

Call to Obedience
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By Pastor Reimar A. C. Schultze

And it came to pass, that, as I made my journey, and was come nigh unto Damascus about noon, suddenly there shone from heaven a great light round about me.—Acts 22:6. Today I shall share with you

My Damascus Road Experience (Part 1)

My story begins in Nazi Germany. Let me start with my mother.

It was 1929 in Hamburg, the second largest city in Germany. Adolf Hitler, the leader of the Nazi party, had not yet come to power but his paramilitary troops were already marching down the beautiful boulevards of Hamburg, Berlin, and Munich under the banner of the Swastika. Rudi, the son of a wealthy industrialist, had just proposed to my mother, Ilse. She immediately informed him of her Jewish ancestry and Rudi responded that her lineage did not matter to him. But a few days later under parental pressure, Rudi broke up the relationship. Despondently, Ilse made her way to jump off a canal bridge in our city, but an inner voice stopped her.

Then she met Alfred, tall, blonde and blue-eyed. Before the relationship could go anywhere she decided she would slowly and methodically inform Alfred of her Jewish background. When she finished, Alfred put his arms around her and said, "I always wanted to marry a Jewish woman." Ilse needed Alfred. The day after Alfred died at a young age, my mother found two loaded revolvers in his desk. Had the Nazis come to our door to get his Jewish family, it would have been over his dead body.

Born in 1936, I was the third child. In that year, all Germans were racially classified: first there were the Arians: the pure Germans such as my father. Then there were the pure Jews, such as my grandfather on my mother's side. And then there were the people of mixed "race", the *Mischlinge* (mongrels) such as my mother and us children. I was the first one in our family that had a racial designation stamped on his birth card. My mother was told by a government official that she no longer qualified for the monthly child-support stipend that all other families received. I never heard the word *Jesus* come from my mother's lips. Yet, after this first encounter with persecution, she came home, opened her Bible and wrote my name behind Psalm 91:11 - *For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways.* That was August 16, 1936, shortly after my birth. Unbeknownst to her at the time that verse became a prophetic force over my entire life.

Soon Alfred was called to the Nazi party office. He was told, "If you divorce your Jewish family, you will have a great future in the party." But my father chose to be loyal to his family, and the next day he was without a job.

Our family experienced harassment from a growing avalanche of anti-Semitic laws. On top of that we began to be bombed by the British. Every night our family of six went from the fifth floor to the air raid shelter in the basement in total darkness, sometimes three times a night, until we were too worn out to go down anymore. All in all we survived one thousand bombing raids. Although we left the bombings of Hamburg in 1943, I continued to be bombed another twelve years in my dreams. Each night I dreaded going to bed. I would dream that I was in the bunker and a bomb broke through the roof, came through the fifth, the fourth, the third, the second and the first floors all the way down through the ceiling of the basement to hit me on the bridge of my nose. I would break out in a cold sweat and wake up. Years later, after I met Jesus, I was a college student in the United States. One day I asked Him to stop the bombing, and He did. Christianity is supernatural.

When the Nazis pressured my father a third time for a divorce, he knew that the next time they would not ask, but simply come with a van, possibly with the exhaust turned inward. We made a quick move to East Germany to buy time, the first of five moves with just what we could carry in our hands. Shortly thereafter Hamburg was attacked by over nine hundred bombers in a single night, called Operation Gomorrah by the British. The next day 42,000 old men, women and children lay dead in the rubble. Because of the Nazi pressure we were no longer in Hamburg. *He will give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways.* I was born with a destiny.

Soon the Germans retreated from Russia and the Soviet army began to move into our country. When they took the first village of Nemmersdorf, the little ones had their heads crushed, the old men were clubbed to death, and all women from eight to eighty were abused and nailed on barn doors and wagon wheels in crucifix fashion. These atrocities were broadcast on the radio to inspire the Germans to fight harder. But the actual result was that within days twelve million Germans became refugees fleeing ahead of the Soviet Army. Before long we would be refugees as well. The winter was cold, the snow was deep and fear had struck the hearts of all. In fact, after the Soviets came to our town, they took the wounded soldiers from the hospital and ran their tanks over them.

Now three dreadful situations faced us: the Russians were coming, the Jews were being killed in our neighborhood; and Alfred, our father and protector, died of a combination of malnutrition and tuberculosis. The condition in our town was dismal, with hundreds of refugees starving or freezing to death in their open horse-drawn sleighs. A thousand frozen uniformed German soldiers were stacked like wood in our school yard. There was no place or time to bury them. We were twenty-four hours from invasion. But the Germans kept a rail track open to evacuate a train of wounded soldiers. The Mayor said on the radio, "We understand that everybody wants to get out. But we can take only a few refugees to stand between the rows of bunk beds on the train. All families where there are at least three children, who are orphans or half orphans, and where there is at least one infant can get on the train." *He shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways.* My young widowed mother still unaccustomed to

making decisions, asked us children as we gathered around her, "Shall we stay or shall we go?" With a single voice we said, "Let's get out of here." Later she wrote in her memoirs, "I took the voice of my children as the voice of God."

The two-hour train ride to the Baltic Sea harbor Danzig, now Gdansk, turned into a three day, three night, mostly standing ordeal. For three days the train was shifting backwards and forwards as the Russians and Germans fought it out over the railroad track. There was no heat, no food, no water, no medical care, no sedatives for the wounded, etc. But we had plenty of snow to eat. I stood two days next to a dead soldier before they laid him out in the snow.

We reached Danzig and joined two million refugees in an ever-shrinking pocket with our backs to the Baltic Sea, while the Soviets were all around us, moving toward Berlin. The German Navy tried to gather everything that floated to take these refugees to West Germany through the mine-infested sea. We got onto a freighter and were asked to lie down, body to body, on the cold steel-riveted floor. A mine sweeper led us out of the harbor, then we were on our own. Two Soviet submarines sank refugee ships; altogether 25,000 refugees and wounded soldiers went down in the ice cold waters of the Baltic Sea. But God sent a fog, and the enemy could not find us. *He shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways.*

The West German harbors were mined shut, so all ships were diverted to Copenhagen, Denmark. There my baby sister died of starvation with another 1,000 little ones. They were buried five to a box under the banner of the Swastika. Soon 36,000 of us refugees found ourselves interned behind barbed wire for the next two years.

There were 17 people assigned to our room. Some boys carved chess figures out of tree branches and we played chess 6 to 7 days a week. The second year we started a full-fledged school system including elementary school, high school and university; although we had no textbooks, no notebooks, no pencils. The first thing we had to learn, still until Hitler's school system, was the great German hymn, "A Mighty Fortress is Our God." This was my first religious education. As I lay on my top bunk on a little bit of straw, I asked, "Who is God, where is he, and what is this all about?" I was like the little boy Samuel who heard a voice speaking, but could not discern that it was God calling him.

At 13 years of age, we were back in the rubble of Hamburg, which was 80% destroyed. I took my bicycle into the forest to escape the debris of the city. I had no tent or blanket, so I covered myself with pine branches for the night. In the morning ants crawled up my legs, awakening me. A nightingale sang its morning song, the golden beams of the sun broke through the birch trees, and I heard a voice speaking to me in perfect German saying, "I love you, I love you, I am love." This is the first time I ever heard someone say to me "I love you".... story to be continued on CTO 361.

My autobiography, "I AM Love" is available at [Atlas](#) or through [Amazon.com](#)

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