

RANDOM HOUSE  BOOKS



Fatherland

Robert Harris

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Author's Note

Praise for
FATHERLAND

‘A powerful and chilling story: the past rewritten. The plot is convincing in every detail, the characters are entirely believable’ MARTHA GELLHORN, *Daily Telegraph*

‘Not since *The Day of the Jackal* has a thriller captured the imagination of so many readers’ SHERIDAN MORLEY, judge of the *Sunday Express* Book of the Year Award

‘Gripping in the way John Buchan, Len Deighton and John LeCarré are. The writing is superb. This novel lifts its author into a new and superior class’ WOODROW WYATT, *The Times*

‘Tightly constructed . . . grips as tightly as a Nazi’s glove’ *Independent on Sunday*

‘A singular achievement displaying original and carefully wrought suspense all its own . . . *Fatherland* easily transcends convention’ *Washington Post*

‘A sly and scary page turner’ *Los Angeles Times*

‘Absorbing, expertly written’ *New York Times*

‘A fantastic thriller . . . The final solution is an utter surprise. Harris reaches it with speed, conveying a whole culture of grotesquery and kitsch’ *Mail on Sunday*

‘A formidable thriller . . . terse, involving and expertly constructed . . . It is five days since I finished *Fatherland* and it is still rumbling around my head’ *London Review of Books*

‘*Fatherland* works on all levels. It’s a triumph’ *Washington Times*

‘Robert Harris’s ingenious new thriller is a triumph . . . Suspenseful and elegant . . . a thoughtful, frightening story’ *San Francisco Chronicle*

‘Ingenious . . . fast-paced and beautifully written’ *Esquire*

‘Terrifying . . . A wonderful new novel’ *Newsday*

‘*Fatherland* is based on a brilliant idea . . . Not only do the intricacies of the plot make for compelling reading but the accuracy and detail of what a victorious Germany might have been like are surprising coming from one who was not born when the War began’ MILTON SHULMAN

‘Truly captivating’ ROBERT LUDLUM

‘I picked it up at an airport bookstall the other day, and couldn’t put it down. Its depth, invention and characterisation lift it well into the realm of literature’ *Independent on Sunday*

'*Fatherland* is, thankfully, fiction . . . an intriguing way to look at Germany's never-buried past' *Newsweek*

'A world so chillingly realistic and controversial that *Fatherland* was initially turned down by every German publisher until even they could no longer ignore its commercial appeal' *Yorkshire Post*

'*Fatherland* is being compared to Martin Cruz Smith's *Gorky Park*, but Harris's narrative is more unsettling . . . His brooding, brown-and-black setting of a victorious Nazi regime is believable and troubling, the stuff of long nights of little sleep' *Time*

About the author

Robert Harris is the author of *Fatherland*, *Enigma*, *Archangel*, *Pompeii*, *Imperium* and *The Ghost*, all of which were international bestsellers. His latest novel, *Lustrum*, has just been published. His work has been translated into thirty-seven languages. After graduating with a degree in English from Cambridge University, he worked as a reporter for the BBC's *Panorama* and *Newsnight* programmes, before becoming political editor of the *Observer* and subsequently a columnist on the *Sunday Times* and the *Daily Telegraph*. The film of *The Ghost* – for which he co-wrote the screenplay – directed by Roman Polanski and starring Ewan McGregor and Pierce Brosnan, is due to be released at the beginning of 2010. He is married to Gill Hornby and they live with their four children in a village near Hungerford.

Also by Robert Harris

FICTION

Enigma Archangel Pompeii
Imperium The Ghost Lustrum

NON-FICTION

A Higher Form of Killing (with Jeremy Paxman)

Gotcha! The Making of Neil Kinnock
Selling Hitler Good and Faithful Servant

FATHERLAND

Robert Harris



To Gill

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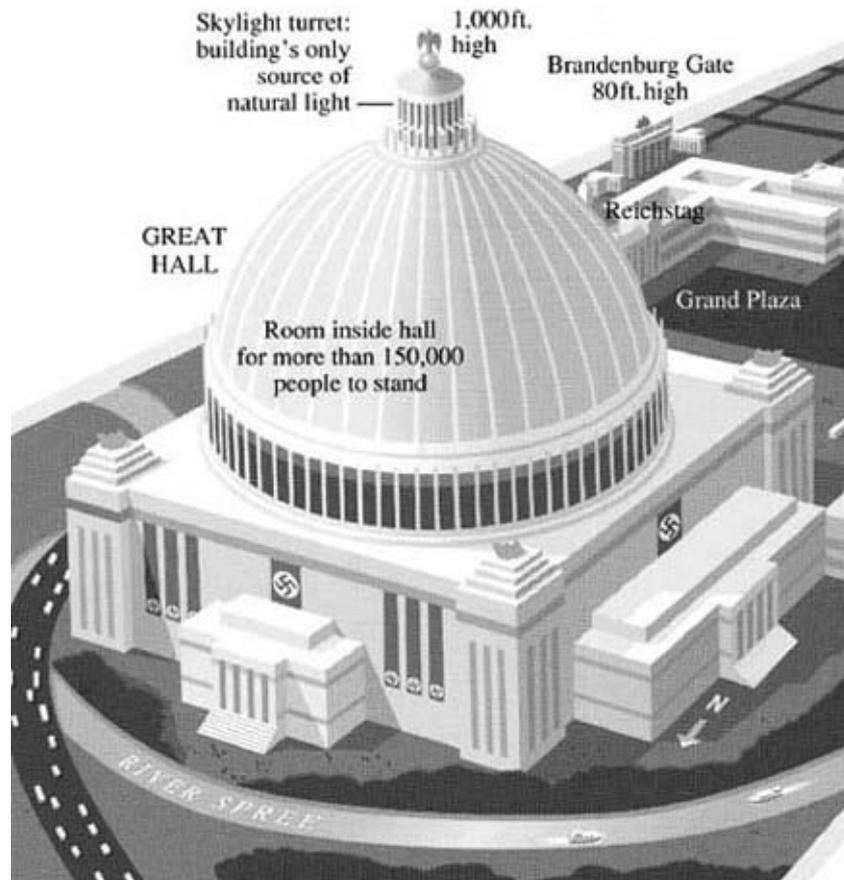
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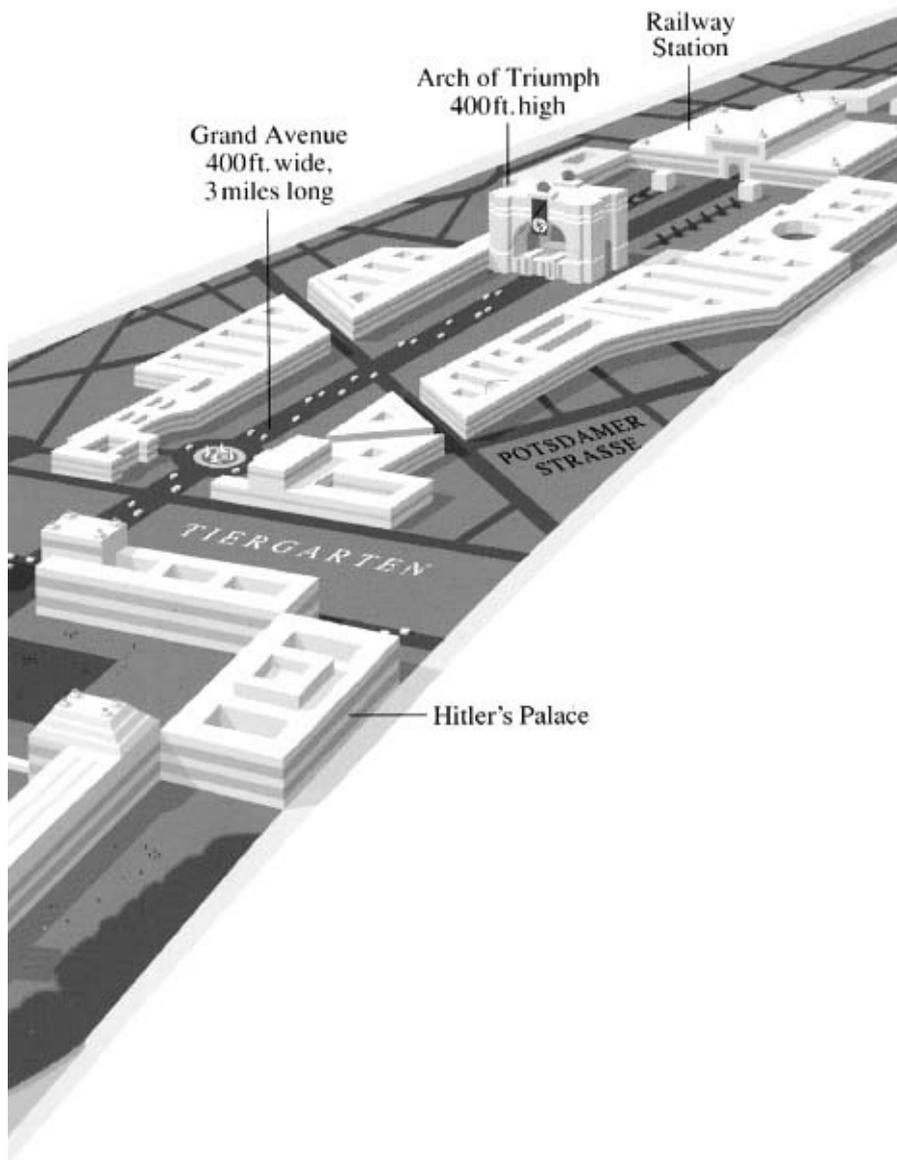
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I also wish to thank David Rosenthal and – especially – Robyn Sisman, without whom this book would never have been started, let alone finished.

Hitler's Berlin 1964





The Greater German Reich, 1964



The hundred million self-confident German masters were to be brutally installed in Europe, and secured in power by a monopoly of technical civilisation and the slave-labour of a dwindling native population of neglected, diseased, illiterate cretins, in order that they might have leisure to buzz along infinite Autobahnen, admire the Strength-Through-Joy Hostel, the Party Headquarters, the Military Museum and the Planetarium which their Führer would have built in Linz (his new Hitleropolis), trot round local picture-galleries, and listen over their cream buns to endless recordings of *The Merry Widow*. This was to be the German Millennium, from which even the imagination was to have no means of escape.

HUGH TREVOR-ROPER
The Mind of Adolf Hitler

People sometimes say to me: 'Be careful! You will have twenty years of guerrilla warfare on your hands!' I am delighted at the prospect . . . Germany will remain in a state of perpetual alertness.

ADOLF HITLER
29 August 1942

PART ONE



TUESDAY 14 APRIL 1964

I swear to Thee, Adolf Hitler,
As Führer and Chancellor of the German Reich,
Loyalty and Bravery.
I vow to Thee and to the superiors
Whom Thou shalt appoint
Obedience unto Death,
So help me God.

SS OATH

ONE

Whick cloud had pressed down on Berlin all night, and now it was lingering into what passed for the morning. On the city's western outskirts, plumes of rain drifted across the surface of Lake Havel, like smoke.

Sky and water merged into a sheet of grey, broken only by the dark line of the opposite bank. Nothing stirred there. No lights showed.

Xavier March, homicide investigator with the Berlin Kriminalpolizei – the Kripo – climbed out of his Volkswagen and tilted his face to the rain. He was a connoisseur of this particular rain. He knew the taste of it, the smell of it. It was Baltic rain, from the north, cold and sea-scented, tangy with salt. For an instant he was back twenty years, in the conning tower of a U-boat, slipping out of Wilhelmshaven, lights doused, into the darkness.

He looked at his watch. It was just after seven in the morning.

Drawn up on the roadside before him were three other cars. The occupants of two were asleep in the drivers' seats. The third was a patrol car of the Ordnungspolizei – the Orpo, as every German called them. It was empty. Through its open window, sharp in the damp air, came the crackle of static, punctuated by jabbering bursts of speech. The revolving light on its roof lit up the forest beside the road: blue-black, blue-black, blue-black.

March looked around for the Orpo patrolmen, and saw them sheltering by the lake under a dripping birch tree. Something gleamed pale in the mud at their feet. On a nearby log sat a young man in a black tracksuit, SS insignia on his breast pocket. He was hunched forward, elbows resting on his knees, hands pressed against the sides of his head – the image of misery.

March took a last draw on his cigarette and flicked it away. It fizzed and died on the wet road.

As he approached, one of the policemen raised his arm.

'Heil Hitler!'

March ignored him and slithered down the muddy bank to inspect the corpse.

It was an old man's body – cold, fat, hairless and shockingly white. From a distance, it could have been an alabaster statue dumped in the mud. Smearred with dirt, the corpse sprawled on its back half out of the water, arms flung wide, head tilted back. One eye was screwed shut, the other squinted balefully at the filthy sky.

'Your name, Unterwachtmeister?' March had a soft voice. Without taking his eyes off the body, he addressed the Orpo man who had saluted.

'Ratka, Herr Sturmbannführer.'

Sturmbannführer was an SS title, equivalent in Wehrmacht rank to major, and Ratka – dog-tired and skin-soaked though he was – seemed eager to show respect. March knew his type without even looking round: three applications to transfer to the Kripo, all turned down; a dutiful wife who had produced a football team of children for the Führer; an income of 200 Reichsmarks a month. A life lived in hope.

'Well, Ratka,' said March, in that soft voice again. 'What time was he discovered?'

'Just over an hour ago, sir. We were at the end of our shift, patrolling in Nikolassee.'

We took the call. Priority One. We were here in five minutes.'

'Who found him?'

Ratka jerked his thumb over his shoulder.

The young man in the tracksuit rose to his feet. He could not have been more than eighteen. His hair was cropped so close the pink scalp showed through the dusting of light brown hair. March noticed how he avoided looking at the body.

'Your name?'

'SS-Schütze Hermann Jost, sir.' He spoke with a Saxon accent – nervous, uncertain, anxious to please. 'From the Sepp Dietrich training academy at Schlachtensee.' March knew it: a monstrosity of concrete and asphalt built in the 1950s, just south of the Havel. 'I run here most mornings. It was still dark. At first, I thought it was a swan,' he added, helplessly.

Ratka snorted, contempt on his face. An SS cadet scared of one dead old man! No wonder the war in the Urals was dragging on forever.

'Did you see anyone else, Jost?' March spoke in a kindly tone, like an uncle.

'Nobody, sir. There's a telephone box in the picnic area, half a kilometre back. I called, then came here and waited until the police arrived. There wasn't a soul on the road.'

March looked again at the body. It was very fat. Maybe 110 kilos.

'Let's get him out of the water.' He turned towards the road. 'Time to raise our sleeping beauties.' Ratka, shifting from foot to foot in the downpour, grinned.

It was raining harder now, and the Kladow side of the lake had virtually disappeared. Water pattered on the leaves of the trees and drummed on the car roofs. There was a heavy rain-smell of corruption: rich earth and rotting vegetation. March's hair was plastered to his scalp, water trickled down the back of his neck. He did not notice. For March, every case, however routine, held – at the start, at least – the promise of adventure.

He was forty-two years old – slim, with grey hair and cool grey eyes that matched the sky. During the war, the Propaganda Ministry had invented a nickname for the men of the U-boats – the 'grey wolves' – and it would have been a good name for March, in one sense, for he was a determined detective. But he was not by nature a wolf, did not run with the pack, was more reliant on brain than muscle, so his colleagues called him 'the fox' instead.

U-boat weather!

He flung open the door of the white Skoda, and was hit by a gust of hot, stale air from the car heater.

'Morning, Spiedel!' He shook the police photographer's bony shoulder. 'Time to get wet.' Spiedel jerked awake. He gave March a glare.

The driver's window of the other Skoda was already being wound down as March approached it. 'All right, March. All right.' It was SS-Surgeon August Eisler, a Kripo pathologist, his voice a squeak of affronted dignity. 'Save your barrack-room humour for those who appreciate it.'

THEY gathered at the water's edge, all except Doctor Eisler, who stood apart, sheltering under an ancient black umbrella he did not offer to share. Spiedel screwed a flash bulb on to his camera and carefully planted his right foot on a lump of clay. He

swore as the lake lapped over his shoe.

‘Shit!’

The flash popped, freezing the scene for an instant: the white faces, the silver threads of rain, the darkness of the woods. A swan came scudding out of some nearby reeds to see what was happening, and began circling a few metres away.

‘Protecting her nest,’ said the young SS man.

‘I want another here.’ March pointed. ‘And one here.’

Spiedel cursed again and pulled his dripping foot out of the mud. The camera flashed twice more.

March bent down and grasped the body under the armpits. The flesh was hard, like cold rubber, and slippery.

‘Help me.’

The Orpo men each took an arm and together, grunting with the effort, they heaved, sliding the corpse out of the water, over the muddy bank and on to the sodden grass. As March straightened, he caught the look on Jost’s face.

The old man had been wearing a pair of blue swimming trunks which had worked their way down to his knees. In the freezing water, the genitals had shrivelled to a tiny clutch of white eggs in a nest of black pubic hair.

The left foot was missing.

It had to be, thought March. This was a day when nothing would be simple. An adventure, indeed.

‘Herr Doctor. Your opinion, please.’

With a sigh of irritation, Eisler daintily stepped forward, removing the glove from one hand. The corpse’s leg ended at the bottom of the calf. Still holding the umbrella, Eisler bent stiffly and ran his fingers around the stump.

‘A propeller?’ asked March. He had seen bodies dragged out of busy waterways – from the Tegler See and the Spree in Berlin, from the Alster in Hamburg – which looked as if butchers had been at them.

‘No.’ Eisler withdrew his hand. ‘An old amputation. Rather well done in fact.’ He pressed hard on the chest with his fist. Muddy water gushed from the mouth and bubbled out of the nostrils. ‘Rigor mortis fairly advanced. Dead twelve hours. Maybe less.’ He pulled his glove back on.

A diesel engine rattled somewhere through the trees behind them.

‘The ambulance,’ said Ratka. ‘They take their time.’

March gestured to Spiedel. ‘Take another picture.’

Looking down at the corpse, March lit a cigarette. Then he squatted on his haunches and stared into the single open eye. He stayed that way a long while. The camera flashed again. The swan reared up, flapped her wings, and turned towards the centre of the lake in search of food.