

‘Can You Add This?’

(re an email on the 70th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz, about the sender's ('E.')

's grandparents and dad having been Jewish refugees in Switzerland during WW2, having avoided the Holocaust but having lost family, home, career, wealth, and so on)

the sender's dad sent this:

I'd like to add something to E.'s heartfelt and important statement. My wife and I were once in Crete on a sightseeing tour. The director of the famous archaeological museum in Heraklion had opened it for our group even though it was Sunday. As we came to the end of the exhibits, we passed a small sales counter he tended, where one could buy catalogues and photos of Minoan art. Some tour members stopped there to express their admiration for the Greek past. This prompted him to say, "this is not just OUR heritage; this is also YOUR heritage." This brought tears to my eyes. He insisted on including us.

We often draw narrow circles around what we don't understand or what we find alien or repugnant. We choose when to acknowledge our participation in the world or in the human race. "This is not mine; it's someone else's." We look at it from the outside. In truth we are inside.

The Holocaust, too, was not MY Holocaust or my parents' or the millions of its victims'; it was also YOURS, your parents', HUMANITY'S. It was not in Auschwitz; it was in the world. And it still is. For all of us, in all of us.

E.'s dad.