

MISSIONARIES. At school I had to attend scripture classes. Once our teacher told a story about a missionary who came to a tribe that revered a god living in a tree. **H**e challenged the tribe thus: "If your god fails to stop me from cutting down your tree, will you then convert to my god?" **C**onfident in their faith the pagans agreed. Their god did not intervene and as a result they were coerced into Christianity. **I** stood up and asked: "If I tossed that cross to the floor and your god did nothing, would you stop believing in your god?" **T**he teacher told me to shut up and sit down.

I don't remember this incident, but my mother used to tell me that one day, when I was about fourteen years old, I came home from school rather outraged, and I told her the above story. I excommunicated myself later that week.

At the same time in my life I became a pacifist. At school one day we were shown the based-on-a-true-story 1959 German (anti-) war movie, Die Brücke (The Bridge) by Bernhard Wicki. It impressed on me the horror and futility of war.