

As a teenager, Christa conducted “pony vacations” and wrote a book, *Kleine Pferde, grosses Glück (Small Horses, Big Joy)*, which was published in German and Dutch when she was twenty. She went on to write many articles about animals for newspapers and periodicals. Then, after she was ordained, she set out to raise the consciousness of her church. In 1980 she conducted her first church service on behalf of animals, and since then she has conducted other animal church services in Germany, and one in Australia as well. In 1986 she co-officiated at a church service against animal experimentation in front of the pharmaceutical giant Hoechst AG (“Hoechst, erbarne dich!”—“Hoechst, have mercy!”). That same year she collected 30,000 signatures calling for “No eggs from factory farms in church institutions,” which she presented to the state governing body of the Lutheran church in Hessen-Nassau.

On July 10, 1988, Blanke conducted the first live TV church service with animals—“Who is my neighbor?”—on German national television (ZDF). The program attracted thousands of domestic and foreign letters (ninety-six percent favorable) and hundreds of press articles. In 1989 Blanke and her husband Michael founded *Aktion Kirche und Tiere* (Action for Church and Animals) to mobilize other clergy, but their effort did not meet with much success. “As an ordained minister of the Lutheran Church, I tried to involve the church in helping animals in distress. So far I had done lots of charity work for the poor (soup kitchen, homeless, prisoners, addicts) with great support from my church, but now I found myself deserted by my fellow clergy.”²⁷

In 1998 Blanke founded the organization Animals’ Angels, whose motto is *Wir sind bei den Tieren* (“We are with the animals”).²⁸ “We specialize in fighting livestock transport throughout Europe. I strongly believe that the reason for me to take on this special issue of animal suffering is a direct result of all the studies I undertook to understand the Holocaust. Animals in transport go through tremendous suffering similar to what the Jews suffered when they were transported to the Nazi camps.” Volunteer teams of Animals’ Angels monitor animal transport trucks to slaughterhouses and animal markets. Teams following trucks

Animal Holocaust

Until recently Christa Blanke was a Lutheran pastor who served with her husband, also a minister, in a village near Frankfurt. She was born in war-ravaged Germany in 1948, and her mother insists she would not have survived without food parcels from CARE USA. “So at a very early stage in my life, I experienced what compassion is all about—it even extended to the former murderous enemy.”²⁶

Later when Blanke learned about the murder of six million Jews by Germans who belonged to her grandfathers’ generation (“unbelievable for a teenager brought up to respect and honor the elderly”), she developed the strong conviction that if anything similar to that should ever happen in her lifetime, “I would fight with everything I had. These two decisions—to extend compassion to everyone in need and to fight a holocaust wherever I saw one—led me straight into the animal rights movement.”

transporting horses to slaughter have passed through both Treblinka and Auschwitz.

Blanke is very proud of her Angels, "mainly younger people whose sacrifices for the animals involved in the miserable live transport trade come from a caring nature and a well-founded professionalism." Teams of Animals' Angels have monitored animal transport trucks through France, Greece, Holland, Hungary, Italy, Lebanon, Lithuania, Morocco, Poland, Romania, and Spain. Blanke says their commitment to the hundreds of thousands of bulls, cattle, donkeys, horses, and sheep involved in the despicable animal transport trade fills her with pride. She says these young people represent the animals' hope for the future. "These dedicated young people, willing to sacrifice, to fight, to pour their hearts and souls into their work" give her hope and help keep her going.²⁹

On November 8, 1999, the Hessian Social Welfare Ministry honored Blanke with the 1999 Animal Protection Prize from the State of Hessen at a ceremony at the Biebrich Castle "for her exceptional commitment to the protection of slaughter animals during transport and the exemplary personal commitment of this animal rights activist on behalf of agricultural work and slaughter animals." The Minister of Social Welfare, Marlies Mosiek-Urbahn, described the work of Animals' Angels: "Sixty volunteer teams escort international animal transports across all of Europe under the most difficult, psychologically and physically stressful, and sometimes even dangerous conditions, and show their presence at slaughterhouses and animal markets, at ports and loading stations. This involvement has led to the disclosure of numerous deplorable conditions and cruelties to animals, and often marked improvements for the animals were achieved. The experiences and knowledge are documented by the organization, utilized legally and journalistically, and have provided an important impetus for animal protection policy."

During a visit to Israel in July 24–28, 2000, organized by Yossi Wolfson of Anonymous for Animal Rights, Blanke held discussions with government representatives concerning the transportation of animals to and from Israel. Blanke says her focus on improving the trans-

portation of animals is the first stage in an attempt to abolish the meat trade. "We are completely opposed to the slaughter of animals," she told the Israeli newspaper *Ha'aretz*, "but if they are fated to be slaughtered, then it should be done where they are raised, after which the frozen meat can be sent to other countries, thereby saving them the unnecessary suffering incurred during transport." Although she has not yet seen much change in the meat-eating habits of the public, she says they have seen surprising results with a number of the drivers who transport animals to slaughter. Some of them have left their jobs thanks to the influence of Animals' Angels and its education campaign throughout Europe.³⁰

Blanke sees parallels between the Nazi era and what is being done to animals today. First of all, there is the decision to strip the animals of their dignity. Once there is no individuality left, then everything becomes possible. Secondly, there is the same kind of mind-splitting among the bystanders. Blanke says that during the Nazi period many Germans had some kind of "pet Jews," the ones who were really nice and not to be mixed up with the "ordinary ones." She says the same thing happens to the animals. There are pets like minipigs and riding horses, not to be confused with "slaughter pigs" and "slaughter horses." Blanke says this ethical schizophrenia is openly supported by governments and the meat industry, while the various media brainwash the public, as they did in Hitler's day.

Other similarities include: meeting points (*Sammelstellen*) where animals are loaded on trucks and railway cars, with no bonds of family or friendship respected; selections that take place according to "value," gender, and age; the use of ramps; numbers tattooed into the skin; language by drivers and butchers full of abuse and contempt ("German Jews were called *Judensau* [Jewish pig] and were treated accordingly"); and the use of euphemisms (to "euthanize" means to murder; "special treatment" refers to slaughter). Then, there is the need for lots of organization and paperwork to transport millions of animals over long distances and upon their arrival to murder them. A small number of people gain tremendous wealth from this horrific trade, says Blanke, and although everybody knows about it, only a few people are actively fighting against it.

Blanke points out that not only were Jews transported to the camps in cattle cars, but in some places the death journey started at exactly the same place where cattle were loaded on trucks or trains to be sent to slaughter.³¹ As historian Marion Kaplan writes, "While some assembly points were in synagogues and other Jewish communal buildings, the Nazis cruelly located others in slaughterhouses."³² After the Jews of Krefeld, for example, were rounded up and taken by train to the Düsseldorf central station about fifteen miles away, a Gestapo and SS escort marched them through the city streets to a slaughterhouse in Düsseldorf-Derendorf, ideal for its secluded location and long loading ramps. From there, the Jews were transported to a transit station called Izbica near Lublin and were then sent to either Auschwitz, Belzec, or Majdanek.³³

On August 30, 1942, in the city of Wiesbaden, the Nazis took the city's last Jewish men, women, and children to the slaughterhouse behind the main railroad station and left them in the cattle pens for four days before loading them on cattle cars. The transport travelled on the special slaughterhouse track to Frankfurt and then on to Theresienstadt, the concentration camp in Czechoslovakia which served as a way station to Auschwitz.³⁴ Blanke points out that, during the Holocaust, the infrastructure of destruction did not change; only the identity of the victims.³⁵

Blanke and her husband, who have three children (Ursula is reading law; Christopher is working in an old people's home in Berlin; Cariona lives at home), provide safety and shelter to various animals: four rescued elderly dogs, two abandoned cats, and a donkey in poor health after abusive treatment. The other animals (ponies and oxen) whom Blanke and her husband kept in Glauberg, where they lived and ministered for more than twenty years, have now been placed with the Animals' Angels Guardian program because the Blankes have less outdoor space in Mütcke, where they moved in 1999.

In an article she wrote in the early 1990s—"That God Also Loves His Creatures Who Have Feathers and Fur, Claws, Horns and Quills:

Reflections on the Church and the Course of the World"—Blanke describes two items she received in the mail on the same day.³⁶ The first was a long, seventy-page report on the proceedings of a church synod conference held in Glauberg, at which church leaders in the course of discussing minor changes in church policy and procedures debated whether or not to insert a sentence or two stating that the Jews are chosen by God. After doing absolutely nothing to help Jews during the Holocaust, she writes, it is "grotesque" that "now the Christians in my church are quarreling over the addition of a sentence about Jews in church policy. Fifty years too late."

In the same mail she received a thick package with photographs and reports from Animals' Angels teams tracking animal transports across Europe. The fact that horses, cattle, sheep, pigs, and chickens are dying of thirst and hunger day in and day out as they are transported to slaughter prompts Blanke to ask, "When will my church raise its voice for the poor creatures who are shipped in rolling convoys across Europe for slaughter? Where is my church? Where is their outcry? They are too busy discussing better relations between Jews and Christians. Fifty years too late."

During a tour she took of a local slaughterhouse, Blanke was struck by the similarity of slaughterhouse language and the language of the Nazis. The veterinarian who conducted the tour explained that the slaughterhouse is divided into "pure" and "impure" zones. In the "pure zone," where business is conducted, the processed animals are under refrigeration, while in the "impure zone" the animals are kept in holding pens and then slaughtered. Since the killing is over for the day, the stalls are mostly empty. "Two groups of cows stare at us with their big dark eyes." Blanke sees pigs who have bloody rivulets running down their skin, who won't get any food or water before the slaughtering starts up again at four o'clock the next morning.

After the tour enters the "pure zone," where the meat marketing department and refrigerators are located, the vet tells them he has finished his work for the day. When he says proudly, "I carry out my duties wherever they tell me to," Blanke thinks, "Many things here are all too

familiar. Words like 'ramp' and 'selection,' 'Suitable animals' are led into the stalls, while the 'unsuitable' ones are killed immediately in a special wing." The technical language depersonalizes victim and perpetrator—phrases like "delivery of goods," "shipments," "special processing" of sick animals, "procedures" of slaughtering, "utilization" of hair, bones, skin. By the time Blanke leaves the slaughterhouse, she is sick to her stomach. "And we didn't even see the slaughtering itself. We didn't hear the fearful screams of the cows or the shrieks of the pigs. We didn't hear the machines drone or the firing of the bolt gun." What she did see, she writes, was "the degradation of the victim that always precedes a murder."

We saw animals—who belong outside where the grass and trees grow, where the wind caresses them and the sun warms them, where their senses and their survival instincts are supported—crushed together, smeared in feces, standing fearfully behind iron bars on the cement floor of a large hall. There is no place to hide, no protection, nowhere to escape danger.

These animals "are living the final hours of their lives in the same city in which the church synod is having its convention, the synod that still cannot finish its business about changing church codes regarding relations between Jews and Christians." Blanke wonders if any of the synod members have ever been in a slaughterhouse. "Did any of them ever hear the victims of this daily holocaust screaming? I can't imagine it. But I can imagine that after all the speeches have been made and all the positions debated, the synod members will go to lunch and eat their lentil soup with beef sausage."

At home that night, as she feeds the animals, Blanke thinks how 130 years ago the church remained silent about the slave trade because they were only black people. Fifty years ago the church remained silent because they were only Jews. Today the church remains silent because they are only animals. "How many millions of animals must be slaughtered and exterminated, sparing only a few 'useful' groups, until the

church discovers that God also loves those among His creatures who have feathers and fur, claws and hoofs, horns and quills?"

Blanke is aware that "the Holocaust comparison is not very popular in Germany and elsewhere, but to me it becomes stronger as I get more insights about the cruel trade with living animals." She also knows there is only so much she can do "because cruelty and greed always seem to get the upper hand." Still, she says she will do all she can. "I am absolutely dedicated to fight the contemporary holocaust of the animals as hard as I can."

By way of conclusion, I say the sooner we put an end to our cruel a violent way of life, the better it will be for all of us—perpetrator bystanders, and victims.

Eternal Treblinka

*Our Treatment of Animals
and the Holocaust*

Charles Patterson

In the United States where slavery and the eradication of most of the continent's native peoples are an indelible part of our history, institutionalized cruelty against the weak and defenseless is as American as apple pie. Although the U.S. eventually went to war against Hitler and helped defeat him, his worldview lives on in the land of the victors.

Hitler declared, "He who does not possess power loses the right to life." Nowhere has this belief found more fertile soil than in modern America, where every day millions of lambs, calves, pigs, chickens, cows, horses, and other animals, most of them very, very young and all of them innocent, are transported to killing centers to be slaughtered for the tables of the master species. Why? Because they can't fight back and defend themselves against those who would kill and eat them, and because there are so few people willing and able to take up the fight on their behalf. Fortified by denial, indifference, and mindless custom that stretches back to our primitive origins, our society's abuse and exploitation of animals seems hopelessly eternal.

The good news is that since a growing number of people are saying "no" to the slaughterhouse and all that it stands for, there is hope that someday these atrocities will come to an end. In the meantime, however, what about the killing of all those innocents that takes place in our midst mercilessly day after day? How long will we allow this socially condoned mass slaughter to continue without raising our voices in protest?