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Carola Stern / Ingke Brodersen
A Strawberry for Hitler
Germany under the Swastika

Translated by Helena Ragg Kirkby

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Ingke Brodersen

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This book speaks of the rise and fall of Nazism; of war; of the persecution and annihilation of human beings; of the year of liberation when the “Third Reich” was finally defeated. This period may be (hi)story, but it remains full of stories that have much to teach us. Stories of people who went along with Nazism because they profited from it, but also of people who risked their lives to help others. Often these were quiet heroes whose names are barely known. Hiltgunt Zassenhaus, for example. When asked why she acted as she did, she said “It was just human decency.”

Hans Mommsen

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As *Führer* of the Nazis Adolf Hitler was supposedly resolute, but in fact he was often indecisive. This was the reason why he failed in his November 1923 attempt to bring down the hated Weimar Republic. The so-called “Hitler putsch” brought him a four-year prison sentence, though in the event he served only a few months. He used these months to pen his memoirs, *Mein Kampf* [“My Struggle”]. Then within less than ten years the die was cast: on 30 January 1933 Adolf Hitler was appointed *Reichskanzler*. Many conservatives had supported him. They thought they could “tame” both him and the Nazis and exploit them for their own ends. But within a matter of months Hitler had turned Germany into a dictatorial Führer state, aided and abetted by his henchmen — from ex-fighter pilot Hermann Göring via propaganda boss Joseph Goebbels right through to Heinrich Himmler, later to become *Reichsführer* of the SS.

Hilke Lorenz

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When the National Socialists came to power, Karl, Annedore and Marianne were children. For them, too, 1933 represented a new era. Cross-country hikes, social evenings, holiday camps, midsummer celebrations: there was always something going on for young people who — such was their Führer’s will — were to “think German and act German.” They were the future. They sang marching songs; they learnt the Nazi salute and the difference between the „master race“ and the “*Untermenschen*”. And yet of all people it was a captive *Untermensch*, a Russian forced labourer, who caused the first crack in Annedore’s vision of the world. He broke through the carapace of cold pitilessness which had made the dyed-in-the-wool „Hitler Girl“ view foreign workers as „enemies“ fit only to be trampled on.

Mirjam Pressler

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She had just turned 14 and was getting ready to emigrate to Palestine. Helene, her older sister, was already there. But instead of going to Palestine, Hannelore, a Jewish girl from Leipzig who was now called Hannah, went to Copenhagen and then to the island of Fünen. Hannah had to work hard, but she felt safe from the terror of National Socialism. Until one day at dawn the SS came banging on the door with their rifle butts and hauled her off to Theresienstadt.

Ursula Wölfel

“Why Do Soldiers Have to Kill?”

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The war didn’t come out of the blue. Its harbingers were words — words like *Wehrpflicht* (“conscription”), *Kampf* (“fight”) and *Luftschutz* (“air-raid precautions”). Anxious about his wife and children, Hannes Huber reckoned they could well do with an air-raid shelter. Everyone in the block did their bit, and a shelter was soon installed. At that stage the war was still a few years off.

In due course, however, the war intruded even on this little block of rented flats on the outskirts of a small town between Duisburg and Dinslaken. Arnold, son of Eric, a committed social democrat, joined the SS and went missing at the end of the war; Ralf, son of Otto Schmitt, the block warden, was a horrified witness of the terror inflicted on Russian civilians by the SS. Wolfgang, sent together with his student detachment to fight the Poles, was badly wounded and became the first person from the block to die as a result of the war.

Hermann Vinke

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Friends had warned him. But Carl von Ossietzky, editor of the political magazine *Weltbühne*, decided to go to bed. During the night of 28 February 1933 he was arrested and later taken to Esterwegen concentration camp. Following international protests he was released in 1936, but by this time he was already dying. He wasn’t the only person in the “Third Reich” who courageously stood up for his democratic principles. Such people did exist — people who resisted to the point of risking their own lives. The carpenter Georg Elser, for instance, who over a period of thirty nights constructed a bomb in the Bürgerbräukeller, a Munich beer hall, which Hitler only narrowly escaped by leaving a few minutes earlier than planned. Or Pastor Martin Niemöller, who was incarcerated in Sachsenhausen as a “personal prisoner of the Führer”. Or the three young Belgian resistance fighters who in April 1943 stopped a death train on its way to Auschwitz and thus saved the lives of 231 people.

Hartmut von Hentig

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Why, in the final months of this crazy war, with the enemy already deep inside their country, did the Germans carry on fighting as if Hitler’s *Endsieg*, his promise of final victory, could still be attained by showing obedience, doing one’s duty, and sticking it out? After all, the best that anyone could hope for was to avoid being killed — either shot as a deserter, or blown to bits by the enemy! Millions of German soldiers had plenty of opportunity to ponder these questions in

gigantic PoW camps. In their various zones of occupation the victors began putting in place a new order of things. In Nuremberg an international court pronounced sentence on the major war-criminals, whose vile deeds now became apparent to many Germans for the first time, but without their truly acknowledging them. The re-education programme began — and not just by means of punishment, professional debarment, and images of the horrors perpetrated by the Nazis. It began above all through the sheer fact that everyone had to find their own way of coming to terms with the aftermath of Nazism: a life of freedom, a life without orders from above. The collapse was total — and for that very reason an opportunity.

Carola Stern

How to Breed Hatred by Demonising the Enemy

An Afterword page 241

Everyone was all in favour of the “Führer” in our little village on the island of Usedom. My mother was in favour, so was the vicar, so was the school-teacher, and even foreigners seemed to be in favour: the Prince of Wales visited Hitler at the *Berghof*, and the French team gave the Hitler salute at the Berlin Olympics. The “reds” and the “yids” had been demonised long before the Nazis arrived. To demonise your enemies is to breed hatred. And hatred breeds violence.

[pages 125-34]

Ursula Wölfel

“Why Do Soldiers Have to Kill?”

Days of War, Nights of Bombs

The war didn't come out of the blue. It crept up slowly, and its harbingers were words: *Rüstung* (“arms build-up”), *Bewaffnung* (“weaponry”), *Rationierung* (“rationing”), *Wehrpflicht* (“conscription”), *Luftschutz* (“air-raid precautions”). At first these were just words in the newspapers and on the radio, muscling in on the vocabulary of everyday life. Most were already familiar: the First World War was by no means a remote memory.

At that time, in 1933, there was a block of flats on the outskirts of a small town between Duisburg and Dinslaken. With its four floors and its bare, grey, windowless end-walls it stood at the tip of a green island of pastureland. Built just before the language of war began to resound, it long continued to be called “the new block” by its neighbours in the pretty farmhouses that with their gardens were all that remained of the old village. On the side facing the street the building had two large shop windows filled with furniture: a bedroom was displayed to the left, a kitchen to the right. But you rarely saw any customers, or any lorries collecting or delivering anything. The furniture on display never changed.

The building and the furniture shop belonged to Herr Mayer, a quiet, friendly man with a bald pate surrounded by a ring of grey hair. Until three years earlier he had been a lawyer in Duisburg, and his profession meant a great deal to him. He had inherited the pastureland, the block of flats and the furniture shop, and had moved there after the death of his wife to enjoy the peace and quiet and to ruminate even more deeply on law and justice. Why didn't he give up the furniture business? After all, the rent from the five flats gave him plenty to live on. He took lots of walks, always bought several newspapers at the kiosk, did his shopping at the co-op, and cleaned his flat himself. Every now and again a woman from the neighbourhood cleaned the shop. That was all anyone knew about him.

In the large top-floor flat lived Erich and Ilse Keller with their four children Arnold, Max, Susanne and Annette, and Ilse's parents, Katharina and Georg Fiedler. Erich Keller was a member of the SPD — a master blacksmith who for many years had been a foreman in a metal goods factory. Until the First World War Georg and Katharina Fiedler had bred saddle-horses on their farm, but inflation had cost them their land, their house, their wealth and all their wonderful horses.

On the second floor to the left lived Otto and Jutta Schmitt with their children Ralf and Anneliese. Until the previous year Otto Schmitt had worked as a bookkeeper. He was now unemployed, but the Nazis had made him Block Warden, and every last thing he found out about the families in his block he wrote down on file cards in tiny capital letters. Jutta, who had previously been a shop assistant in a pharmacy, was now the family breadwinner as a cook in a newspaper printing-house canteen, but still dreamed of studying chemistry at university.

Block Wardens

had some 40 to 60 households both to look after and to keep an eye on. They collected subs from Party members, made house-to-house collections for worthy causes, and were responsible for ensuring due participation at rallies and ceremonies. They were required to report “political acts of a criminal nature” to the Gestapo, and any “persons spreading damaging rumours”.

On the second floor to the right lived Hannes and Mechtild Huber and their one-and-half-year-old twins Ludwig and Mariechen. Hannes was a teacher; Mechtild had wanted to be a gardener really, but then she had gone and married her Hannes immediately after leaving school.

Eugen Mayer, the landlord, lived in the left-hand flat on the first floor, above the shop, while Richard and Marion Lange had recently moved into the right-hand flat with their fox-terrier Foxi. The Langes both worked in Kaufhaus Schirk, a department store.

Block warden Otto Schmitt couldn't make Herr Mayer out at all. A shopkeeper who took no interest in his shop? There was something wrong there. He'd pay him a visit and sound him out a bit. Just not enough was known about this man. He'd heard that Erich Keller knew him from before. Otto made a mental note to ask Erich about him. They'd known each other since they were at school, and though one was a Nazi and the other an SPD man they got on well together, provided they didn't talk about politics; unfortunately, however, both were unduly fond of talking about politics.

Otto met Erich on the landing outside the top-floor flat. But before he could ask him any questions, Eric called out “I was just coming down to see you, I need to talk to you! No sooner is your Adolf in power than he's let the cat out of the bag! Have you heard the latest? We're both going east with our entire families as settlers!”

“What a good idea”, said Otto.

Erich pulled a piece of paper from his pocket, went over to the stairwell window, and read in a hoarse, halting voice: “Only by fighting can we save ourselves! Our young must be toughened

up, our fighting spirit must be strengthened! Democracy is a cancer. We must save our farmers! Settlement policy! Universal conscription! Conquering new *Lebensraum* in the east! Ruthless Germanisation!”

He stuffed the piece of paper back into his pocket. “Your Führer said all that in a speech at a military do of some sort on the third of February. D’you know what that means? War, that’s what it means, Otto, war!”

“Is that official?” asked Otto. “Where did you get that? But stop shouting like that!”

Erich whispered that he’d got it from colleagues. No names, no pack drill! But this Hitler bloke, what on earth was he thinking of? Reckons he can go to war and simply grab some land in the east somewhere?

“For us, Erich, for Germany!” exclaimed Otto. “So that at last we have enough land and enough raw materials! Then no one will be unemployed, and people like me who really know a thing or two won’t have to be on the dole any more. I’m sure the whole speech will be in the papers tomorrow, and anyway perhaps all that stuff on your bit of paper has been made up, just to make people think that Adolf Hitler wants war! Never, never! He wants a thriving, peaceful Germany. That’s why he needs land in the east.”

“Land?” said Erich. “Which particular land?”

“Just land. After all, there’s plenty of it in the east!”

“Then I just hope you get a map for Christmas!” screamed Erich. “People live there, for God’s sake. No matter where you go in the east, people live there, people just like you and me!”

Ilse came out onto the landing. They were to keep their voices down and not talk about “war” so much. Otherwise yet again her mother wouldn’t be able to sleep: she was so afraid for Arnold because he wanted to be an officer or an SS man or both at the same time. “Only yesterday that Mr. Huber downstairs put her in a real state with all his talk about being afraid of a war coming.”

“Ah yes, our esteemed Mr. Schoolteacher!” exclaimed Otto Schmitt. “Scared of war — a right wimp he is!”

“I’m scared too”, said Ilse. “Everyone’s scared of war. Be honest, Otto, you are too!” At this point there was a shout from Jutta downstairs telling Otto to get down sharpish and eat his dinner.

“Don’t let your fried potatoes get cold”, said Erich.

“Same goes for you and your soup!” said Ilse.

Needless to say the newspapers reported nothing of the speech on conscription and land in the east that Hitler had delivered on 3 February 1933 to a gathering of army commanders. But even as early as 1933 there were ominous portents enough: the burning of the Reichstag, the Enabling Act, the book burnings, even the banning of the SPD. On 14 October 1933 Hitler renounced Germany's membership of the League of Nations and thereby ended Germany's involvement in the Geneva disarmament conference. It should already have been clear to everyone that he was bent on war.

Reichstag elections were called for 12 November. Were the voters happy with Hitler and his government? Yes or no? And did they approve of Germany's exit from the League of Nations? Yes or no?

On the Sunday of the election Ilse Keller woke her parents first, knowing that Grandpa Georg would need twice as long as normal to shave and get dressed. He only ever left the house when his mirror told him that he was a gentleman, a true gentleman, and for him the dignity of a gentleman resided in unpretentiousness and the gleam of freshly polished shoes.

Grandma Katharina had long since finished dressing, and had laid the breakfast table and sewn a button on Erich's Sunday-best coat. But Erich didn't want to go and vote. An election without political parties? No. He would sooner stay in bed. "So what's your opinion on our rejection of the League of Nations, Mr. Member-of-the-SPD?" asked Ilse. So Erich got out of bed and they all left exactly on time, just as Grandpa Fiedler liked to do.

Jutta Schmitt was waiting for them by the stairs. "Otto's helping with the election",

The "outlaws"

On 10 May 1933 the books of undesirable writers were burnt at every German university. In the presence of each university's rector and professors its libraries were plundered, there was a formal reading of the "12 Theses Against the Un-German Spirit", the writers' names were read out, and their books were cast into the fire. Almost every writer of repute was included in the list of those outlawed, from Heinrich and Thomas Mann to Bertolt Brecht and Sigmund Freud. Oskar Maria Graf was omitted from the list and protested vehemently: "What have I done to earn this disgrace? My entire life and my entire writings give me the right to demand that my books be committed to the pure flames of the fire rather than end up in the bloody hands ... of brown-clad gangs of murderers." Graf was deprived of his citizenship and his books were banned.

(Preparing for the book-burning. Some 500 tons of confiscated books, periodicals etc. lie heaped in Berlin's Magazingasse.)

[Vermerk dr. Übersetzerin: Ich nehme an, daß diese Parenthese eine Bildunterschrift darstellt...]

she said. "He left an hour ago." Mechtild Huber was just coming out of her flat. Hannes was still feeding the twins. The Langes were already standing outside their front door in their Sunday best making comforting noises at Foxi through the letter-box: they didn't want to take him with them. Out on the street they found Herr Mayer coming towards them. Had he already voted? He raised his hat, and Grandpa Georg raised his too; both smiled and bowed: two gentlemen out on a Sunday.

That's how peaceful election day was. But when the result was announced, Grandpa Georg shouted "It was rigged! We've been cheated! Ninety five percent of Germans saying Yes to our betrayal of the League of Nations? Never!" He ran from flat to flat within the building and asked "How did *you* vote on the League of Nations question?" Erich Keller came running along behind him to apologise for his father-in-law's antics. Only Richard Lange said "It's supposed to be a secret ballot, isn't it?" Everyone else obligingly answered his question.

The two of them then did their sums with Katharina and Ilse. There were eleven voters in the block. Two of them, the Schmitts, had said Yes to Germany's withdrawal from the League of Nations. They weren't sure about Richard Lange. But at least eight people in the building had voted No. "What did I tell you?" exclaimed Grandpa Georg. "Most people want to stay in the League of Nations! Those newspaper people have lied, or else they've done their sums wrong."

"And we talked about the election all day long instead of war", said Ilse. "It really did me good."

On 26 January 1934 Poland and Germany signed a ten-year non-aggression pact. At the end of July 1934 there was a resurgence of fear about a possible war. It was sparked by horror at the grisly spectacle of the murder of SA-boss Röhm and his underlings. Then the German President Paul von Hindenburg died. Hitler, who was already Chancellor, inherited all the President's powers, and on top of that became Supreme Commander of the armed forces! People were now talking openly of war. Many expected it to start in January 1935 when a referendum was due to take place in the Saar to determine whether its citizens wanted to rejoin Germany, the Saar having been governed by France since the end of the First World War. Many feared that the French would not accept the result if it went in favour of Germany. Remembering the First World War numerous people started hoarding for fear of a shortage of food and goods. "People who hoard don't have sufficient trust in the Führer; they're troublemakers and doom-merchants!" declared Otto Schmitt. But his wife Jutta secretly put an extra hundredweight bag of potatoes in their cellar and hid half a sack of flour in an old clothes cupboard. Ilse Keller asked Jutta if she could borrow a tiny corner of her cellar to store a small barrel of sauerkraut because her own

cellar space was taken up with the Fiedlers' old furniture. Grandpa Fiedler didn't think much of hoarding either, as it wasn't really allowed; but Grandma Katharina had hidden half a sack of soap powder in the old water heater in the attic, and she had also spared a thought for the Hubers' little ones and given Mechtild a box containing fifty packets of blancmange powder. Marion Lange reported that the department store still had a stock of bicycle tyres, so Hannes bought four new tyres plus inner tubes even though the old ones were still perfectly good.

On 13 January 1935 the people of Saarland voted for reintegration into Germany. The League of Nations gave the referendum its seal of approval, and France also accepted it. A war did not take place.

On 26 June 1935 two important laws were promulgated. Labour Service, hitherto voluntary, was made compulsory, and was also made a prerequisite for entry to university. This applied with immediate effect to all males between the ages of 18 and 25, and a little later was also extended to females. The Air-raid Precautions Law introduced a universal obligation on all citizens to install air-raid shelters, make blackout preparations, and acquire fire-fighting equipment.

Being a particularly hard-working teacher, Hannes Huber only got to read the newspapers properly on Sundays. He twice read the article about installing air-raid shelters and about the dangers of air attacks. If it really came to the point one day, would he be able to protect Mechtild and the children from bombs and fire? It didn't bear thinking about. And now there was even a law making such protection mandatory! In that case the danger had to be a real one. He grabbed the paper, dashed round to the Schmitts' flat and rang the doorbell twice with great impatience, regardless of the fact that it was a Sunday. Otto Schmitt came to the door; Hannes held the paper up and said "We ought to install an air-raid shelter in that bit of the cellar where the bikes are kept!"

"Of course we should!" exclaimed Otto. He, too, had read the air-raid article.

(Summer 1939. Air-raid warning practice for shop-girls in Berlin's
Potsdamer Platz [= *Bildunterschrift??*])

He agreed with Hannes's suggestion, and an hour later all the block's residents were gathered in the Langes' new sitting room drinking juice topped up with fizzy water, puzzling out which of them would clear out the attic, and where they could get hold of sand containers, buckets, fire extinguishers, first-aid boxes and blackout material. Such was their enthusiasm that they slipped into a cheerful mood as if they were all planning a Sunday outing together. They

were afraid, needless to say; but for a couple of hours they felt safe and secure as though already tucked up in their air-raid shelter-to-be. Right at the end, just as they were exchanging loud and cheerful goodbyes, Hannes Huber asked “What about Herr Mayer?” There were embarrassed smiles on all sides: they had completely forgotten about him.

The following day Erich Keller went to see him on behalf of all the tenants. Herr Mayer was agreeable to all their proposals. Obviously, he said, he would pay for any preparatory building work and the conversion of the cellar; that was clearly his duty. Though they’d probably see very little of him down there himself, he added: he’d been a soldier in the last war and he had a real thing about cellars.

At the end of August the Hubers had a baby girl. They called her Friederike. “It’s an old-fashioned name”, said Mechtild, “but it’s so well suited to the present day. People will be able to call her ‘Friedchen’ or ‘Friede’ [translator’s note: *Friede* is the German word for “peace”].” All the residents attended the christening. Herr Mayer gave the baby a little golden chain, and cradled her in his arms for a long time. Everyone got the impression that he knew a thing or two about tiny babies.

7 November 1935 saw the first cohort of recruits to swear their oath of allegiance to Hitler. Arnold Keller, the elder of Erich’s two sons, was among them.

Preparations for war

Universal conscription had been introduced on 16

March 1935. This violated the conditions imposed on Germany in the Treaty of Versailles following the First World War.

The year 1936 did not begin well: Hitler repudiated the Locarno Treaty of 1925 whereby Germany, Belgium and France had undertaken not to violate each other’s borders. The German areas on the left bank of the Rhine were supposed to remain free of all military installations — but on 7 March 1936 fully armed German cavalry and infantry battalions flooded into these areas across the bridges of the Rhine. A good few people regarded this as a matter for celebration. It could have been the first day of the war, but France was not yet ready for war.

On 10 July it was ordained that the Party’s most basic unit, the “block”, would no longer be restricted to Party members but would include *all* citizens. Otto saw this as a signal to take renewed interest in Herr Mayer. First of all he drew up a written check-list: What do we know about him? Age, family, profession, his past? What are his habits? What friends does he have?

What papers does he read? Everyone in the building knew he was 63. But as to where he was born and whether he had siblings or children or at least a cousin somewhere in the area, no one had the faintest idea, despite the fact that he'd been getting a lot of visitors recently. They were always quiet, self-effacing people who one scarcely even caught a glimpse of. "Distant relatives" said Mayer when Otto finally buttonholed him.

On his walks Mayer liked wandering across the fields and sometimes also went through the small patch of bushes to the "Moorschenke" inn. In addition he clearly had a liking for the station, the post office and the Duisburg department stores. Otto had seen him there twice, talking to total strangers and even shelling out for their coffee and cakes.

On 1 August 1936 Hitler opened the Olympic Games in Berlin. They passed off in a whirl of excitement like some great and jolly festival — a real propaganda coup for Germany. Over 4000 athletes from forty nine countries were enthusiastic in their praise of German hospitality.

1936 Olympic Games in Berlin

In 1931 the International Olympic Committee had decided to award the Games to Germany — a decision that it refused to alter despite international protests. This gave Hitler an opportunity to present himself to the world as a welcoming, peace-loving host. The Games were declared to be a "national enterprise". Never before had so many athletes participated in the Games. The most outstanding of them all was the black American, Jesse Owens, "the fastest man in the world", who won four gold medals. But it was the German team — "fighting for the ideas of our Führer" — that achieved the highest medals total.

Anti-Jewish propaganda posters and signs barring Jews from entry were removed for the duration. However, the persecution of Jews and opponents of the regime continued unabated. Just as the Olympic Games were taking place, building work started in Oranienburg near Berlin on Sachsenhausen concentration camp.

August saw a number of changes within the building. Herr Mayer relinquished his flat on the first floor and set up house in his office and store-rooms. Roller shutters appeared on the shop

door and the doors leading to the yard, as also on the office and cellar windows. A new tenant, Frau Hoopke, moved into the flat previously occupied by Herr Mayer. Otto Schmitt immediately started a file-card on the new family. He read it out to Jutta: "Caroline Hoopke, 53 years old, widowed 1933, maiden name Hirschel. What do you think?" he asked Jutta. "Nice name. But otherwise?"

"Former teacher. Four children. Ruth, her eldest daughter, is a music student; the second, Hertha, is married; the third, Karla, is only fourteen, she's still at school. Her son Wolfgang is studying shipbuilding in Danzig — because it's cheaper, so they claim. Not a single Party member in the entire family! Perhaps Ralf should show a bit of interest in them?"

Guernica

July 1936 saw the beginning of the Spanish Civil War between the fascists under General Franco and the socialist Popular Front. Numerous Germans fought with the Popular Front — Jews, communists, social democrats and other opponents of Hitler. Hitler assisted Franco by sending him 6000 German soldiers, the "Condor Legion", equipped with the very latest weaponry — thus finding a good opportunity to try out new weapons in someone else's country. Nine months later German planes bombarded the small town of Guernica in northern Spain. 200 civilians died. Pablo Picasso painted a famous picture entitled "Guernica" that has become a symbol of murder in the name of war.

"He's not interested in girls", said Jutta.

"So what *is* he interested in then? He's seventeen, for goodness' sake!"

"Politics and anthropology or some such thing. He spends the whole day learning Latin. He wants to leave school with top grades."

"A swot!" said Otto. "My son a swot!"

On 1 December the Hitler Youth were made the official state youth organisation.

Ralf was furious. "What's this supposed to mean? The whole thing's just a pack of lies!"

"What are you on about?" asked Otto. "I'm proud of you, Pack Leader Ralf! And Hitler is proud of all of you! Where are the lies in that?"

“It’s *all* lies! In the morning at training camp last summer we sang “And the early morn is our special time” — a beautiful song. Then in the evening we sang “Dear friends, good night, remember this day” — another beautiful song. On a bad-weather day we went to visit a concentration camp. They tied someone to the whipping-post. He whimpered like a child and screamed “Not again, not again! Just shoot me instead!” They’d only stuck him on there as a joke and as a warning to the others, the guards told us. That was really in tune with the lovely songs, don’t you reckon? It made me feel ill!”

“You lot have to be toughened up”, said Otto. “One of these days you’re going to be our brave young soldiers!”

“I know. At training camp there was a motto on the wall: ‘We were born to die for Germany!’ ” said Ralf before running out of the room and slamming the door.