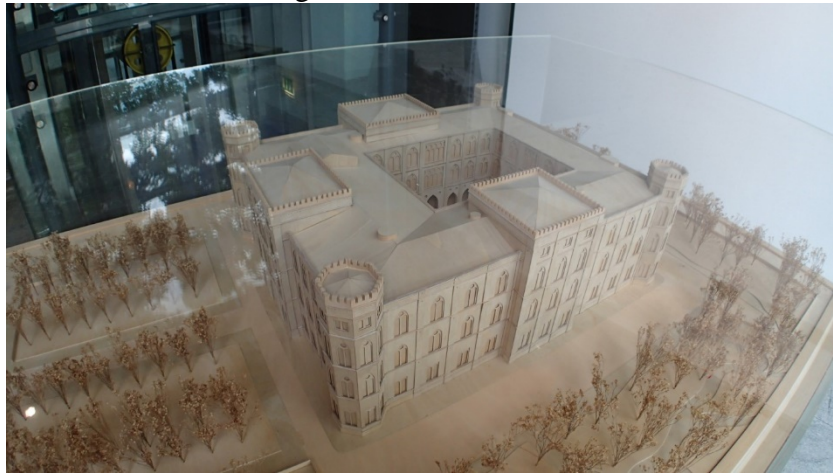
Actually, a beer here left me with the urge to invade Poland. Two I wanted to blitzkrieg France. After the third I wanted to take over the world. Fraulein Su dragged me out before I ordered a fourth.



I shot this as a joke for an old college beer drinking buddy, Don Konig, founder of the Humpties Restaurant chain. Only later in the day did I learn that these Greco-Roman buildings were Nazi Party headquarters. We returned.



Fraulein Su shot this, as she shot that incredible panorama at the start of the Lost Pictograph Expedition. Nazi Rallies were held here and book burnings. Today they're art and archaeological museums. Bomb damage still shows.



Goosestepping along Brienerstrasse - an upmarket street then as now - one halts in a couple blocks at Gestapo HQ. It looked like this before the Allied air force did urban renewal.



Today there's an art gallery on the main floor - and displays information on its former reincarnation.



Across the street and a bit down is the barred and protected freedom flame in tribute to the victims of National Socialism.



“Plaza of victims of Nationalsocialism”.Uh, isn't that's what Tom Maclair's party is, he running for prime minister of Canada? National socialism...?



A couple more blocks down is the Odeonplatz. It was just to the left, down that street a brick's throw, where Hitler's *Putsch* got shot up. 16 Nazi and 3 cops killed. He got five years, spent nine months, and wrote *Mein Kamph*, the sloppiest, worst written book I've read. Maybe it got lost in translation. It certainly appealed to the Huns. I've always thought the reason the Krauts hated the Doilyheads was because – although the sausage eaters considered themselves the Master Race – when they looked around it was the Doilies who were at the top of everything – the professions, business and arts. It was a massive national case of bitter, twisted denial.



He was fond enough of it to have done this watercolor. This one's a bit amateur actually.



The day WW-I was announced, this is where he was, near the front, circled.



If this isn't the face of someone who loved war, none is.



Munich still has its brown shirts. They're called cops. A breed everywhere never far politically from waving to friends in a stiff armed manner.



Talking about Nazi salutes, Krauts have a new and different fuhrer. This large mural was on a nearby wall. Who says squareheads don't have a sense of humor?



Since I didn't have an army to invade anyone, we went to the museum instead where they have my beloved Broughels.



I didn't think I would have gotten far invading anyone with these examples of the master race anyway.



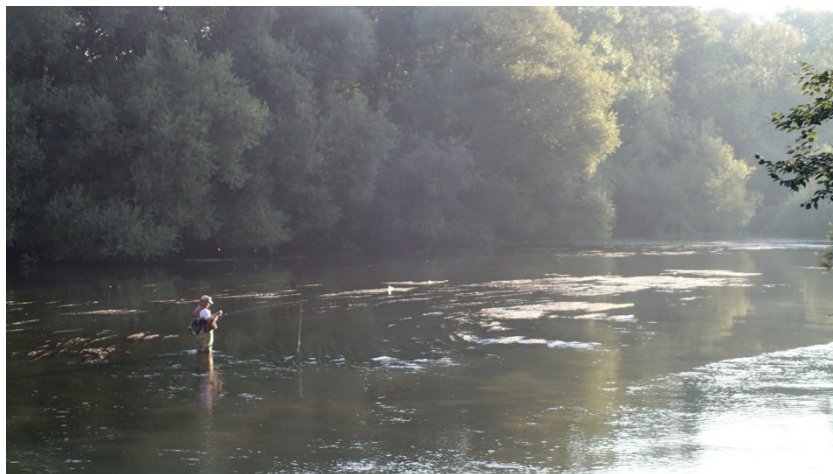
This painting should be famous.



And Van Gogh of course. This one painted at Auvers-sur-Oise, our next stop.



But I couldn't get war out of my blood. It was that Cherman beer. We booted through Lorraine. It's a beautiful region and explains why it segued into a girl's name. Nancy is also in Lorraine. I can't imagine a girl being named Moose Jaw.



We “wild” parked, as the Europeans call parking where one wants to, by the Meuse River where I shot this bucolic early morning scene and had a bath.



A hundred years earlier it looked like this because the Meuse flows through Verdun, the scene of the bloodiest and longest battle of WW-I. The current beauty made it impossible to imagine the terror, stench, thunder of guns, horrible atmosphere that words can't reach....



It was France's greatest defence against the war-like Huns, a citadel protected by over a dozen forts. The Krauts wanted to bleed the Frogs dry here. Well, 400,000 Frogs croaked and an equal number of Krauts turned soar in an 11-month battle. All wars are stupid but WW-I was idiotic beyond belief – as was the leadership on both sides. The often ignorant bastards beneath these crosses all believed they would have a short, grand adventure, and they'd be home by Christmas. There hadn't been a European war since 1870 and everyone was hungry for adventure. That's never been written as a major cause but it was. It fueled the domino of alliances that fell into place.



This is what's left of the top of Fort Douaumont (yes, the spelling is correct).





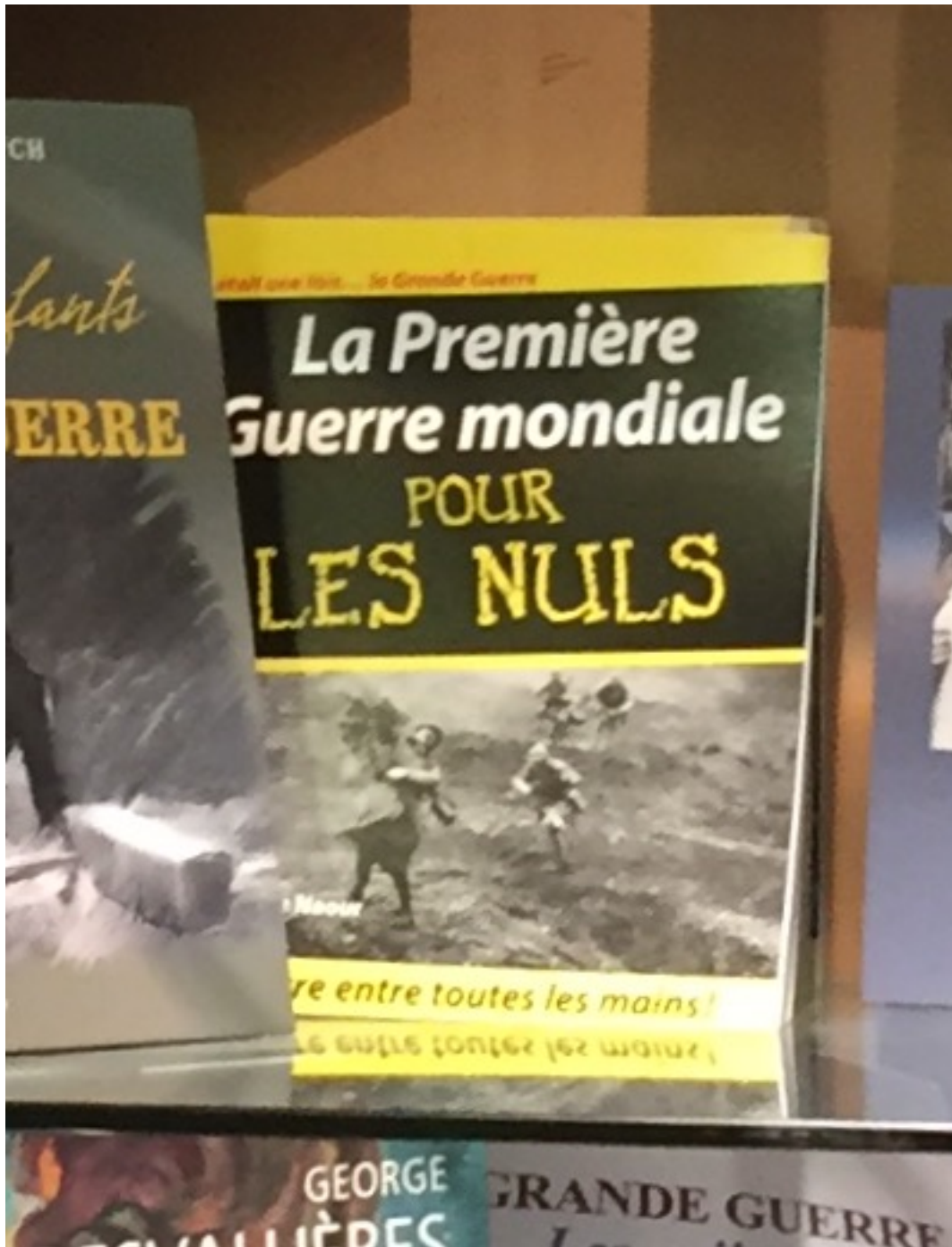
Amazingly, the underground tunnels and living quarters etc were still intact.



Mechanism for lowering and raising a big gun after each firing. This was the first mechanized, industrial war.



Verdun town itself survived, if the windows were blown out and it was evacuated. I fell in love with the place and the people were very un-French, which is to say friendly and helpful. Needing to find the Peugeot dealership, one chap led me there in his Audi.



If you don't know anything about WW-I that's okay. They have an edition for dummies....



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