

# ***The Path: The Story of a Flight to Freedom*** **by Rüdiger Bertram** **Illustrations by Heribert Schulmeyer**

**Original Title:** Der Pfad: Die Geschichte  
einer Flucht in die Freiheit

**Working Title:** The Path: The Story of a  
Flight to Freedom

**Original  
Language:** German / Germany

**Publisher:** cbt Verlag, Random House  
(Germany)

**Publishing date:** 2017 / 2022

**Number of  
pages:** 240

**Recommended  
age:** 10+

**Rights sold to:** Spain



**Featured on  
New Books in German**

**Potential translation  
funding from  
the Goethe Institut**

**Film adaptation released  
in Germany  
February 2022**

**Various film nominations -  
German Film Prize, Goldener  
Spatz Prize 2022**

**An exciting Second World War adventure story  
about a boy and his father who flee Nazi  
Germany by crossing the Pyrenees on foot**

## About the author

**Rüdiger Bertram** is a distinguished German freelance journalist, author and screenwriter with over twenty titles to his name. Prizes include the **Leipziger Lesekompass** from the Leipzig Book Fair and in 2022 he was named **Lesekünstler des Jahres** - Reading Artist of the Year - awarded to an author whose works particularly inspire young readers. His books have appeared in over 25 countries but have yet to be translated into English

## About the illustrator

**Heribert Schulmeyer** is a German illustrator and comic artist. He started off publishing in the 1980s in German underground comics. He now illustrates for some of the major German publishing houses, e.g. Ravensburger, Carlsen; and regularly collaborates with Rüdiger Bertram.

## About the translator

**Claire Storey** is a literary translator working from Spanish and German into English. She translates for adults and children, but has a particular interest in YA and MG. Claire is co-editor of **World Kid Lit**, highlighting the importance of books in translation for young readers. In 2021, Claire was named Outreach Champion by the Institute of Translation and Interpreting for her work promoting languages in schools. She would be happy to discuss school visits and marketing events.

## Publishing Rights

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**THE PATH: A STORY OF A FLIGHT TO FREEDOM**  
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# Overview

**The Path** is a thrilling, fast-paced historical adventure following the journey of Rolf and his father Ludwig, a journalist fleeing Nazi Germany. Their plan is to travel through France to Spain and from there to sail to the United States of America to join Rolf's mother who has travelled on ahead. But the only way to get to Spain is to place their lives in the hands of Manuel - a Spanish shepherd boy - and cross the Pyrenees on foot. But when Ludwig is captured en route, the two boys have to continue their journey alone. Along the way they have brushes with Nazi officers, wild bears and they encounter resistance fighters on both sides of the Spanish border.

The book opens and closes with a graphic novel-style comic strip, quickly bringing the reader up to speed with events in Germany as war broke out. The end comic strip finishes the story off, telling what happens to Rolf after we leave him in Spain. This is a lovely touch and something that is quite unusual.

In February 2022, the film version of the book was released in Germany with both the film and screen writer being recognised in recent awards.

## Why This Book?

While it is fair to say that there are many wartime adventure stories in the English language, there are relatively few books for young people written from the German perspective. The fate of Jewish people fleeing Nazi Germany is well documented, but this novel follows the fortunes of a lesser-known group: the German journalists who were declared Enemies of the People. This is a topic explored by Terrence Petty in his 2019 adult title *Enemy of the People: The Munich Post and the Journalists who opposed Hitler* (The Associated Press).

Rolf and his father take a more unusual path out of Nazi Germany, through France and across the Pyrenees on foot, just like German philosopher Walter Benjamin. Benjamin's story was recently documented in a picture book published in German and English by NordSüd/NorthSouth books: *Mr Benjamin's Suitcase of Secrets*.

Reading this book brought to mind the experiences by one of our most beloved authors, Judith Kerr. In her autobiographical story *When Hitler Stole Pink Rabbit*, we really get a sense of the adventure she felt while fleeing Nazi Germany. That too comes across in this book; while there is danger and adversity around the corner, there are also moments of joy and excitement.

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# Praise for *The Path*

*A political adventure story intertwined with courage and hope. It comes across unobtrusively, without being moralistic* - Süddeutsche Zeitung, 02/01/2018

*Multi-faceted, authentic and exciting* - Eselsohr, 01/12/2017

*Bertram doesn't avoid the horror and violence of war, yet he focusses on an adventure story bolstered by the growing friendship between Manuel and Rolf* - Der Sonntag Karlsruhe, 12/08/2018

*Historical truths flow seamlessly and appropriately throughout, while the fable of friendship and courage, loyalty and responsibility is grounded in modern times* - Filmdienst, 07/12/2017

## Marketing ideas

In the book, Rolf and Manuel have interactions with members of the French Resistance. While Rolf is German and fleeing the Nazis, much of the action takes place in occupied France under the Vichy Regime. August 2024 is the 80th Anniversary of the Liberation of France so there could be opportunities to market this book around this time.

2024 also marks 80 years since the D-Day landings. I would imagine this will be discussed in the media and the World War Two will be brought back into public conscious. The BBC are also due to release the second series of their WW2 drama *World on Fire* later in 2023.

World War Two is on the UK curriculum both at KS2 and KS3 level. There could be potential to create school materials to accompany the book.

This novel is the story of a father and son fleeing persecution. While told from a historical perspective, this book also has parallels with the current refugee situation that is much discussed in current politics.

In 2021, I was named Outreach Champion by the Institute of Translation and Interpreting for my work in schools. As the author lives in Germany, I would be happy to work with you as the book's translator to organise school visits to promote the book, talking to young people about the book and about translation.

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# Themes

## **Second World War**

The backdrop to this story is the Second World War. We are given a glimpse into the dangerous living conditions for German people who were sought by the Nazi Regime and the fear they felt. Through Rolf and Ludwig's journey through France and across the mountains, we also learn about the French occupation and the Resistance as well as references to Spain's Civil War.

## **Loyalty and Friendship**

Rolf and the Spanish shepherd boy Manuel are thrust together, yet despite the language barriers, they form an unlikely friendship. Rolf is initially a bit bolshy and comes across as a bit of a know-it-all; however, after saving each others' lives - one from drowning, the other from a wild bear attack - they find themselves bound to each other through a sense of loyalty and friendship. At the end, Rolf is warmly welcomed into Manuel's Spanish-speaking family,

## **European Languages and Culture**

As a linguist, one of the things I love in this book is the demonstration of the different languages and cultures in Europe. Rolf and his father speak German, they are traveling through France and have to use the French they have learnt. They then meet Manuel, a Spaniard, who has learnt some German from his work chaperoning German people across the mountains. When Manuel and Rolf meet the French/Spanish resistance fighters, Manuel communicates in Catalan and at the end, Rolf is welcomed into Manuel's Spanish-speaking family. Through the different languages, friendships are made and trust is built.

## **Love of dogs**

Rolf cannot bear to leave his beloved terrier Adi behind and so Rolf smuggles Adi along with them, despite having been told to leave him behind. It is Adi who ultimately gives their hiding place away and while Rolf is initially very angry and upset, he comes around. Adi later saves the lives of Rolf and Manuel. This is a story of the love that exists between humans and their canine companions.

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## Financial Assistance to Aid Translation

The book appeared on the [New Books in German](#) recommendations list. While it is now outside of the five-year guaranteed funding window, it would still be worth submitting an application to the Goethe Institute.

From the New Books in German website:

**The Goethe-Institut website gives further information on the process, including details of forthcoming deadlines and decision dates. The page also links to the online application portal. The Goethe-Institut advises people to apply early.**

**Generally, 40%-60% of the total translation fee is covered. There is a maximum payment of 8,000 Euros per book.**

**If you want to discuss your application before filling the form in, or have any questions, you are very welcome to contact the Goethe Institut employees listed at the following links:**

**Goethe-Institut London -**

**<https://www.goethe.de/ins/gb/en/kul/ser/uef.html>**

**Goethe-Institut New York -**

**<https://www.goethe.de/ins/us/en/kul/bks/uef.html>**

### NEXT APPLICATION PERIOD

1 May to 1 June 2023 for translations going to press in August 2023 or later. The funding decision will be communicated to the applicant by email on 17 July 2023.

Our calls for proposals are open for a one-month period four times a year, with closing dates on 1 March, 1 June, 15 September and 1 December.

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