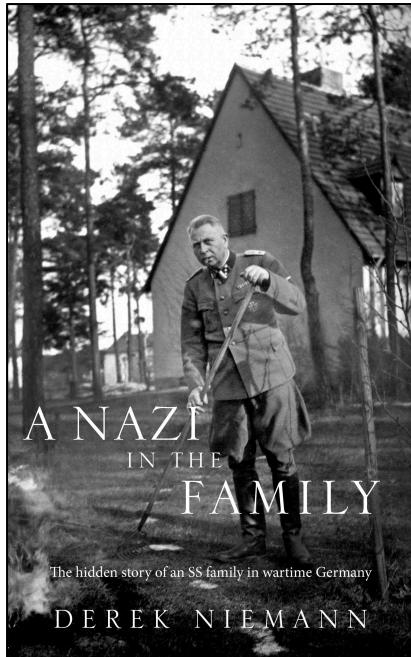


A Nazi in the Family

The Hidden Story of an SS Family in Wartime Germany

By Derek Niemann

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FOR REVIEW IN APRIL/MAY ISSUES



“I was at Dachau. Not as an inmate – I was one of the bad Germans. I used to tell people I was in Munich, but no, I was at Dachau.” – Rudolf Adolf August Martin Wilhelm Niemann (my Dad)

For most of his life, Derek Niemann’s father kept his early childhood hidden away from the world, his children, even, perhaps, from himself. Though he had lived through the war in Nazi Germany, he never, ever, discussed it in front of anyone. It wasn’t until Derek was 50 years of age that he made the chilling discovery that his grandfather Karl had been an officer in the SS, attached to the slave labour camp in Dachau, with his family and children living nearby. A lifetime of unsettling hints and clues began to fall into place, and Derek set out to unearth the true story of an often contradictory family man and his involvement in one of the greatest horrors in human history.

Eleven million people perished in the Holocaust. Most of them slept (and many died) in the bunk beds that Derek’s grandfather had responsibility for manufacturing. Karl regularly visited concentration camps as part of his work. He saw the skeletal figures and witnessed torture and brutality. Yet for ten years he carried on working for the SS regardless, taking home his wages, tending his garden, reinventing himself in the evenings as a family man.

In this shocking book Derek reveals the story of a family living through the formation of Nazi Germany from the ashes of the Great War, right through to its collapse under Allied assault. This is an unflinching look at a man who, whether through compulsion or circumstance, fell into the darkest service of Nazi Germany; of a wife, obstinate in her opposition to the regime, but loyal and loving to her SS officer husband; and of children who through innocent eyes saw the rise and fall of a country and a family.

2015 marks the 70th Anniversary of the Liberation of Auschwitz, Buchenwald, Belsen and Dachau.

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Scots-born Derek Niemann is a nature writer and editor, now freelance after 25 years working for the RSPB. His previous book, *Birds in a Cage* (Short Books, 2012), the true story of POWs who overcame the hardships of imprisonment by watching birds, combines his twin passions for history and natural history. Derek has also written a number of wildlife books for children, as well as columns for the *Guardian* and *BBC Wildlife*.

FEATURE ANGLES

Personal Revelation: The author makes the discovery at the age of 50 that his grandfather was an SS captain managing concentration camp slave labourers. We follow him as he takes us on a journey through Berlin, Sachsenhausen, Dachau and the Alps to uncover his family's hidden Nazi past.

Inside view of an SS Family, being the wife of a Nazi: The husband is the committed SS captain and Nazi, his wife detests the regime and privately rebels although she supports him publicly. The author, the grandson of the couple uses his own research and testimony of surviving relatives to tell the story, illustrated by an incredible archive of more than 400 photographs.

Scottish Angle: The Scots-born author grew up in 1960s Lanarkshire in a family concealing the dark secret of his German grandfather. The book follows the family's life in wartime Berlin and later escape to Scotland – to seek a better life, swapping goose-stepping parades of Berlin for Orange Lodge parades in a divided community.

Recovering and restoring family photographs: The author has access to pictures from all three surviving siblings. Most were prints, some in albums, a few in frames, plus 110 negatives that had been kept for 40 years by a Jewish lady who was allocated the family home in Berlin after the war. In total there were over 400 images relating to the period covered by this book. All the photos were restored by the author's wife Sarah.

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