

## My date with Adolf Hitler

By Claudia Lucas (nee Calmon)

*This story was found amongst Claudia's papers after her death. Initially thought to be fanciful, it has since been independently reported by an acquaintance of hers so is probably true.*

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A rather shattering thought, which occurs to me every now and again is:- I might have been able to avert World War II. Let me explain.

It was 1934 and at that time I was living in a residential outskirt of Berlin, a place called Wannsee. Wannsee is situated about halfway between Berlin and Potsdam, the latter is where Rudolf Hess is still held captive in prison for his war crimes<sup>1</sup>. I had just started to attend a local school, when one morning during our assembly, the headteacher announced to the whole school, positively swelling with pride and joy as he spoke, that Herr Hitler and General Paul von Hindenburg were going to travel from Berlin to Potsdam on the following day to attend a meeting and their car and escort were going to travel right through the middle of our main street of Wannsee. The whole school was to have the day off to line the street. After he had announced this bit of news, he called out to the playground the most junior class. This of course included myself. After we had lined up the headmaster walked up and down the line glaring at each of us in turn, although we had no idea why he had acted as he did. Suddenly he stopped in front of a little blond boy and put his podgy finger out pointing to him and said: - "Yes you will do" and then proceeding back along the line he stopped in front of me and grunted: "Yes you will be the girl" .

Soon we were to learn the reason for all this. The Headmaster explained that he had decided to celebrate this momentous occasion by getting the car carrying these VIPs to come to a halt in our main street, and the two of us whom he had selected were to present both Herr Hitler and General von Hindenburg with a large bunch of flowers. He then dismissed all the class except for the boy and myself and gave us more detailed instructions. Each of us was to stand at the head of the queue on each side of the road, with our bunch of flowers. As soon as we could spot the arrival of the car which would have motorcycle riders on alongside it, we were to run out into the road and thereby stop the convoy. We were then to rush to the side of the back doors of the car and open them, curtsy or bow, give a greeting welcome and hand over the flowers.

The whole thing sounded very exciting, and I began to realise that I had been chosen for a very special mission. When I re-joined my classmates, I got a big reception which was shouts of envy and awe. I could not get home quickly enough to tell my parents the great news, and was as nearly always, horribly let down by their reception which was one of stony silence and funny looks. The only comment was my father making some cryptic crack about being somewhat surprised that they had chosen ME. Although I had very fair hair and was a

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<sup>1</sup> Not true as Rudolf Hess was imprisoned in Spandau, in West Berlin. Claudia died in July 1987, a month prior to Hess's suicide.

very keen athlete in those days, one could not deny the fact that I had big brown eyes, and he thought it odd because the perfect German specimen should by rights have blue eyes.

The following morning, I took great care in dressing in my best Hitler Youth uniform, of which I was a member. In fact, everyone in my class was a member. By the time I walked to school I noticed that what must have been the whole population of Wannsee was already lining the streets and there were flags everywhere, both the German eagle and the swastika adorned every shop. When I arrived at school I was summoned to the headmaster, who took me and the boy by the hand and walked us to the top of the street queue. The boy on one side having been given a large bunch of flowers, and me on the other side, clutching my own bunch of flowers. Then we had a long wait ahead of us. Of course, we did not realise that we had been placed in position a good hour before the arrival was due. The atmosphere in the street was quite electric with excitement and it began to affect me too.

Suddenly an excited shout from the headmaster "Here they come!" and sure enough escorted by the motorcycle riders the big black car was travelling towards us. As instructed, I jumped into the middle of the road and the boy on the other side did likewise and the convoy came to a halt. We both rushed round to the back door of the car to open it, and I remember having trouble with those big round heavy handles that had to be turned. The next thing I knew was that the person inside the car was helping me to open the door and I found myself face to face with ADOLF HITLER. I gave a very deep curtsy and in my panic I completely forgot the words of greeting that I was to speak, but I just grinned from ear to ear with sheer nerves. Hitler, whose picture I had seen very many times, looked so small and ordinary I thought, but he gave me a most benign smile and began to pat me on the head and stroked my fringe in a most patronising manner. He spoke to me, but I cannot recall a single word as it was all too much for me. I noticed that the man sitting on the other side looked very old and reminded me of Father Christmas. I doubt if the whole interlude took more than a few minutes, before the car continued on its journey to Potsdam. At the time I felt numb and elated with the experience.

Little did I know or realise that in years to come I would be fighting Germany and fighting to exterminate that very man – the man that I had bunched. If only I had known then what I learned later, I had the Fuhrer in a vulnerable position, so I could easily have slipped a time bomb into the bunch of flowers. A far-sighted person could easily have used me as an instrument, an innocent child, to kill Adolf Hitler there and then.

Claudia Lucas

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*Claudia was born in October 1922 to Jewish parents. She was 12 when this episode took place and the family were already in the process of leaving Germany, her father having been appointed legal and economic advisor to the Bata Shoe Company in Zlin, Czechoslovakia in 1933.*