

# My Life in the Third Reich Nightmares and Consequences

By Gisela Cooper

## Synopsis

In 1923 I started my life in the deepest depression ever known.

My parents lived there in Saarau/Upper Silesia, a small industrial town.

As a small child I saw great poverty, but I was fortunate to have a happy childhood because father was able to find and keep his job until 1932.

Happy holidays were enjoyed by us with mother's and father's parents in the Harz Mountains and in Thuringen.

Beginning of 1929 father was promoted and was sent to Dueneberg/near Hamburg, where I started school at 6 years of age. We lived isolated and I wished for playmates. In 1931, my brother Dieter was born, and I liked to mother him.

Times were very hard for most people and lots joined the communist party. It resulted in great unrest and crime so as burglaries were committed. It happened to us too, after our Alsatian had been poisoned, for easier access to our residence.

A complete change occurred with Hitler being elected.

A lot was done to provide the poorest with food and clothing, by organising collections.

Then work for almost everyone, except married women, was given. No-one realised that it was directed to prepare for a new war. Propaganda was spread through newspapers and wireless. 1934 I joined the Hitler Youth, for at last to find friends. It was then not based on the indoctrination of Nazism, but we learned to march like soldiers and had to learn commands. It was fun for us.

The first Jews and anti-Nazis were now arrested, but most were released until 1938. Concentration Camps had been built. From now on we were hammered with daily Nazi propaganda. Everything none German was ridiculed.

I attended my school until 1938, where all school material was free from the beginning, even in the twenties throughout the depression. My parents had sent me then to a boarding school in the Harz Mountains for a year. My parents moved to Leipzig, where I joined them in June 1939. There, I finished a Year's national service and started to work in the Leipzig telegraph office in 1941. War had broken out, and I read in telegrams sent by authorities about many deserters from the Eastern Fronts, when looking for them, or being captured. I thought that I had a better opportunity in my job and started work as a telex operator in the Heinkel works, where Heinz, the owner's son tried to seduce me, but as I was unwilling, he send me to their sister factory somewhere in the countryside where 2000 of Auschwitz prisoners worked. I tried to help some in a small way and was arrested by the Gestapo, being accused of sabotage. I was prepared to be shot, but instead was sent to a Labour Camp (Branch of Buchenwald.) There I saw bestial things being done to many girls. Also no medical care was given. I developed pleurisy. It was a miracle that I survived and was sent home beginning of April 1945. SS guards were trying to flee.

I arrived home, after father had searched for me in the sister factory and prisons.. They told him lies where ever he went to find me. Allied Troops were now outside Leipzig and father was ordered to fight them off, but his 400 men were killed except 4. He returned home, but Dieter had been put in a foxhole by the SS to fight off the American tanks. The SS fled, and Dieter came home no sooner they had gone. After two weeks Americans came with their Sherman tanks past our house. I went on the balcony and waved and they waved back. Now we could relax again, no more threads with the warnings of Concentration Camps hanging over our heads any more, no horrible propaganda came over the wireless, but American music. It had been a terrible time because Nazi spies being put in communities to denounce people with controversial views.

Leipzig was in East-Germany. No Marshall plan for us. German troops had destroyed everything in Russia. To feed the Russian troops, they had to confiscate our food supplies. I managed to get to West-Germany before the iron curtain came down. In West Germany I found employment working for British families. There I met my husband. We married in Bristol in 1953. Sadly my husband had a fatal accident in 1956. We had two boys who joined later the Para's and went to the Falklands and were after staying 25 years in the Army, and had after found good jobs. I had married again, but it was a huge mistake. I was divorced. Luckily I had two lovely daughters from this marriage. I live alone now, but we all keep almost in daily touch, thanks to computers.

The book is full of anecdotes and also some military information, which affected us daily.

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