

WHAT IF HITLER HAD WON?

ROBERT HARRIS

Fatherland



Includes the
first chapter of

Munich



Coming
21.09.17

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Author's Note

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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*

'Clever and ingenious...Its breeding is by Orwell, out of P.D. James, a detective story inside a future shock' *Daily Mail*

'A writer who handles suspense like a literary Alfred Hitchcock' NELSON MANDELA, *Guardian*

'Robert Harris has recreated the whole structure of a totally corrupt society in a way that makes the flesh creep' JOHN MORTIMER, *Sunday Times*

'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 eleven bestselling novels: the Cicero Trilogy - *Imperium*, *Lustrum* and *Dictator* - *Fatherland*, *Enigma*, *Archangel*, *Pompeii*, *The Ghost*, *The Fear Index*, *An Officer and a Spy*, which won four prizes including the Walter Scott Prize for Historical Fiction, and *Conclave*. Several of his books have been filmed, including *The Ghost*, which was directed by Roman Polanski.

His forthcoming book, *Munich*, uses the Munich Conference of 1938 as a backdrop, and is filled with the real-life characters and events of the time.

His work has been translated into thirty-seven languages and he is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature. He lives in West Berkshire with his wife, Gill Hornby.

Also by Robert Harris

————— FICTION —————

Enigma Archangel Pompeii
Imperium The Ghost Lustrum
The Fear Index An Officer and a Spy
Dictator Conclave

————— 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



arrow books

To Gill

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I thank the Librarian and staff of the Wiener Library in London for their help over several years.

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

INTRODUCTION

Adolf Hitler once remarked that 'one good idea is worth a lifetime in an office'. I suppose you could say that *Fatherland* was my one good idea. I have written seven other novels in the twenty years since this book appeared – better novels, I hope, at least some of them – but none has had quite the impact of my first.

The idea began to evolve in my mind in the mid- 1980s, when I was writing a book about the forged Hitler diaries (*Selling Hitler*, 1986). My research included Hitler's *Table Talk*: the Führer's droning monologues, recorded in 1941 and 1942, outlining his plans for the world after the Wehrmacht had won the war. This gargantuan vision – of a remodelled Berlin renamed Germania, of 25 million German settlers living thousands of miles away on the Steppes, of an empire linked to the Fatherland by double-decker railways and gleaming *autobahnen* – struck me as a wonderful subject for a nonfiction book. Indeed, I thought, perhaps I could write it unconventionally, and approach Hitler's world as if it actually existed: it would be a kind of *Baedeker's Guide to Hell*, using the actual maps and architectural models that had been produced by the planners in Berlin.

The idea wasn't bad, but I quickly realised it would only take me so far. It wouldn't enable me to address the really crucial questions. For example, would ordinary Germans actually have wanted to live in these ghastly colonial settlements, as bit-players in their Führer's fervid, megalomaniac production? And what about the extermination of the Jews? How did Hitler plan to explain the disappearance of six – or, if the whole of Europe had been conquered, ten – million people?

This in turn raised a fascinating geopolitical 'what if'. Assuming that Germany couldn't have defeated the United States militarily, the world would presumably have settled into a prolonged Cold War. In which case, might some future US president have decided, like Richard Nixon, to pursue a policy of détente with Berlin? Would realpolitik then have ensured that Hitler's victims were no more of an obstacle to such a process than those of Stalin, or of Mao? And if this Cold War had also led to a great thaw, would the Nazi empire have melted away with it, in the way of the old Soviet Union?

Gradually I realised that if I was going to explore these concepts, I would have to create imaginary characters living in a victorious Third Reich, and devise a story that somehow would take the reader on a journey through that society. It meant that as an author, I too would have to travel into unfamiliar territory and pass through the looking-glass from fact into fiction: not because I wanted to (oddly enough, I was never one of those journalists who harboured a secret ambition to be a novelist) but simply because fiction was the only tool available to tackle what I wanted to do.

I decided at the outset that the best form for my novel would be a police procedural. I liked the conceit of having an honest policeman working for a criminal regime: a detective investigating a single death in a society founded on the greatest act of mass-murder in history. I knew also that I would need to set it in the 1960s: close enough to the war for most of the senior Nazis, including Hitler, still to be alive, but near enough to our own time for it to be a world of television, jet travel and the Beatles illicitly playing a nightclub in Hamburg.

I wrote the opening few pages – my first pages of fiction – on a Saturday afternoon in 1989, in a kind of ecstatic daze engendered by the realisation that I could imagine literally anything and set it down on paper – that a body with a leg missing could surface in a lake during a storm, or that a

marching band could pass from one side of a square to another, watched by my sceptical hero through a rain-flecked windscreen. I felt as if a whole powerful section of my mind was switching on for the first time.

Utterly defeated, I put the book aside for more than a year. That November, the Berlin Wall came down. Bizarrely, I regarded this as the final coup de grace for my abandoned novel. Who, I reasoned gloomily, would be intrigued by reading about a fictional unified Germany when one could turn on the television and see the real thing?

Looking back, I recognise this now as a classic case of the terrible, irrational pessimism that afflicts most writers at some stage of a book. Because, of course, if there was one factor that suddenly gave my fantasy of a united Germany a harder edge, it was the news that exactly such an entity was unexpectedly returning to the heart of Europe.

I resumed work on *Fatherland*, without much enthusiasm, at the beginning of 1991. As far as I was concerned I was giving it one last try. And now, at last, I did what I should have done in the first place: I tried to imagine the story right through to the end. A novel, I suddenly perceived, is essentially a recounting of something *that has already happened*: it is not a game of consequences in which one can simply make it up as one goes along. (Of course, one *can* write a novel extempore, just as one can embark on telling a joke without having thought up the punch line, but it's a risky undertaking).

In the original pages I had employed multiple points of view; re-reading the typescript I recognised that the book was only remotely interesting when the detective was centre-stage. Accordingly, I threw away more than half of what I had done and started again. In October 1991, amazingly, I finished.

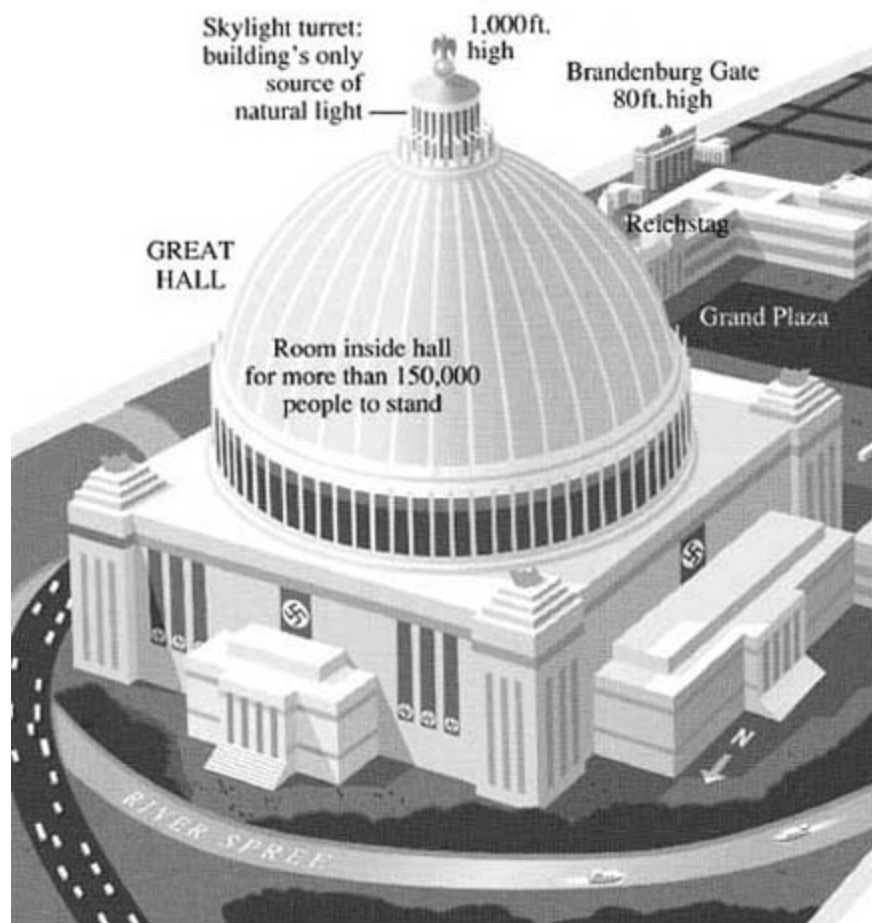
Looking at the picture of my younger self signing copies, I think one can at least safely say that my novel, whatever its faults, has worn better than its author. But then one of the

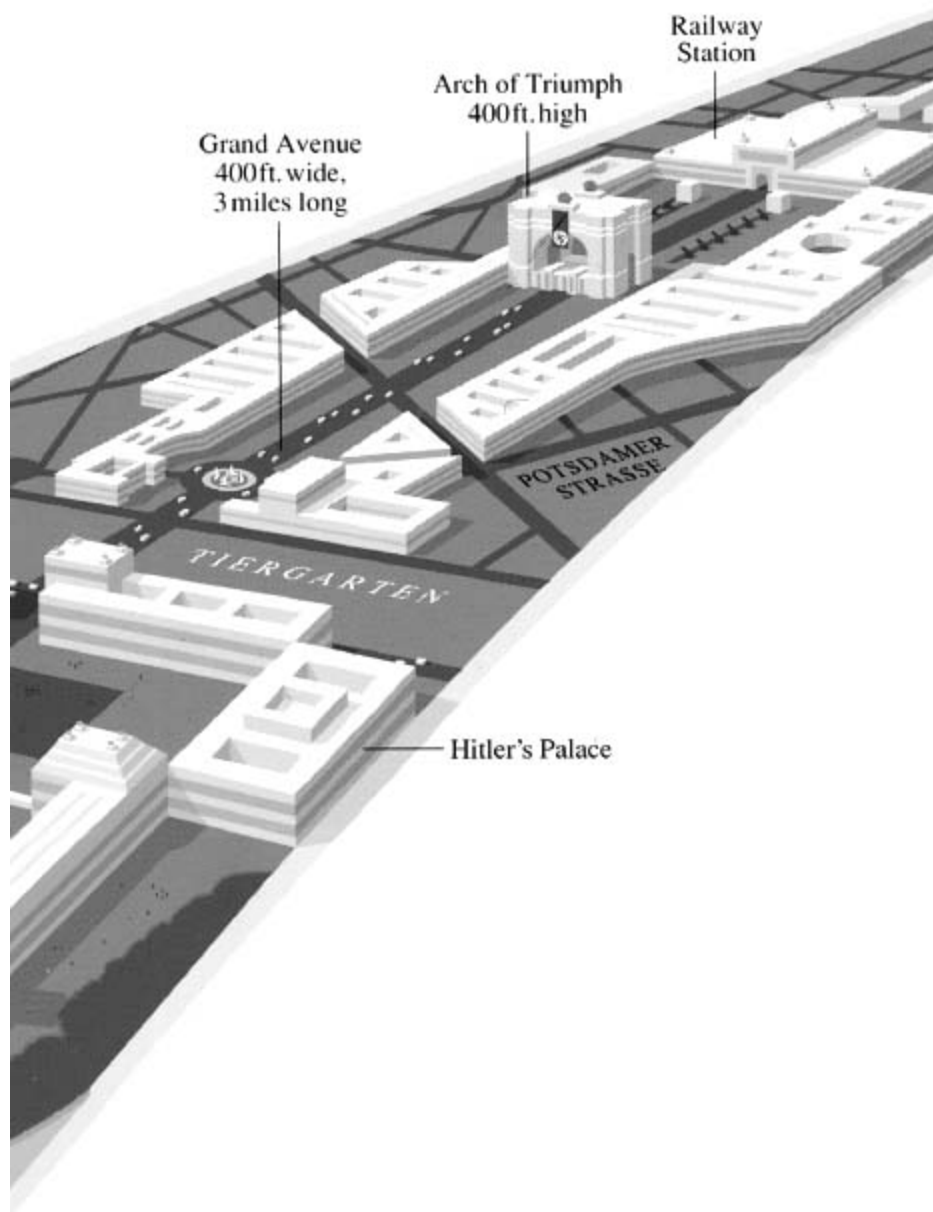
great, paradoxical advantages of historical fiction is that it does not date. *Fatherland* in particular – set in an imagined past that is also a conjectured future – is doubly insulated against changes in fashion.

Besides, the 140 year-old ‘German question’ – how can this great and industrious nation exist in the centre of Europe without dominating it? – is still awaiting an answer. The current problems in the Eurozone, like the fall of the Berlin Wall, have brought all kinds of ghosts out of the shadows. ‘Suddenly Europe is speaking German,’ one of Chancellor Merkel’s more tactless colleagues boasted recently – thus demonstrating, I suspect, precisely why *Fatherland* continues to attract readers who weren’t even born when it was first published.

Robert Harris, April 2012.

Hitler's Berlin 1964







Atlantic Ocean



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

THICK 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. Smeared 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.

TWO

KRIPO HEADQUARTERS LIE on the other side of Berlin, a twenty-five-minute drive from the Havel. March needed a statement from Jost, and offered to drop him back at his barracks to change, but Jost said no: he would sooner make his statement quickly. So once the body had been stowed aboard the ambulance and dispatched to the morgue, they set off in March's little four-door Volkswagen through the rush-hour traffic.

It was one of those dismal Berlin mornings, when the famous Berliner-luft seems not so much bracing as merely raw, the moisture stinging the face and hands like a thousand frozen needles. On the Potsdamer Chaussee, the spray from the wheels of the passing cars forced the few pedestrians close to the sides of the buildings. Watching them through the rain-flecked window, March imagined a city of blind men, feeling their way to work.

It was all so *normal*. Later, that was what would strike him most. It was like having an accident: before it, nothing out of the ordinary; then, the moment; and after it, a world that was changed forever. For there was nothing more routine than a body fished out of the Havel. It happened twice a month – derelicts and failed businessmen, reckless kids and lovelorn teenagers; accidents and suicides and murders; the desperate, the foolish, the sad.

The telephone had rung in his apartment in Ansbacher Strasse shortly after six-fifteen. The call had not woken him. He had been lying in the semi-darkness with his eyes open, listening to the rain. For the past few months he had slept badly.

‘March? We’ve got a report of a body in the Havel.’ It was Krause, the Kripo’s Night Duty Officer. ‘Go and take a look, there’s a good fellow.’

March had said he was not interested.

‘Your interest or lack of it is beside the point.’

‘I am not interested,’ said March, ‘because I am not on duty. I was on duty last week, and the week before.’ *And the week before that*, he might have added. ‘This is my day off. Look again at your list.’

There had been a pause at the other end, then Krause had come back on the line, grudgingly apologetic. ‘You are in luck, March. I was looking at last week’s rota. You can go back to sleep. Or . . .’ He had sniggered: ‘Or whatever else it was you were doing.’

A gust of wind had slashed rain against the window, rattling the pane.

There was a standard procedure when a body was discovered: a pathologist, a police photographer and an investigator had to attend the scene at once. The investigators worked off a rota kept at Kripo headquarters in Werderscher Markt.

‘Who is on today, as a matter of interest?’

‘Max Jaeger.’

Jaeger. March shared an office with Jaeger. He had looked at his alarm clock and thought of the little house in Pankow where Max lived with his wife and four daughters: during the week, breakfast was just about the only time he saw them. March, on the other hand, was divorced and lived alone. He had set aside the afternoon to spend with his son. But the long hours of the morning stretched ahead, a blank. The way he felt it would be good to have something routine to distract him.

‘Oh, leave him in peace,’ he had said. ‘I’m awake. I’ll take it.’

That had been nearly two hours ago. March glanced at his passenger in the rear-view mirror. Jost had been silent ever

since they left the Havel. He sat stiffly in the back seat, staring at the grey buildings slipping by.

At the Brandenburg Gate, a policeman on a motorcycle flagged them to a halt.

In the middle of Pariser Platz, an SA band in sodden brown uniforms wheeled and stamped in the puddles. Through the closed windows of the Volkswagen came the muffled thump of drums and trumpets, pounding out an old Party marching song. Several dozen people had gathered outside the Academy of Arts to watch them, shoulders hunched against the rain.

It was impossible to drive across Berlin at this time of year without encountering a similar rehearsal. In six days' time it would be Adolf Hitler's birthday – the Fuhrertag, a public holiday – and every band in the Reich would be on parade. The windscreen wipers beat time like a metronome.

'Here we see the final proof,' murmured March, watching the crowd, 'that in the face of martial music, the German people are *mad*.'

He turned to Jost, who gave a thin smile.

A clash of cymbals ended the tune. There was a patter of damp applause. The bandmaster turned and bowed. Behind him, the SA men had already begun half-walking, half-running, back to their bus. The motorcycle cop waited until the Platz was clear, then blew a short blast on his whistle. With a white-gloved hand he waved them through the Gate.

The Unter den Linden gaped ahead of them. It had lost its lime trees in '36 – cut down in an act of official vandalism at the time of the Berlin Olympics. In their place, on either side of the boulevard, the city's Gauleiter, Josef Goebbels, had erected an avenue of ten-metre-high stone columns, on each of which perched a Party eagle, wings outstretched. Water dripped from their beaks and wingtips. It was like driving through a Red Indian burial ground.

March slowed for the lights at the Friedrich Strasse intersection and turned right. Two minutes later they were parking in a space opposite the Kripo building in Werderscher Markt.

It was an ugly place – a heavy, soot-streaked, Wilhelmine monstrosity, six storeys high, on the south side of the Markt. March had been coming here, nearly seven days of the week, for ten years. As his ex-wife had frequently complained, it had become more familiar to him than home. Inside, beyond the SS sentries and the creaky revolving door, a board announced the current state of terrorist alert. There were four codes, in ascending order of seriousness: green, blue, black and red. Today, as always, the alert was red.

A pair of guards in a glass booth scrutinised them as they entered the foyer. March showed his identity card and signed in Jost.

The Markt was busier than usual. The workload always tripled in the week before the Führertag. Secretaries with boxes of files clattered on high heels across the marble floor. The air smelled thickly of wet overcoats and floor polish. Groups of officers in Orpo-green and Kripo-black stood whispering of crime. Above their heads, from opposite ends of the lobby, garlanded busts of the Führer and the Head of the Reich Main Security Office, Reinhard Heydrich, stared at one another with blank eyes.

March pulled back the metal grille of the elevator and ushered Jost inside.

The security forces which Heydrich controlled were divided into three. At the bottom of the pecking order were the Orpo, the ordinary cops. They picked up the drunks, cruised the Autobahnen, issued the speeding tickets, made the arrests, fought the fires, patrolled the railways and the airports, answered the emergency calls, fished the bodies out of the lakes.