CATRINE CLAY

'TRULY REMARKABLE'
DAILY TELEGRAPH

'AN EXTRAORDINARY STORY'
MAIL ON SUNDAY

'UTTERLY COMPELLING' *INDEPENDENT ON SUNDAY*

TRAUTMANN'S JOURNEY

FROM HITLER YOUTH TO FA CUP LEGEND

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About the Book

Bert Trautmann is a football legend. He is famed as the Manchester City goalkeeper who broke his neck in the 1956 FA cup final and played on. But his early life is no less extraordinary. He grew up in Nazi Germany, where first he was indoctrinated by the Hitler Youth, before fighting in World War Two in France and on the Eastern Front. In 1945 he was captured and sent to a British POW camp where, for the first time, he understood there could be a better way of life. He embraced England as his new home and before long became an all-time English football hero.

About the Author

Catrine Clay has worked for the BBC for over twenty years, directing and producing award-winning television documentaries, mainly for the History Unit. She has written three previous books. Her most recent book, King, Kaiser, Tsar: Three Royal Cousins who Led the World to War, was published in 2007 to high acclaim (‘Proof that good storytelling is a true art,’ Caroline Moorehead, Spectator, ‘Weird and wonderful,’ Hilary Spurling, Observer). She is married with three children, and lives in London.

Also by Catrine Clay

Master Race (with Michael Leapman)
Princess to Queen
King, Kaiser, Tsar

List of Illustrations

CREDITS: Private collection unless otherwise stated; 1, Daily Mirror; 2, Bildarchiv Preussischer Kulturbesitz; 7, Bundesarchiv; 9, Hulton Deutsch; 10, Ulstein Bilderdienst; 13, 14, 28, 29, 30, 32 and 36: source unknown;15 and 16, BFI; 25, St Helen's Reporter; 26, Corbis; 27, Kemsley Newspapers; 31, Manchester Evening Chronicle; 33, Manchester Evening News

For Tom, who loves history
And Charlie, who loves football

Trautmann’s Journey

From Hitler Youth to FA Cup Legend

Catrine Clay

Yellow Jersey Press
LONDON

‘He was the best goalkeeper I ever played against. We always said, don’t look into the goal when you’re trying to score against Bert. Because if you do, he’ll see your eyes and read your thoughts.’

Bobby Charlton

‘I volunteered at seventeen. I was a paratrooper. I fought in Russia for three years. I was in France after D-Day. I was at Arnhem, I was at the Ardennes. I got captured in March 1945, and came to England as a POW. That’s when my real education began, at 22, in England.’

Bert Trautmann

Introduction

IN OCTOBER 2007 I got off the train at Manchester Piccadilly on my way to meet Bert Trautmann. He was waiting for me on the platform, tall, smartly dressed in jacket and tie, still handsome at the age of 84. As we walked down the platform a man came up to us. ‘You’re Bert Trautmann, aren’t you?’ ‘I am,’ answered Bert, with a German Lancashire accent all his own. ‘May I shake your hand, sir?’ They shook hands and exchanged a few words: the football legend, hero of Manchester City, the goalkeeper who broke his neck in the last sixteen minutes of the Cup Final but still went on playing. Then Bert wished him luck and we were on our way.

We took a taxi to the restaurant where we were going to talk over the idea of this book. ‘Bert Trautmann, isn’t it?’ the driver turned round in his seat to greet him. ‘You were my boyhood hero. How you doing?’ he asked. ‘Not so bad, thank you,’ said Bert. Later, settled at our table in the restaurant, the chef came out of the kitchens and asked Bert for an autograph for his young son. It was like that wherever we went; that Cup Final was more than fifty years ago, but in Manchester they still remember Bert Trautmann, their very own Jerry goalkeeper, and want to shake his hand. ‘It’s always like this,’ he says with a smile and a shrug. ‘I still get fan mail almost every day. Last week I got a letter from China! Unbelievable!’ Bert uses the word

‘unbelievable’ often, partly because so much of his life has been just that. ‘In the old days, after a match, I’d be stood there signing autographs for an hour, sometimes more. At the beginning I was overwhelmed by all the attention, but I never liked to say no, so I’d be there, long after the match was over, still signing those autographs, tired out, but I did it. The other players used to say, “Why do you do it, Bert?” But they didn’t understand. After the war, when I was a POW just up the road from here at Ashton-in-Makerfield, I had so much understanding, so much forgiveness, so much friendship, that I wanted to give something back; show there were good Germans, not just bad.’

We talked about his life over the meal: the growing up in Nazi Germany, the Hitler Youth, volunteering for the Luftwaffe at just seventeen, fighting in Russia, and all the rest. But most of all, sport. ‘Sport has been my life,’ he said. ‘It’s seen me through everything, good and bad, even in Russia when I was fighting the partisans and we had to strap ourselves up in the trees at night by our leather belts because it was the only safe place to be. Even then, the regiment had a handball team, and we got away from the front line from time to time, playing matches against other teams, keeping us sane. Later, after the war, in England, it was the football, becoming Manchester City’s goalkeeper and suddenly all that fame. Unbelievable.’

‘It’s a history book too,’ I explained. ‘Starting in Weimar Germany, ending in post-war Britain. You’re a kind of Everyman who goes through all these dramatic times and experiences, making us think, what would I have done under those circumstances?’ Bert agreed with that. ‘In a way, it was my childhood that made me what I am,’ he said. ‘And the war. I was born with a natural sporting talent – in athletics, handball, football, it’s true – but the war made me tougher, harder. After fighting the partisan, nothing could ever frighten me again. Not even a broken neck. You can be a good goalkeeper, but to be a great one you have to have

heart. All the great goalkeepers have it: courage and heart.'

After the meal he took out a large black and white press photograph. It was taken on 15 April 1964, at the end of his testimonial match at Maine Road, the day he finally retired from professional football, aged 41, and shows him being interviewed in the stands in front of one of those old-fashioned microphones, with the press photographers and fans crowding round in their raincoats and trilby hats, cloth caps and National Health glasses, and Bert in the middle, looking like the star he was, a bit more composed now than when he first came off the field. 'That's when I really cried,' he said. 'Tears rolling down my cheeks. It had rained all day, and I thought, that's it. No one will come. No people, no money. I never earned more than £35 a week in those days, you know, so I needed the money: wife, two boys, and a house to maintain. But they came, from all over – Bolton, Liverpool, Preston, London and Manchester of course – 47,000 came. Magnificent, wasn't it?'

Kick-off was at 7.30 p.m., by which time the rain had stopped, and when Trautmann led the two teams out of the tunnel the noise from the stands was deafening. 'How many outstanding moments are there in your life? But the best ones are the human ones, and this was one of them. I always say, I'm grateful to the people of England, especially Lancashire people and my fellow professionals in the game, for accepting me after the war and as a German, and making me the person I am today.' Even as he's talking about it, 45 years later, he has tears in his eyes. 'Actually, the game never really ended. The people just jumped onto the pitch and a path had to be made for us to get off. Emotionally, that was the moment. I was in tears. Of course I was. I'm not ashamed of it.'

The *Daily Express* put it this way:

BERT GETS 47,000 TRIBUTE

> Fans paid £9,000 in a farewell tribute to Carl Bernhard Trautmann, England's best loved German. 5,000 fans ended the game three minutes early in their eagerness to salute this superb servant of football. Players fought to get off the pitch and it was several minutes before Trautmann, looking pale and drawn with emotion, managed to reach the dressing room with the help of police. The quality of the football – between a combined Manchester City and United team and an International eleven – matched the occasion, with the 49-year-old Stanley Matthews putting on one of his top-line acts for the benefit of young Trautmann, the 41-year-old.

Bert and I spent many days together after that lunch, with me asking the questions and Bert sitting hunched over the tape recorder, remembering. His memory proved remarkable, as good as a young man's, no detail too small for his attention. His years under the Nazis during the 1930s followed by the war and the time as a POW in England are bound to have an epic quality to them, and he was often emotional, remembering things which had lain dormant for many years. Then came the football fame, but fame has its own highs and lows, and Bert's life has had plenty of those. I explained that I would tell it as a story. A story of our times. And like most good stories, this one began a long, long time ago.

1
Childhood in Bremen

AS A CHILD growing up in Bremen in Germany in the 1920s and early 30s Bernhard was always known as Berni. ‘Berni, fetch the potatoes from the cellar,’ or, ‘Berni, go to Schmidts and get a loaf of *Sauerbrot*,’ and, ‘Berni, don’t be long!’ this last called out of the kitchen window by his mother as he was already running down the road. Later, among his *Kameraden* fighting in Russia, he was Bernd. Later still, in England after the war, he became Bert. But for the time being he was Berni.

Berni was eight when he saw his first political demonstration. It was the first Sunday of May 1931 and he went with his father and mother and his brother Karl Heinz, aged five. The day was hot and the lilac was already blooming in the gardens in front of the blocks of flats where they lived, built by the council in uniformly grey concrete, solid and functional, four families to a block. Each block had a cellar below and a large attic above, where Berni’s mother Frau Trautmann took her turn doing the laundry once a week, hanging the washing on long ropes with pulleys across the attic during the snowbound days of winter and out in the gardens at the back of the flats in the summer, the white sheets flapping in the sun along with Herr Trautmann’s work overalls and Berni’s school clothes. There were stone steps leading down to the

cellar, but the stairs from the ground floor up to the attic were made of solid wood and always smelt of beeswax because they were scrubbed and polished every day, each housewife taking her turn. The blocks of flats ran the length of Wischusenstrasse, only giving way to large private houses with gables and turrets once you got to the far end by the Heerstrasse, which was the main thoroughfare, and there were lime trees all along and one large old oak, so although it was social housing built for workers in the Bremen docks it was a pleasant place to grow up. The Trautmanns' flat was number 32.

Demonstrations[1] were a constant feature of the Weimar Republic, set up in 1919 to replace the autocratic monarchy of Kaiser Wilhelm II after Germany's disastrous defeat in the First World War. Over two million Germans died in the conflict, and twice as many came home so maimed and mutilated they could never lead a normal life again. The new government of liberal democrats promised to reform the reactionary institutions of the kaisers and improve the lot of the working man, most of whom had only recently returned home from the front. Berni's father was one of these – one of the lucky ones who suffered only minor wounds, though Lord knows what it did to a man to spend the best part of two years in the trenches. He never talked about it. He was just twenty when he came home, and soon after he married Frieda Elster.

Berni and his father walked ahead. They didn't speak, but greeted neighbours coming back from the demonstration or from an afternoon walk in Burger Park. Everyone was wearing their Sunday best, the men in suits, freshly laundered shirts and polished shoes and spats, the women in home-made summer frocks and light jackets, with hats and gloves. Times were hard and many of the men were unemployed, but on Sundays you wouldn't know it. '*Gruess Gott!* What's it like up there?' Herr Trautmann asked his neighbour Herr Wittenburg, speaking in

Plattdeutsch, the local dialect. ‘So far so good,’ replied Herr Wittenburg, passing on. It had become something of a Sunday sport in relatively peaceful Bremen to go and watch the demonstrations, as long as you stayed well back in the crowd.

Elsewhere the demonstrations were not so peaceful. Sunday after Sunday the storm troopers of the NSDAP, the rising Nazi Party, pitted themselves against the communist KPD and the USPD, the militant wing of the socialists, in all-out street fighting. Germany, only recently united as a nation under the Prussian kaisers, wasn’t used to democracy. There were too many political parties[2] in the Weimar Republic and no sooner was one formed than a splinter group emerged, halving its vote. The Social Democrats, who initially had a majority in the Reichstag, soon lost their hold: for the left they were too cautious with reform, for the right they were too liberal, and far too weak with the Allies at Versailles. And they were led by Stresemann, who was a Jew. By 1931 the political centre had collapsed completely, leaving the stage free for the extremists.

The worst demonstrations were in Berlin, but all the major towns and cities had them, even Bremen with its moderate socialist local government. Against its stated principles, the Weimar Republic resorted to physical force to control the masses, who were close to revolution. Workers’ uprisings and strikes were violently put down by the police and military, keenly assisted by the *Freikorps*, bands of right-wing vigilantes mostly made up of disaffected junior officers unable to adjust to life in post-war Germany. The police were meant to arrest troublemakers on both sides, but somehow left-wing demonstrators always came off worse. By the time Hitler formed his first cabinet in January 1933 there had been eleven chancellors.

Berni, at eight, was a striking child with blond hair, blue eyes and a keen, alert expression. He could run fast, jump high, catch any ball, and throw it far. Physically he looked like his father, a handsome well-built man who worked in the docks, first as an electrician and then as a loader for Kali Chemicals, distributing the cargo on merchant ships, but in character Berni resembled his mother, who was more intelligent and spoke a better German. She had attended a *Gymnasium* 'grammar school', while her husband had left elementary school at fourteen with only a basic education, to start his apprenticeship as an electrician. Frau Trautmann was generally considered to have married beneath her, but anyone could see why she had. As time went on the differences between them caused some trouble, and Berni always resented the way his father dominated his mother even though she was the clever one, the better one, and it especially annoyed him that she took it all without a word. It was no secret that Berni was his mother's favourite, her joy and her hope.

Up at the crossroads a large crowd had gathered. There seemed to be many more demonstrators than usual, and the brawling had already started. Berni, keen to get a better view, tried to make his way to the front through the legs of the crowd, but his father grabbed him by the collar and pulled him back. Instead he scrambled halfway up a cast-iron lamp post to where some acanthus-leaf decoration gave him a foothold. His mother told him to come down, scolding him for messing up his Sunday best, but his father let him be, so he stayed and watched the scene unfold.

He'd never seen anything like it. There were dozens of men in various stages of undress, grabbing and swearing and beating hell out of one another. Some of them had proper weapons, others used their banners – trade union, KPD or NSDAP – to batter the enemy, one man was even using a rolling pin; many were kicked to the ground unconscious, and there was blood everywhere. Rather

belatedly, an open police lorry came speeding round the corner, horn blowing, with two rows of policemen wearing shiny black tricorne helmets seated on wooden benches, already wielding their truncheons. Taking the corner too fast, the lorry tipped over sideways, throwing the policemen out onto the road helter-skelter. It was a splendid moment and the crowd roared with laughter, clapping and cheering, but not for long. Some of the police were injured, but those who weren't leaped to their feet and started laying into the people with their truncheons; then the mounted police arrived, charging down the middle of the street on their horses, straight into the crowd. At the same time the *Freikorps* and the SA arrived in more open lorries and jumped into the fray, attacking the crowd with rifles and sabres. The mood changed abruptly to one of fear and people quickly dispersed, running in all directions. Herr Trautmann grabbed Berni by the ankle and pulled him down from the lamp post. 'Run, Frieda!' he shouted to his wife, who was already caught up in the stampede, carrying Karl Heinz in her arms.

They raced across the Heerstrasse and down Wischusenstrasse, Berni leading the way and not stopping till they were a good halfway down, out of breath. Berni could still hear the distant shouts, but here the birds were singing and you could smell the lilac and the privet, and Sunday fell back into place again, everything strangely as it had been. Still, Herr Trautmann kept looking over his shoulder to make sure no one was following. Other families were doing the same. No one talked. Everyone went quickly into their flats and locked the doors. Later they heard that three had been killed and over a hundred seriously wounded. One of the wounded was Herr Trautmann's brother-in-law *Onkel* Bencken, a surly man who held loudly to his socialist beliefs, against all family advice.

As soon as they were inside Frau Trautmann gave Berni a good slap. 'Look at your clothes!' she shouted at him,

completely distraught. They were standing in the small vestibule, which had wood panelling halfway up the wall and iron hooks for coats and hats with an umbrella stand in the corner. Berni sat on the wooden bench taking off his shoes; the house slippers were ranged in a neat row beneath the bench. ‘Look at you!’ Frau Trautmann shouted and slapped him again. Karl Heinz began to cry.

Herr Trautmann took no notice; he put on his slippers and went through to the kitchen, sat down at the table and picked up the local newspaper. He never bothered to engage in family matters, that was his wife’s job; his job was to earn the money. Originally the family had lived in Walle, a better part of town, but as inflation turned into hyperinflation following the First World War, his wage packet was effectively reduced by more than half and they could no longer afford it. In the year Berni was born, 1923, the German mark wasn’t worth the paper it was printed on: in June it was 1,800 to one US dollar, by July it was 160,000, by August it was a million, and the price of basic foodstuffs could double in a day. Foreign investors took their money out of Germany as fast as they could, leaving the economy in even greater chaos. The Trautmann family was forced to move to the east side of Bremen, into the social housing where they still lived. From here Herr Trautmann bicycled to the docks every day, grateful to have a job. By 1931 there were nearly six million unemployed and on his way he passed many old war comrades, jobless and homeless, queuing at the soup kitchens set up at most of the main crossroads. Herr Trautmann himself was never unemployed, but he always worked a double shift, just to make ends meet.

In the early days of the Weimar Republic there had been many attempts at workers’ councils in socialist Bremen, especially in the docks, where the trade unions were active, calling strikes and demanding wage arbitration at the drop of a hat, but every initiative failed. It was always the same

story: good intentions soon mired in political infighting, each party breaking up into feuding factions, losing sight of the common aim. Originally Trautmann had been a middle-of-the-road socialist, supporting Stresemann and the ruling SPD, but lately he'd pretty much given up on politics. Like most people, he blamed the crushing terms of the Versailles Treaty. How could Germany[3], already in a parlous state, possibly pay 269 billion gold marks over a period of 42 years in war reparations? Later the sum was reduced to 132 billion, with the rest paid in kind: coal, pig iron, crude steel and so on. But it was still impossible. The only people to profit, he agreed with his drinking companions, were the Jews, who owned all the big department stores and charged exorbitant interest rates from the poor fellows who got themselves into debt. Trautmann was an amiable man who liked to be liked: he was popular with his drinking fellows, who met at their *Stammtisch*, their regular table, in the local *Gasthof* every Sunday morning. He wasn't a weak man, but he tried to avoid trouble, preferring to keep his head down, tell another joke and order another round of beer.

The day after the demonstration life was back to normal. Herr Trautmann left the flat at 5.30 a.m., bicycling down to the docks in time for the start of his first shift at six. Frau Trautmann had been up since five, preparing breakfast: bread and jam and coffee, with hot milk for Berni. There was no bathroom, so everyone took their turn at the kitchen sink, stripped to the waist, washing themselves with a flannel and carbolic soap before putting on their work clothes, fresh every day. Frau Trautmann always wore a large apron, Herr Trautmann had his overalls, and Berni had his school clothes: short-sleeved shirt and short trousers with leather braces, a sleeveless jumper in summer and a thick hand-knitted long-sleeved one in winter. Berni never saw his father in the mornings because he only got up once Herr Trautmann had left for work. Karl

Heinz, being just five, stayed in his bed till Berni left for school at seven thirty.

His school, the Humanschule, was only 500 metres down Wischusenstrasse and Berni could run there in two minutes. In 1931 he was the new boy, having only recently moved from Walle, and he soon found out how rough it was by comparison. Every class has its bullies and Berni's had Rainer. Rainer was a big toughguy, top dog in the class hierarchy with no intention of ceding it to anyone. Berni knew how to keep his head down so at first there was no trouble, but as his natural talents began to reveal themselves and his position in the class rose, he found himself nose to nose with Rainer. There wasn't much Berni could do about it. His class teacher, Herr Koenig, liked him because he was bright, always one of the top three in a class of forty, and the boys liked him because he was already the best sportsman in the class, and always up to some prank, stealing apples from the farmer who had his orchard next to the school, or telling jokes about the teachers, or passing notes to Richard Hohnemeyer or Herbert Behrens, the friend who shared his wooden desk. In a word, Berni was popular, and Rainer didn't like it, didn't like it at all.

One morning not long after the political demonstration Rainer was waiting for Berni at the school entrance. 'Meet me after school and we'll see who's the chief,' said Rainer, showing Berni a clenched fist. School ended at one o'clock in those days, leaving the afternoons free for homework and sport. 'Can't,' replied Berni. 'Have to take Vati his dinner down the docks.' 'Be there,' threatened Rainer. 'Can't,' said Berni and went inside.

The business about his father was true. Now that Herr Trautmann worked a double shift at Kali Chemicals he couldn't come home for his midday meal, so Berni took it to him prepared by his mother, a half-hour there and back. He didn't mind, speeding up Wischusenstrasse and across the

Heerstrasse, then down the cobbled streets which led to the docks, billy cans swinging from the handlebars – soup and potatoes, potatoes and soup, and sometimes a bit of *Mettwurst* sausage. If he timed it right the level crossing of the dock railway would be up and then he could speed across the tracks and past the sentries at the entrance gate, right down the Kali quay, past the red-brick office buildings and on to the canteen, where his father would be sitting at a bare wooden table with all the other men on their half-hour break, waiting for their meal before the next shift began.

Bremen had been a city since medieval times, a thriving port trading with the world and always retaining a certain political independence, even within the German Empire. It is situated in the far north-west of Germany, on the River Weser, sixty kilometres inland from the North Sea, and whether it was its geographical position, the trading links with the rest of the world, or the political independence it enjoyed under the kaisers, Bremen held on to the socialist ideals of the Weimar Republic long after most other German cities had given up hope, and the trade unions in the docks remained a strong force – at least till the Nazis came to power, at which point they were disbanded overnight and brutally smashed.

Sometimes Berni bicycled along the other quays in the Bremen docks, past ships from Africa, the Near and Far East and the Americas, ships so huge you could see only their black hulls rising high above, studded with rivets and hung with the heavy chains and ropes which anchored them to massive iron bollards the length of the quays. The passenger ships docked at Bremerhaven, great luxury liners taking the glamorous rich across the ocean to New York and beyond. Berni might cycle past one great iron hull and smell coffee from Africa; from another it was spices from India, from another the sweet smell of tobacco or the acrid smell of rubber. What with the scraping and banging

of ships docking, stevedores and lightermen shouting, lorries coming and going, and sailors and dock workers falling out of the bars fighting and swearing, the place was all life.

Kali Chemicals had its own quay and warehouses at the far end of the docks. Herr Trautmann had recently been promoted to master loader, a position of some responsibility because if the cargo wasn't loaded evenly the ship would not hold an even keel at sea. The raw material Kali dealt in was a salt-like mineral transported to the Bremen docks by train from mines the far side of Hamburg, which was used in fertiliser and, later on, as war approached, ammunition. Kali had its own plant behind the quay, where the fertiliser was put on conveyor belts, either in sacks or loose, and loaded straight onto the ships anchored both sides of the quay. It was filthy stuff to work with, and by the end of each day Herr Trautmann was covered from head to toe in a thick layer of dust, which turned his hair and eyebrows white and was so corrosive that the leather on his boots never lasted more than six months, just eaten away. The first thing Herr Trautmann did at the end of each day was to scrub himself clean and unclog his ears and nostrils in the communal showers at the plant. Then he got on his pushbike and made his way home.

Berni didn't fully appreciate the difficulties of his father's working life, perhaps he was too young, but he enjoyed the pride of his father being master loader, boarding ships as soon as they docked armed with his ledger and pencil, making for the first officer's cabin, where they checked their lists and planned the loading over a glass of schnapps. Sometimes Berni was allowed to board a ship with his father; many of the officers knew him already and waved to him from the decks high above as he stood waiting for his father on the quay below. He knew how to handle himself on these occasions, only speaking

when he was spoken to and smiling engagingly so that, if he was lucky, one of the officers spun him a pfennig, which he caught mid-air with pleasing ease, a bow and '*Danke Schön!*'

So Berni had told Rainer the truth about his father and the need to take him his dinner after school, but it made no difference: for three days running Rainer was there waiting for him at the school entrance, challenging him, and each time Bernie repeated the same story till, on the fourth day, he got fed up with it. It was typical of Berni to suddenly lose his patience, and his temper with it. Anyone who knew Berni could have told Rainer that once he lost his temper there was no stopping him. So, 'All right,' he said suddenly that day. 'Tomorrow morning, before school.' Stupid Rainer couldn't wait to get his hands on Berni, who was small by comparison, and give the little upstart a good thrashing.

As it happened, Berni had volunteered for English lessons every morning before school began. That was typical of Berni too: he was keen to learn, at least at this early stage of his life, before the Hitler Youth took everything over. The school had asked his parents' permission, and his father at least was surprised that Berni should want to do the extra work, but Berni had made up his mind he wanted to learn this foreign language. Was it a presentiment, was it curiosity, was it his natural intelligence seeking a new challenge? One way or the other, he did it, even though it meant starting school an hour early. His friend Herbert Behrens joined him, along with six other bright ones from his class. The teacher was a Mrs Payman, married to a local businessman who was English.

The next morning Berni turned up half an hour before English class, ready for the fight, but as he walked into the classroom, bang! Rainer, waiting behind the door, punched him in the face, hard. It was a bad mistake: Berni's temper went off like a rocket and soon Rainer had a cut on his

chin, a black eye and a bloody nose. The other pupils were shouting and cheering the fight on when Mrs Payman arrived, just in time: big boy Rainer was on the floor, almost out cold. There were two blackboards in the classroom, a large one attached to the wall and a smaller one propped up against it. They put Rainer on the loose blackboard, like a stretcher, and carried him off to the school nurse. Mrs Payman was bound to report the incident, so later that morning Berni found himself standing to attention in front of the large wooden desk in the school director's room. Herr Schweers was the old-fashioned, autocratic type of school director, military in bearing and manner, with an inflexible belief in harsh discipline. He refused to tolerate such behaviour in his school, especially as it wasn't the first time Berni had hit someone in a fit of temper. Herr Direktor Schweers called in Herr and Frau Trautmann to tell them of his decision: Berni was to be expelled and sent to a school of correction.

Herr and Frau Trautmann were shocked beyond belief. They knew that under his normal easy-going nature Berni had a temper: he wasn't past thumping Karl Heinz when he annoyed him, and he shouted at his mother from time to time. But basically Berni was a biddable boy, running shopping errands and helping with the housework, polishing the stairs or putting the washing through the mangle on days when his mother wasn't feeling well. At school he rarely joined in playground fights, preferring to spend his energy on sport. So Herr and Frau Trautmann tried to defend their son to Herr Direktor Schweers, but it got them nowhere until Herbert Behrens, a quiet, shy type of boy, took his courage in his hands and told the full story: that it wasn't Berni who had started the fight, but Rainer, and that in fact Berni had tried three times to avoid it, but that Rainer had gone on challenging him till Berni finally agreed. Herbert saved Berni's skin, thereby cementing a friendship between two boys of very different character

who nevertheless shared the same basic beliefs about fair play. But later that day, as Berni walked unsuspecting into the kitchen, his mother was waiting for him and gave him a good hiding with her wooden spoon. His father on the other hand, when he came home from work, and in confidence, congratulated him, saying, 'Well done, *mein Junge*. Don't ever let anyone bully you.' Years later Berni could look back on his life and his father's words, and think, Yes, that's right. And I never did.

When Berni was eight he became eligible to join Tura, the local amateur football club. Football clubs in Germany were brilliantly organised in those days, offering all sorts of sporting activities along with the main event, including athletics, *Völkerball* and handball, as well as chess tournaments, card games, swimming competitions and anything else an active boy might want to do in his spare time. Membership was only a few pfennigs, and as a result big clubs might have as many as 30,000 members. Tura fielded numerous football teams from juniors to the seniors, and they trained every Sunday morning, often coached by famous players. At the pinnacle stood the Second and First Elevens, who travelled the length and breadth of northern Germany playing friendlies against other clubs. Members of the junior teams were sometimes allowed to travel with them in the coaches, to watch and learn, drink in the heady atmosphere and long to be one of the stars themselves. Tura was a club for life, and for Berni, already showing outstanding natural talent, it was life itself.

So although there was little money to spare at home this didn't stop Berni having a happy childhood, and he had his parents to thank for it, because they gave him everything a boy might need: love, discipline and plenty of freedom. Perhaps his mother loved him a bit too much, and she certainly had the greatest influence on him, but in later years he came to recognise that his father had also played his part. When Berni was still young his father often took

him to football matches, and afterwards, sitting on the tram on the way home, they would discuss every detail of the match: which players had done well and which hadn't, which team displayed the better tactics, which goalie had made the best saves, anything they could think of, like two old professionals. If the First World War hadn't intervened Herr Trautmann would certainly have gone on playing the game himself, but by the end of those two years in the trenches he'd lost the heart for it.

On summer Sundays the Trautmann family went boating in the Burger Park or for a trip on the River Lesum, on a steamboat, when Frau Trautmann packed a picnic, which the four of them ate on the banks of the river, watching the boats and ships go by before getting back on the steamboat home. But best of all was the fact that every summer, from the age of seven, Berni was sent for two weeks' holiday to *Onkel* Hans, Herr Trautmann's brother, at his house in the countryside outside Hamelin, and right from the start he went alone. Perhaps it was lack of money, but each year his parents took Berni to Bremen station, the *Hauptbahnhof*, put him on the train and waved him off. He was never frightened, only excited. At Hamelin he played in the fields all day long till the light faded with his cousin Hansi, who later became a fighter pilot and was shot down over the Channel, and then, once the two weeks were up, he got on the train again, all alone, and travelled back to Bremen. Freedom is what Berni relished, and freedom is what he got.

Momentous political events were meanwhile shaking Germany, but why should Berni bother? He'd never heard of Stresemann and had no idea that when the great man died the last hope of a stable society vanished, preparing the way for the Nazis. The street fights and violent demonstrations which bedevilled the Weimar Republic had often been orchestrated by the Nazis, whose tactics were always the politics of terror. Now their endless propaganda

about the injustices of the Versailles Treaty, the perfidy of the Jews and the inability of the Weimar government to solve inflation and unemployment won over enough of the population to narrowly win the election in 1933, setting Germany on a course which led to the final disaster. When Hitler and the Nazis came to power on 31 January 1933, overnight everything changed in Germany. They called it the *Machtergreifung*, the Seizing of Power, and it was marked by rank upon rank of SA and SS storm troopers goose-stepping past the Chancellery in Berlin for hours on end, saluting Hitler, who stood at an open window, saluting back with that outstretched arm. In those early days few ordinary Germans realised the full meaning of the change which had overtaken them; only the party members knew, those who had been working for years towards this very moment. But the change was like night for day.

In the Trautmann household the shift in political power was quickly reflected in their everyday lives. Herr Trautmann still did his double shift at Kali Chemicals, but now working practices became much more organised, with wages based strictly on productivity. There was better welfare and improved medical care, but every worker was expected to make donations to the Nazi Party, up to a quarter of his salary. There were no more strikes, and no more communist or socialist agitators. The masses of unemployed were put to work, building motorways, factories and new railway networks, all with an eye to the war to come, though the man in the street didn't know it. He might have realised had he read Hitler's own political testament, *Mein Kampf*, written as early as 1924, where he stated again and again that the only solution to Germany's problems was war and conquest to extend the nation's *Lebensraum*, its space to live. 'We turn our eyes[4] to the lands of the East,' he wrote. 'When we speak of new territory in Europe today we must principally think of Russia … this colossal Empire in the East is ripe for