

ARTICLE APPEARED
ON PAGE 2AWASHINGTON TIMES
19 June 1985

FILE ONLY

**PRUDEN ON
POLITICS**By
Wesley Pruden**'Evil' challenges,
impotence preens**

The face of evil is a familiar one, and every generation of us is required to learn to recognize it.

The generations in the West seem cursed with weak men who yearn in vain for the day that evil — they shrink in their cowardice even from calling it that — gets a facelift.

Evil loves the reflection of its face in all that it does. This is the reality that weak men cannot bring themselves to acknowledge.

Josef Mengele, the angel of death at Auschwitz, went to hell unrepentant, his son Rolf now tells us in the inevitable magazine memoirs.

"I have not the slightest cause from within myself to 'justify' or even excuse any decisions, acts or behavior in my life beyond the objective reasons behind them," the doctor told his son some years ago.

"... My tolerance really does have an exact limit — and that is where traditional values are concerned which are beyond discussion, and where I must fear danger for those close to me or for my national community."

His father spoke until the very end of his malicious and malevolent belief in the existence of "worthless" lives. Rolf Mengele recalls, and he never understood that neither he nor anyone else had the right to judge the value of a life, or the lack of value of a life — let alone to destroy it.

Nevertheless, the doctor, who filled the wombs of living women with wet concrete and injected dye into the eyes of living children just to see what would happen, was "a kindly man." The son recalls the stories he wrote about about warm puppy dogs and laughing children, and he often rowed little Brazilian children across a lake in a boat he built himself.

No one in 1985 — well, almost no one — finds it difficult to see Mengele as "bad," if not necessarily "evil." Some of the Mengele neighbors in Bavaria can't find it in their hearts to blame the family for taking care of the old man; "after all," said one particularly mindless *hausfrau*, "it's the Christian thing to do."

But recognizing the face of "evil" in a new generation is difficult for some people in the West who learned not very much from the experience with evil during the Hitler time. The Shi'ite savages in Beirut have conducted no Mengele-like medical experiments (such "science" being probably beyond their competence), but they have shown the same malevolent contempt for the "worthless" lives of infidels. Like Dr. Mengele, they show a special interest in Jews.

What manner of men is it that can kill with the feral fury that took the life of the American sailor, whose demeanor so set him apart from the rest of the infidels aboard Flight 847? What manner of men is it that are so driven to mutilate the body of the infidel that when their boots are finished with their grisly work a mother could not recognize the face of her son?

Far more important, what manner of a people are they who argue not over how and when such evil should be answered, but whether? Already the television talk shows, the editorial pages of the great newspapers, the conversations of the enlightened and the civilized resound to the unctuous bromides of cowards.

"What is hard to understand," writes Richard Cohen in *The Washington Post*, who is always puzzled and usually a little offended by martyrs who won't go nicely to their deaths, "is why both the United States and Israel persist in thinking that violence is an antidote to passion."

The savages in Beirut, he clucks with a triumphant wink, earlier Beirut bombing in which the CIA has been indirectly implicated.

The White House, recently so contemptuous of the "weak" and "vacillating" Jimmy Carter, goes to work on the containment of the "politics" of the dilemma. Everything is "damage control." This is the way the political technicians talk; it might even be the way they think.

Passions cool quickly, righteous anger flees, and the unrepentant evil among us calibrate the risks in new assaults on men who revel in their impotence.

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