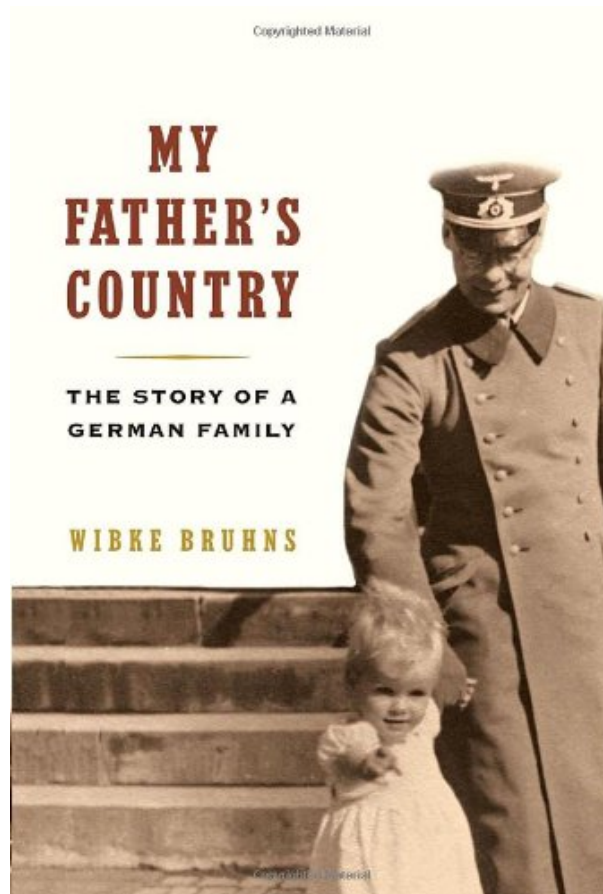


MY FATHER'S COUNTRY: STORY OF A GERMAN FAMILY BY WIBKE BRUHNS



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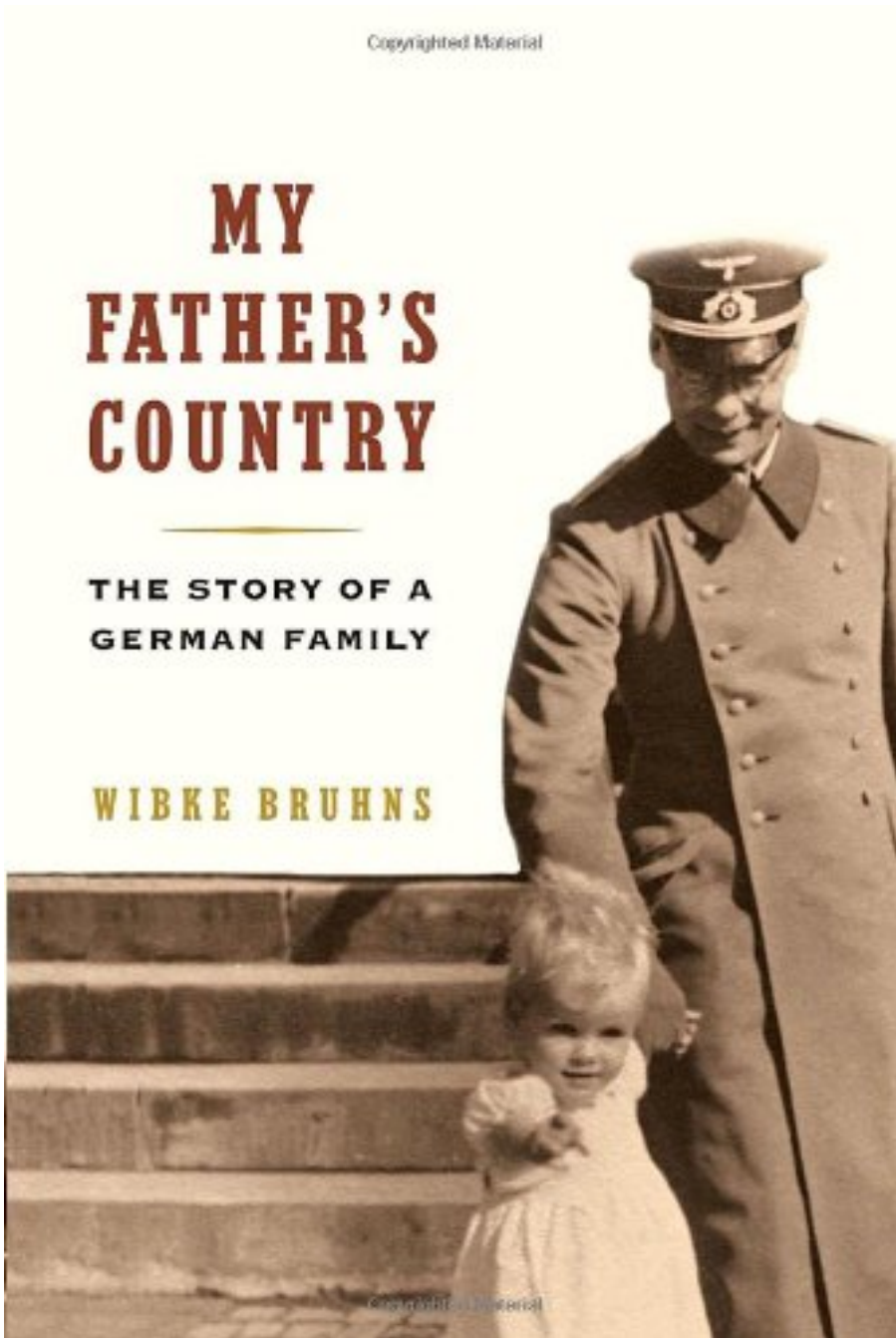


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From Booklist

Bruhns, born in Germany in 1938, has worked as a television journalist and a U.S.-based correspondent for Stern magazine. In 1944, her father, Captain Hans Georg Klamroth, was executed for his part in the conspiracy to assassinate Hitler in July of that year. For decades, Bruhns seems to have tried to maintain an emotional distance from the father she barely remembered. When she caught a glimpse of her haggard father while watching a documentary on the trial of the conspirators, she determined to learn more about him and her family. The result is a searing, painful inquiry that reveals much about her family through the length of the twentieth century; it also confronts readers with the dilemma of trying to survive in a totalitarian society without becoming part of the monstrous evils. Both of her parents were enthusiastic backers of Hitler for years. Bruhns seems particularly disturbed to discover how shamed other family members were by her father's act of betrayal. Her efforts to discover the causes of his conversion are both riveting and heartbreaking. --Jay Freeman

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"A literary feat of extraordinary courage. . . . An intimate glimpse into the heart of darkness. . . . Illuminating."

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From the Trade Paperback edition.

About the Author

Wibke Bruhns was born in 1938 in Halberstadt, Germany. She has worked as a journalist in both TV and print and as a TV host and news broadcaster. She was a correspondent for Stern magazine in the United States and Israel and headed the culture section at one of Germany's largest radio stations, ORB. She has two grown daughters and now lives and works as a freelance writer in Berlin.

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On August 15, 1944, Major Hans Georg Klamroth was tried for treason for his part in the July plot against Hitler. Eleven days later, he was executed.

Wibke Bruhns, his youngest daughter, was six years old. Decades later, watching a documentary about the events of July 20, she saw images of her father in court suddenly appeared on-screen. "I stare at this man with the empty face. I don't know him. But I can see myself in him—his eyes are my eyes; I know I resemble him. I know I wouldn't be here without him. And what do I know about him? Nothing at all."

How could her patriotic family succumb to Nazi sympathies? And what made her father finally renounce Hitler? With a wealth of letters and diaries documenting the story of her family, from the time of Kaiser Wilhelm to the end of the Second World War, and with her own coruscating intelligence, she unravels her family's unique and unforgettable history.

My Father's Country tells an astounding story—gripping, startlingly intimate, emotionally riveting—of three generations. A huge best seller in the author's native country, it offers unparalleled insight into the experience of being German in the last century. A real-life Buddenbrooks.

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Most helpful customer reviews

3 of 5 people found the following review helpful.

A Daughter's Story

By Christian Schlect

A modern German woman relates in a powerful conversational style the story of her own close-knit and upper-middle class extended family, from the days of the last Kaiser through to Hitler.

One is offered a close view of a Prussian clan devoted to each other, duty to the state, and good order. But good order was absent in Germany at the end of World War I, with many unresolved social, economic, and political grievances setting the stage for the rise of the Nazis. Family members slowly, without due thought, became willing cogs in the ultimately murderous system that Hitler fashioned, until 1944 when the author's father and brother-in-law were involved in an unsuccessful assassination plot aimed at der Fuhrer.

The author does not turn away from relating the painful personal marital failings and political blindness of the very human father she never really knew.

In the end, the reader of Ms. Bruhns' book has a better sense of how the solid "good" people--of the advanced society that was Germany--came to be a part of the conformative and hyper-nationalistic political climate that led directly to the horrors of World War II.

1 of 6 people found the following review helpful.

Good book; bad publisher.

By michibilly

I like this book. It's a little sentimental at times and there seems to be a fair share of 'filling in the blanks' with conjecture; still liked it. Since I know little about WWI, this book has aroused my curiosity and I'll be picking some other books on this period as well; always a good thing.

Now the bad news. It POs me off more than a little that this publisher, Knopf, does not permit 'speech' to be enabled. I often travel and one of the things that really attracted me to the Kindle was the ability to read a book and then, while in the car, have the Kindle continue to read the book. Apparently publishers like Knopf are hoping that you'll buy the Kindle edition to read on your Kindle, and then buy the audio book too. Nope. Now only will I not do that, I'll avoid books by this publisher if speech is not enabled.

8 of 15 people found the following review helpful.

Lots of Trees, no Forest

By Daniel J. Cragg

The most intriguing thing about Mrs. Bruhns' biography of her father, Hans Georg Klamroth, is the degree of detail she has uncovered about his life from surviving family archives and reminiscences. I wish I were blessed with as much insight into the life of my own father whom I knew much better than Bruhns ever knew hers. It is indeed a wise child that knows his father.

If one reads this book carefully one can get a fascinating view of an upper-class German family evolving through the tumultuous years of the 20th century. For that reason alone I give MY FATHER'S COUNTRY three stars. Otherwise it is a bore and ultimately a disappointment. It bores because there is just too much detail about the intimate lives of the Klamroths, stuff of no possible interest to anyone but another Klamroth.

It disappoints for two reasons: First, I bought this book because I wanted to know more about Hans Georg's involvement in the plot to assassinate Hitler, for which he gave his life. This climactic event is covered in little detail only at the very end of this book. Second is Mrs. Bruhns' aggravating tendency to intrude her own 21st-century moral judgments on the people of her father's generation. One example is her comment on advice given to her father by her grandfather "to adopt the correct military attitude and impose a sense of duty on your emotions." "What nonsense!" is Mrs. Bruhns' comment. But it was this very "military attitude" that led her father to keep quiet about the assassination conspiracy and to refuse to give up anyone's name under interrogation. One can only imagine what was done to him during those interrogations but still he kept his silence. That is why he was hanged, not because he was directly involved in the attempt on Hitler's life.

The major flaw in MY FATHER'S COUNTRY is demonstrated at the end when Mrs. Bruhns tells a poignant story about one of her first post-war memories as a child. When she innocently asked, "Why does nobody say Heil Hitler anymore?" someone slapped her face for saying that. As 21st-century biographer, her final comment is, "Why did anybody ever say it?" The answer to that important question is in the pages of this book, if you have the patience to dig it out. But Mrs. Bruhns does not see it in the wealth of intimate detail she gives us about her father. In the end she knows a lot but understands little.

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