

The Perfect Nazi - Uncovering my SS grandfather's secret past and how  
Hitler seduced a generation by Martin Davidson.  
Viking 2010.

How would you feel if you discovered that the father of your German born mother had served in the German armed forces during the Second World War? How would you feel if you discovered that your German grandfather had been not just in the German army but in the SS? How would you feel if your grandfather had not just been an opportunist but a die hard Nazi and one of the party's earliest members, but also a street-fighting man and convinced anti-Semite?

The answer to all these questions for Martin Davidson, film-maker and commissioning editor for History at the BBC, was to investigate his grandfather's life story in as much detail as possible and then to write a book about it, and what a book *The Perfect Nazi* is!

In the course of ten enthralling chapters, Davidson describes the life of his grandfather from its beginnings in Perleberg in 1906 to his death in Berlin some 85 years later. In minute and fascinating detail he traces his steps into the Nazi party in 1922, through its various parts and up its greasy pole until the conclusion of the war when his grandfather, Bruno Langbehn, was in Prague.

But what makes *The Perfect Nazi* such an excellent book is not just the Langbehn story, and the impact of its detail upon the writer, but his retelling of the events which saw an obscure ex-German army corporal rise to be the Fuhrer of Germany and instigate a murderous rampage through Europe provoking a world war and costing countless millions of lives. Refracted through the lens of Langbehn's own experiences this is as good a description of Hitler's rise and fall as you could read.

Martin Davidson has produced an honest and highly readable biography of a grandfather who intrigued and horrified him in almost equal measure, and has doubtless achieved his own *modus vivendi* with this troubling aspect of his German family.

*The Perfect Nazi* is a book that deserves to be very widely read, and also to find its way onto reading lists in the field of Second World War and Holocaust studies.

Rabbi Dr Charles H Middleburgh