

We Didn't Know

Tom Paxton

"We didn't know," said the Burgomeister
"About the camps on the edge of town
It was Hitler and his crew
That tore the German nation down
We saw the cattle cars it's true
And maybe they carried a Jew or two
They woke us up as they rattled through
But what did you expect me to do"
"We didn't know at all
We didn't see a thing
You can't hold us to blame
What could we do
It was a terrible shame
But we can't bear the blame
Oh no, not us, we didn't know"
"We didn't know," said the congregation
Singing a hymn in their church of white
"The press was full of lies about us
Preacher told us we were right
The outside agitators came
They burned some churches and put the blame
On decent southern people's name
To set our coloured people aflame
And maybe some of our boys got hot
And a couple of niggers and reds got shot
They should have stayed where they belong
And preacher would've told us if we'd done wrong"
We didn't know at all
We didn't see a thing
You can't hold us to blame
What could we do
It was a terrible shame
But we can't bear the blame
Oh no, not us, we didn't know
"We didn't know," said the puzzled voter
Watching the President on TV
"I guess we've got to drop those bombs
If we're gonna keep South Asia free
The President's such a peaceful man
I guess he's got some kind of plan
They say we're torturing prisoners of war
But I don't believe that stuff no more
Torturing prisoners is a communist game
And you can bet they're doing the same
I wish this war was over and through
But what do you expect me to do"
We didn't know at all
We didn't see a thing
You can't hold us to blame
What could we do
It was a terrible shame
But we can't bear the blame
Oh no, not us, we didn't know