TEARS OF AMBER

SOFÍA SEGOVIA

TRANSLATED BY SIMON BRUNI

1. The girl

Ilse

December 12, 1935, to March 25, 1938

At the first breath, life hurts.

How could you not cry, the first time the light hits your eyes, or the first time you feel the dry brush of the air on your skin? How could you not cry when your lungs are filled with cold, unfamiliar oxygen, or when the soft sounds that used to reach your flooded ears arrive hard, unfiltered? How could you not protest when the world turns infinite and does nothing to contain the body that, until that day, had been so tightly held, so closely hugged in the dark softness of your mother's interior?

The girl was beginning to acclimatize, even to enjoy life in her mother's arms, when they took her to the church to give her a name.

That day when everything still lay ahead, when she and her people were unaware that their days were numbered, unaware of the baptism of fire that would erase the name of their land from the earth, the holy water blessed her forehead and spilled onto East Prussian ground. Since 1918, proud Prussia had stood apart from Germany—not of its own volition, but as a punishment imposed on it by the world. And its inhabitants, including this newly baptized girl, had been ostracized, like a splinter separated from its stick: you are, but you're not; you belong, but I've almost forgotten you. They yearned for their Germanic siblings to the west—separated

by sea, but more so by land. Separated by their former territories, which had once been Prussia, too, and which the world was now intent on calling the Polish Corridor.

The day of the girl's baptism of water, there was still a long way to go before the baptism of fire, but in the decades to come, the world would strive to understand the order of events, the importance of the variables; it would call upon great minds to assign blame and establish how cruel the culprits had been. Sometimes it would fall silent, hoping to make people forget how intolerable the crime had been. Other times it would promise what happened would never happen again. Rarely would it be mentioned that this promise had already been made once, then broken when the aggressor, the loser, was punished.

The girl would always like the name chosen for her, but that day, the priest let it fall unceremoniously in a sudden gush of cold. The name was hers forever thanks to that water and the thousands of blessings, but the ice-cold shock was brutal and prompted screams that didn't stop until the ceremony was over.

Her parents celebrated in a way that hadn't been possible when their eldest daughter was baptized. What a difference five years made, they thought while they set the table for six guests, the delicious smell of roast goose wafting around them. How far they'd come from the hunger of their childhood and youth. How well chosen their chancellor was: he had saved Germany.

At the same time, far away, a French journalist named Madame Titayna was conducting a rare interview with their taciturn leader, who expressed himself thus: There is not a single German who wants war. The last one cost us two million dead and seven and a half million wounded. Even if we had been victorious, no victory would have been worth that price, he declared, and she returned to her country convinced that neither the man nor his people were a threat to peace.

The chancellor wanted peace, and Ilse's parents did, too. Hartwig and Wanda Hahlbrock had survived the devastation of the war to end all wars. Now, all they wanted was to see their

daughters grow up happy. And they finally believed it was possible. Three years of the Führer, three years of order, three years, at last, of a present without hunger and a future with promise. And so: a new and beloved daughter. Ilse.

Two years and three months later, though she remembered neither the pain of her birth nor the icy water of her baptism, Ilse was already a little bundle of acquired knowledge, because children never learn as much as in the first three years of life. They learn, they live, but they never remember having learned or lived.

It was in that time that Ilse discovered the people of her small and isolated world; she learned to identify hunger's twinges but also to be patient: food would come—her mother would ensure it did; there was no need to cry, because she'd learned the words *I*, *am*, and *hungry*, among many others. In those first years, she learned that the stove gave off cozy warmth at a distance, but when she got closer, it burned. She learned to stand, to walk, to climb steps and go down them. She learned to name things. To name herself: Ilse Hahlbrock, though the surname still tied her tongue in a knot.

She also learned not to cry, because tears only annoyed her mother, who always said to her, Ilse, we don't cry. She discovered what it was to desire something that wasn't hers—she thought her sister's doll more beautiful than her own—but also how to let go and to make do without complaint.

In that time, she learned to fear geese and dogs, though nobody could understand it: Kaiser doesn't bite, Ilse. He's a good boy; you can pet him.

But the girl had her reasons to be afraid, though she had no memory of them.

Because on one occasion—a rare occasion when, aged two, she'd left the house without her mother noticing—Ilse approached the lake, lured by honking.

The night before, her parents had promised to take her to see the goslings soon, but Ilse didn't know how long *soon* was, and it felt as if that promise had been made an eternity ago,

so she set off, with plans to play with the babies and keep them warm: the lake was always freezing, and if she hated cold water, she thought they must feel the same.

But the geese didn't give her the chance. Seeing the human fledgling approach, they came out flapping and kicking until they reached dry land. Then they ran, honking.

Ilse wasn't new to the world: she could differentiate the soft *Ilse* she heard when she managed to keep still for a while and let her mother work in peace from the *Ilse!* that reverberated through the house when she refused to get in the tub, come the moment she was called, or eat all her salami.

That's how Ilse knew with certainty that their honks were not a greeting. With a leaden weight in her stomach that came from nowhere, Ilse turned and ran as fast as her two-and-a-quarter-year-old legs would allow.

As she fled, a powerful scream rose within her. It sealed her throat and seeped into her little body, never to come out.

Ilse knew—how did she know?—that the geese were faster than she was, that they would reach her, that they would bite her, that they would tear off her skin and even her hair.

She didn't dare look back.

Schnell laufen. Run faster, she told herself. *Schnell, schnell laufen!*

The hot breath of the enraged birds warmed her ankles.

Then, from the corner of her eye, she saw Kaiser approach at full speed, enormous, formidable. Had she turned, she would've seen the dog throw himself between her and her winged assailants, but no: with her eyes fixed ahead, she only felt the Alsatian's tail brush against her legs, and, in her panic, thought it was his great fangs.

In her frightened mind, he joined the pack, his *woof, woof, woof* merging with the geese's *honk, honk, honk*. And Ilse ran faster.

She took refuge in the barn, surprised to have won the race, and there, in the dark, felt her heart slow. As time passed, she was overcome with a new fear: that her mother would catch her, with her harsh *Ilse*, the one her mother used when she'd been a bad girl. *Nein, Ilse. Nicht allein.* Her mother's word was law in the house: You never go out alone, Ilse.

Had it not been for her stomach, the great motivator, she would've spent the evening there, perhaps the whole night. But hunger persuaded her to return to face whatever she had to face. And because, when Ilse was hungry, she could think of nothing else, her mind forgot what her body never would: the reason for her fear of geese and dogs.

What had seemed like an eternity to the little girl had taken just half an hour. Her mother, busy embroidering her daughters' pinafores and slips, never noticed her absence, thinking both girls were taking their nap. Ilse made no complaint, just devoured her toast with the creamy butter they made on the farm. Then she played all afternoon with Irmgard, the older sister who kept her entertained (and stopped her from leaving the house alone) while their mother sewed, wove, embroidered, cleaned, and cooked.

When their father arrived, Ilse knew it was time for dinner, and good thing, because she was hungry again. Their mother served sauerkraut with beef sausage: her favorite.

But then she saw Kaiser, who came inside only at her father's invitation, staring—as if, she thought, he wanted to eat her. Ilse, whose body would forevermore hold that afternoon's scream, lost interest in food and sought refuge on her father's lap.

And it was true that Kaiser had hunger in his eyes, but not for her: he was gazing at the sausage with love. He felt he deserved a prize for heroism, for standing between the geese and the girl, for the sharp pecks those feathered demons had landed during their pitched battle.

He waited patiently, but dinner ended without anyone offering so much as a piece of stale bread. Not that Ilse would've dared to hold a hand near that enormous, quivering snout, and in

any case, though still petrified, she didn't dare leave a single crumb. If her mother ordered *Alles essen*, the girl knew she'd better clean her plate.

Ilse would never know that the events of March 25, 1938, had been stored in her more as instinct than as conscious memory. Nor could she imagine how that day would be etched in the memories of her people—not because a Prussian girl had been chased by some geese, but because the master of their country's destiny was in Königsberg, making his intentions clearer to the Germans and to the world.

2. The boy and the flying banners

Arno

March 25, 1938

It was the first time in his life he'd been to Königsberg, but on that day, his third birthday, he didn't know it. Nor would he remember the flurry of preparations his family had made to spend time away from their small farm.

That morning, nobody had to wake him; he was the youngest of four and still followed the rule all babies know as soon as they're born: the day begins when they wake.

First the baby, then the mother, then the sun. Next, the cockerel's cry and the dairy cow demanding to be milked, followed by the father, to help the mother who had to relieve the cow that, once awake, wouldn't stop mooing. And after them, the rest of the family, though they wished their heads could remain stuck to their pillows a little longer, that there could be light coming through the window before they had to open their eyes.

But that was impossible: the new day had arrived, and with it, the usual flurry of activity on the Schippers' farm.

Of course, now that he was three, Arno no longer began his day with tears. He'd left those behind when he'd found the words he needed.

Mutter! Vater! Ich möchte mein Frühstück!

The morning began the way mornings always did: with the youngest of the family demanding breakfast, and the rest craving more time in bed. Then came hurried farm chores, and finally, elegance: wearing their Sunday best, they would go together to the city.

"It's a historic day and it's your birthday, Arno," said Karl, his father, while they buttoned their overcoats.

It was March 25 already, but in those parts, spring took a long time to take the hint. With luck, they would have a little sun by midday. With luck, it would snow neither on the short journey to Königsberg nor on their return.

Arno picked up on the excitement of his older brothers, who understood the occasion better than he. For eight-year-old Fritz and seven-year-old Johann, who saw themselves as experienced travelers, the day promised more than anything they'd known until then, more than the things they'd enjoyed each time their father took them to the city: the luxurious houses and buildings with big windows, the bells of Frauenburg Cathedral, the cobbled streets, the seven bridges, the games in the gardens of Königsberg Castle. It all paled next to today's historic event. On this visit, they would even forget the lure of the fruit-shaped *Schwermer* marzipan they'd tried on that rare occasion when their father had had money, time, and a good mood all at once.

Though they were frequent travelers in comparison with Arno (who'd never left the vicinity of the farm) and with Helga (whom, as a girl, despite being older, their father never took to the city when he worked there as a carpenter), Fritz and Johann were very young. The journey still seemed long to them, and they were easily distracted. On the snow-spattered road, they played the good older brothers and guides, moving with Arno from one side of the cart to the other to point things out: if it wasn't the big ox on the right, it was the lambs that blocked the road ahead, or the dead dog in an advanced state of putrefaction on the left.

"Did you see his eyes, Arno?"

Arno wanted to see everything, but his mother was afraid he'd fall, and they knew not to get her worked up; she must not overexert herself.

"Come here," Helga said, sitting him on her lap. "Keep still, now."

Helga held Arno close until he calmed down: her arms were the most familiar, the most comforting. His mother sat beside him every night for a while before he slept, and she told him stories, but it was ten-year-old Helga who carried him in her arms, who soothed him when he had nightmares, who told him off when he misbehaved, and who gave him baths. There, with his sister's arms keeping the cold at bay, he fell asleep, lulled by the cart's rhythmic rocking and the eternity it seemed to be taking them to arrive at the unknown destination.

"We're here."

Arno opened his eyes, instantly on alert. They were surrounded by activity. He'd never seen so many people in one place. His mother and father were arguing.

"The cart will get stolen if we leave it here," she said.

"No, nobody would dare today. And we can't go any farther with it. Look, everyone's doing the same."

That day, Königsberg's broad streets were packed with visitors from the surrounding area. It was a historic day, and no one wanted to miss it: the excitement shone in their faces. Around the Schippers, other families were lining up their vehicles outside the city walls, as close to one another as the horses would tolerate. Then they unloaded their baskets or bags to walk the rest of the way. The Schippers copied them, with Arno on his father's shoulders, or we'll lose you forever in this crowd, *mein Sohn*.

Arno sometimes felt confused, because if he was the baby, why did adults like to say, what a tall boy! If he were tall, he'd be big; he'd be the eldest. And everyone in his house was taller than him. If he were tall, he'd be able to reach the butter that his mother kept away from him on the shelf. If he were tall, he'd be able to reach the wooden horse his father had made him

when Fritz snatched it away and held it up as high as he could. If he were tall, Fritz wouldn't dare play pranks like that.

On his father's shoulders, for the first time, Arno really did feel tall. Even though his father was smaller than many in the crowd, Arno could see everything from there: the bald patches on some hatless men and the feathers in the hats of the elegant ladies; he liked seeing his siblings walking far below. Up here, he was the first to hear the music floating out from the city's streets. The wind blew through his bright blond hair. He looked all around, eager not to miss a single detail, not caring when his father told him, "Hold still, Arno."

Ahead, it was as if everything were walls: from the ones that encircled the city to the biggest buildings he'd ever seen. He'd never seen anything so high, other than the geese that flew over his house, a house that now seemed tiny.

Looking up, Arno gaped in astonishment, but his father said, "Sohn, close your mouth before you catch a fly." And he closed it, but it was stubborn, and sometimes it opened again by itself, because it wasn't just the size of the buildings and churches that surprised him: wherever he looked, flags were flying like red wings painted with black and white—big ones, small ones, gigantic ones—soaring up to the sky in the wind.

High-spirited women were selling flowers and flags just the right size for his little hands. And he wanted one.

"Vater, ich möchte eine Flagge!"

"Nicht jetzt."

Those were the most frustrating words Arno knew: Not now. Could he have a cookie? Not now. Could he play? Not now. Could he shout? Not now. Could he eat his bread? Not now. Could he have the flag that all the other children had? Not now, not now. At three years of age, Arno was already tired of those words, but he knew that, once his parents had said them, they would never go back on them. "So not now, but maybe later?"

"*Ja.* We'll see."

His father didn't want to stop, even when Arno signaled him with his legs, as if riding a horse. They seemed to be in a hurry. They walked as quickly as their mother was able.

Arno knew that not all mothers were like his. He knew that big, fat Frau Filipek, for instance, who walked to the farm once a week to exchange butter and sausage for some eggs, had more children than his mother, and sometimes she carried one of them all the way there, along with her bartering goods and her own weight.

The children took advantage of every second to play, while the mothers took more time than necessary to perform the transaction, chatting. But they were busy, practical women, and the conversation ended before long: there was a lot to do, and the Filipeks had to keep going.

Content, Frau Filipek packed her basket and walked off as energetic as she'd arrived, rosy cheeked, while his mother silently watched her stride away before returning to the kitchen to rest, breathless, without attempting to carry the boy, who, sometimes, couldn't understand why his mother never picked him up.

"Do you remember when you skinned your knee? Do you remember how much it hurt? Well, your mother's heart hurts just like that," his father explained to him more than once.

"And will she get better?"

"No."

That was why they had to take care of her. Because life is hard with a skinned heart. But Arno kept forgetting.

Every day, before leaving for work, his father said to him, look after your mother; help her; don't cause problems. Arno began the day with these intentions, but he soon forgot. He wanted to play, and he forgot about his mother's skinned heart. He wanted to run and to climb even when his siblings were at school and his father was at work, and there was no one else but his mother to look after him.

His body fled from the resolution he'd made just a few minutes before; he soon went too close to the stove, though he knew perfectly well he should not; he went to see the cow or to roll in the wheat, even though his mother had forbidden it. And he only remembered his promises when he saw his mother—pale, agitated, breathless—approach as quickly as her body would allow to dissuade, rescue, or scold him.

Tall, as he felt now on his father's shoulders, and grown-up, as tall boys that didn't forget their promises were, from time to time Arno observed his mother, a frail woman from whom he'd inherited his blond hair and blue eyes, walking slowly but steadily. He'd alert his father if he saw her become unwell, he decided. That was one thing he *could* do: spot the exact moment when her discomfort began. He was an expert at spotting that: he'd lived with it since he was born.

The Schippers soon merged with the tide of people. There were more and more flags, and the chants started off small, but grew in size.

Arno didn't know the songs. They were quite different from the ones his mother sang so sweetly when she had enough air to lend to a melody, but he liked them. He didn't know the words, so he pretended, timidly at first, until he started to feel part of the growing, evermore vociferous crowd that, gradually, became a homogenous mass.

And the steam that came from the mouth of each individual with each note mingled with the rest; it accumulated and grew large. It took on a life of its own, turning into a blast and then a swell of mist that enveloped him, that made him imagine he was floating.

And he thought his mother was walking with a little more strength in her body and more color in her face, and that his siblings had grown a little taller, through nothing more than some songs. Other children were up high like he was, sitting astride their fathers' shoulders, and they held up their arms as if commanding the seas; boys and girls he'd never seen before, but who recognized one another in their expressions, their smiles, the songs' words that almost none of

them pronounced correctly, and which none understood beyond the fact that they promised bread. And they liked that.

But with all the walking, his father's shoulders seemed to have developed corners, and Arno's discomfort was now greater than his taste for the songs. He was thirsty, and his hunger was now greater than his desire for a flag.

"Vater, ich bin hungrig!"

"Hold on, we're nearly there. When we arrive, we'll give you something to eat."

But like everyone around them, they went no farther: some soldiers directed the crowd to the two sides of the broad avenue, lining it. The stadium was full; this was the closest they'd get.

The Schipper family was lucky: the children were able to sit at the cordon on the sidewalk, and the adults had no one in front to block their view of the parade that was about to begin. Frau Schipper gave the children bread and sausage.

"Eat slowly, Arno. Don't make yourself choke."

The children ate sitting; the adults, standing. Arno spilled tea on his long woolen socks, so while they dried, he returned to his father's arms, wrapped in his overcoat and his warmth.

The songs continued, now accompanied by bands. There were voices that stood out from the others—from those of mere mortals—on loudspeakers, commanding the crowd to repeat slogans, to respond in unison, to raise an arm, and to yell together over and over, until the words reached the boy's ears with total clarity: *Ha hidler.* Arno asked his father to put him down and, standing on the curb, he joined the chorus each time they were instructed: *"Zig ail! Zig ail!"* he shouted. And then, *"Ha hidler! Ha hidler!"*

Without wondering and without asking what it was that they were repeating with such fervor, he joined in raising his arm almost to the sky. But his throat soon dried up from all the yelling, and his arm tired from all the raising and lowering.

The game lost its charm before it really started.

He felt the heaviness that he'd recently learned to detect in time to avoid wetting himself, and insisted until his father took him behind a building to let it out in a steaming stream.

But then they returned to their place. To more of the same. Arno sat down and stood up again and again. Obliged, he remained there, but his body wanted to be somewhere else. He couldn't understand why he wasn't allowed to run into the middle of the broad, empty avenue, a space that beckoned him unrelentingly. He knew he'd be able to start a game of tag with the other children his age, who seemed equally fed up with all the walking, all the yelling, all the waiting. They could have fun together. But no: Don't move, Arno; stay on the sidewalk, don't get lost; come on, keep singing. And he must not upset his mother. It would've been easy to forget had it not been for his father's firm hand on his shoulder whenever he sensed his son about to make a break for freedom.

"Nein, Arno."

Arno sat down. Again. To wait. Again. But wait for what? He didn't know.

By the end of the day, the fervor, the songs, and the slogans had lost the right to linger in his mind. Tiredness even erased the excitement of being tall on his father's shoulders.

He'd always remember the red of the flags, though he'd never speak of it, not even with his wife when they lived far from there. For the rest of his life, that day remained a painful and almost forbidden subject.

In any case, what was there to say about such a dim memory? It had been etched in him more as a feeling than a recollection, consisting only of images that visited him in the depths of bad dreams on nights he let his guard down. He'd never know it was on this precise day that he'd first witnessed the red and black flying.

By now, all Arno wanted was to go back to his little world on the farm: to sit at the table for dinner and then climb into his warm bed without having to be asked twice. Down on the

sidewalk, his parents' feet like a cocoon around him, protecting his small frame from being trampled, he'd even tired of looking up to ask, can we go home, *bitte*? since they would just say, a bit longer, Sohn.

So Arno had stopped asking. He'd stopped wishing he could run into the middle of the avenue. He was sitting where he'd been told to sit, no longer looking ahead, or up, and certainly not behind, because all he'd see was a dark and endless forest of legs and crotches.

Earlier, he'd tried to strike up a remote conversation, in signs, with a boy sitting like he was, in the same position and with the same tired expression, at his parents' feet, far away on the opposite sidewalk. But they hadn't been able to understand each other, and Arno had given up trying.

Protected but bored, he rested his chin on his knees and, with a flimsy stick, tried to scratch his name in the dirt. Helga taught him at home, but his letters didn't come out like his sister's. Frustrated, he was about to ask her for help when something changed: his little cocoon filled with a sudden, expectant silence. Even a three-year-old like Arno could tell: something momentous was about to happen.

"Was ist los, Vater?"

"Come on, Arno! Quick!"

The silence ended, and the people around him began to yell and cheer loudly again as his father lifted him up in his arms. Now Arno saw the front of the parade: riders mounted on enormous horses, then the soldiers going past. At first, their precise march impressed the boy, but there were so many of them and their step was so rhythmic that it became hypnotic. The crowd raised and lowered their right arms, and they yelled the chants they'd been practicing for hours.

His father's body shook with the effort of his own shouting, with the reverberation of the voices and the loudspeakers, and with the vibration from the military vehicles that followed.

Vehicles of different sizes, so many of them, bigger than any Arno had ever seen, and they were all new and impressive, without a spot of mud: together, marching, powerful.

And that was when Arno's fatigue fell away, how he discovered a new passion that would stay with him for the rest of his life and trigger his first permanent memory, one that, years later, when his fiancée asked him, what's your first memory? he'd deny, because it would've meant accepting that his earliest recollection was of war.

In that moment, he couldn't take his eyes off the revolving tires, off the tank wheels that acted as cogs moving their chains in a never-ending ellipse. Arno tried but was unable to make out where the chain's cycle began and where it ended. Then a tank moved its turret from side to side in a greeting, and its gun up and down in a bow, and in an instant, Arno was breathless.

He didn't understand their function as weapons. He cared about them as mechanical objects.

"How do they move, Vater?"

But his father didn't answer, occupied as he was with the object of his own interest—which was at that moment passing in front of them—and because the boy's voice was drowned out by the swell of voices.

"Heil Hitler! Heil Hitler!" the crowds chanted.

"Arno, look," said his father, and Arno obeyed. He looked and looked. He observed. He studied. But he didn't look where his father did, because nothing would distract him from those marvelous machines and from the questions that resounded in his head as loud as the engines and cogs; from the questions that resounded louder than any mass chant: How do they work? How do they move?

And owing to the intensity with which he tried to solve the mystery, everything else went unnoticed in Arno Schipper's first memory, including the short man standing high in a

convertible car, feeling even taller than the boy had on his father's shoulders. Taller than anyone.

From his perceived giant's height, the man turned from side to side to wave, like the turret on the tank that belonged to him. But unlike the vehicle's gun that had fascinated Arno so, the man kept his arm up high, because someone like him would never humble himself by bowing. Not even before the people who'd granted him power with their votes and their faith, and who sustained him at the heights he seemed to enjoy so much.

Distracted as he was observing vehicle after vehicle, Arno paid him no attention, nor did he care, an hour later, when the lethargy and the desire to be elsewhere returned, about the man's impassioned speech, which could be heard not just over the loudspeakers but all across Germany by radio transmission. That was how he achieved the Anschluss—annexing Austria for the glory of Germany and at the request of the Austrians—without firing a single shot.

During the speech there was total silence. When Arno went to ask something, his father said, "Quiet. We must pay attention to every word." Arno couldn't understand anything that the voice coming out of the loudspeaker said; each word blended into the next, and none of them seemed to take him closer to what he wanted: his home. Surprised, he saw his father crying, with a smile on his face.

"Are you sad, Vater?"

"No. My eyes are just watering from the freezing air."

After the first five minutes, he rested his head on his father's shoulder. And well before the speech was over, Arno was in a light sleep, immune to the leader's spell, deaf to the carefully controlled words that flowed from his mouth, and which, all together, promised peace and the divine support of the German god (whose existence most of those listening had been unaware of until that day), oblivious to the masterful, dramatic finish, delivered in a style so often used by the speaker, one of the greatest orators and persuaders in history.

"In the course of my political struggle, I have been given a great deal of love from my people. Yet when I recently crossed the former border of the Reich, I met with a wave of love stronger than I have ever before experienced. Not as tyrants have we come, but as liberators. An entire people cried out in joy. It was not brutal force that triumphed here, but our swastika. When these soldiers marched into Austria, I remembered a song from my youth. Back then I frequently sang it, with faith in my heart, this proud battle song: *The people are rising, the storm is breaking loose!* With faith in Germany and in this idea, millions of our fellow countrymen in the New Ostmark in the south of our Reich have held their banners high and remained loyal to the Reich and the German people. One People and one Reich: Germany!"

Sieg Heil! Long live Germany! *Heil Hitler! Heil Hitler!*

The crowds, and all the people of Germany wherever they were when they heard those words, resumed the chants with renewed fervor, but Arno would never remember that part of the day. In the days, months, and years that followed, his surprised parents and siblings asked, but he went right past us, just a few meters away, don't you remember? No. He didn't remember because, when the Führer passed by, Arno was busy looking at cogs, and when he spoke, Arno fell asleep in his father's arms, and Karl stroked his head and whispered in his ear, happy birthday, son.