

The Ties That Bind

(1984)

by Su Friedrich

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Voice and Text of THE TIES THAT BIND

L is for Lore (voice)

S is for Su (scratched words on the screen)—either thoughts, or my questions to her

* * * indicates a pause between sections of speech

Opening Title

Lore Bucher was born in 1920 in Ulm, a small city 75 miles west of Munich. Her father was a gardener and horticulturist; her mother managed the home. She had four older brothers and two older sisters.

In 1947, while working as a secretary for the American Military Government, she met Paul Friedrich, an American working in the "de-nazification" program in Ulm.

L: Well, for example, when I learned the first time about Nazis was of course when you were told in the papers, you were told in school about that and you had it explained at home. I remember the extraordinary sadness when the elections came and Hitler came to power...and I also remember that my brothers at first seemed very sympathetic towards the Nazis, until they realized what was happening. And only because my parents had always spoken about the time after the First World War, the times of the crash, the very, very difficult times where people lost practically all their belongings, and they were sort of introduced to Nazism during the early years by Hitler proclaiming, "I shall give every German a house, a garden, a job..." and, I mean, promise, promise, promise, promise, right?

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I think the greatest danger had been the crash, the depression and then the inflation. And people were very definitely looking for some way out of their total and utter misery, and that man came just at that moment. And see, that is what I always find so striking in history in general: That there are times where, when something good should happen, evil arises! It's terrifying!

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So, at any rate, there was talk, back and forth, is he or is he not...And it was my father who realized that there was something more to it; he was a very cautious man. And one of my brothers wanted to join the Army...uh...the Party, and that's where my father stepped in and said absolutely not. What he did secretly, I would not have known, but he probably would have been out in no time at all. I certainly never heard anything.

* * *

Then of course with my entrance into high school, that is when it had already started, and of course we had all Jewish friends and my father had Jewish friends. And there were rumblings, you could see it in the papers, and we were constantly badgered to join the

Party. And my father's business suffered a great deal because there was no affiliation and many contracts were turned down. On the other hand, when there were exhibits of his work--the vegetables or fruits--he always won medals. And later on, when it really came out in the open, we were written up in "Der Sturmer", which was the real Nazi paper, and at the same time many of the Jewish people were written up.

S: *When I was a kid*
I never understood why my mother hated fireworks so much

L: And I really often felt that I was also punished in school for that: That I did not belong to the BDM,¹ which was the Hitler Youth, and I remained friends with the Jewish girls, with Anneliese Hirsch and Ilse Moss and I would absolutely ...you know...there was no question about it that they would remain my friends! And I remember one day, it was in French class. Anneliese had forgotten her words, and you were not supposed to help someone, and I just looked at her and mouthed the words to her and Miss Burrell heard it, or rather she saw it, and she just flew at me in this RAGE and she said, "Lore Bucher! Come out here!" And I had to sit there, right beside the desk, through two hours of French class, at the end of which she said, "Now get up, and now we shall go to the Director and tell him all about it!" And there was no question about it, because she was an ardent Nazi, and this was the way that she could get at some (of us). I was not the only one; there were two other girls in class.

S: *Only three of you in the whole class?*

L: Almost all belonged to the BDM ¹ and when there was a school function and you were told to come in uniform, you could see all of them standing out because they all came in uniform and we did not. And that was punishment, if you ever received punishment. They would look at you, oh, they would practically spit at you! And I remember in one instance we had to go on some kind of a march and the teachers wanted to force the parent to buy a black skirt and white blouse and three cornered scarf [the uniform of the BDM]: "Absolutely not, there will be no money spent of any such things!" [said her parents]. Yea, so we marched in our dresses.

* * *

And for longest time of course we did not know: were our teachers members or were they not? Did they just pretend that they were because they did not want to lose their position and their job, right? But very, very gradually during the next years you heard all kinds of rumors and you realized how teachers were treating you and from their treatment we could detect who was and who was not. So, our English teacher, the one I met still...remember when I was in Germany [on a visit]? Miss Seifang. She admired me and she brought that up again when I saw her. She said, "Here she comes, our feisty Lore who would never budge," and she said she had always admired us that we had the fortitude to stick up for our convictions. And I said, "Well, Miss Seifang, it wasn't very hard because we knew that you too were anti-Nazi and that is why we just loved you!"

* * *

And the other thing for which I personally was often attacked--attacked verbally: Because I wouldn't put up my hand. I would NOT say "Heil Hitler"; I would say "Gruss Gott"² and would just keep that up, and that was very tricky, and a lot of people did it. So you see.

S: *When did you finish high school?*

L: 1938. Yes. I took the Mitlereife and the Abitur.³ Yes, right. And then I was told I could study no further. The guardian who was set up after my father died claimed that there was not enough money to continue the education. Which I did not believe, nor did my sister. All I talked about was how I wanted to go the university and study. And I have never forgotten the shock when we told. She and I cried one evening and, as a matter of fact, that was an evening where we said we're going to run away...(laughs)...we were so upset. And we were told that we have to go out and get ourselves a job and that's precisely what happened. They consented to pay for secretarial school, and that's where I went to for half a year.

* * *

And I just happened to have seen this ad in the paper; I applied for the job and he was very impressed and he immediately hired me. And I stayed there until I was drafted, or what they call drafted, rather taken out of...you know, dragged out of the house.

S: *In November 1982*

*I saw my mother's hometown
for the first time.*

* * *

Nope, wrong house

* * *

I wanted to know which room had been hers

* * *

When my mother saw the photo she said

How awful! They removed all the shutters and window boxes!

L: And of course at that time my father was dead. Of course my mother was just as against the regime as my father, so from that point of view there was a continuation of the same ideas and of the same resistance.

S: *The cross of honor of the German mother*

L: They had a program where they honored mothers who had a lot of children, and they gave the mothers...they presented a cross: a bronze for so and so many children, a silver

for so and so many children...

S: *Bronze for 4 or 5 children*

L: But this of course was the great thing anyway: You must be pure of blood and a pure Aryan and you must have a lot of children so the army has the fodder, right? Army fodder!

S: *Silver for 6 or 7 children*

L: Of course, I mean you laughed about it, or you took it very seriously; it depended on the person. But certainly this was forever and ever proclaimed. It was just terrible. Yea, definitely: the great mothers and the family...A tremendous to-do.

S: *Gold for 8 or more children*

* * *

Any eligible woman would receive the medal, even if she wasn't in the Nazi party.

L: My sister Anna was the first born and then came my brother Otto, then came George, then Tony and Ernest and then came my sister Josephine who is still alive and I. And I understood there were more children; my mother was supposed to have had ten children and three died in childbirth.

S: *I would NEVER wear this thing she said
and threw away her silver medal.*

* * *

But why did they come and drag you out of the house?

L: Oh yes, first of all, that was when the war had been declared, and the first thing was that of course my brothers were drafted. Our maids--we had two maids--they were taken immediately. They were just taken away, we never heard from them again. Then our horses, both horses. And the carriage, and the car, and the truck, and all that happened within one week. When the horses were taken, my sister and I sat in the windowsill and my mother stood there and we cried and cried. Because they came first to the house and said, "This is what is going to be taken." And there was nothing you could do. All you could do is shoot them and kill them, but then somebody else would come and would shoot you and kill you, right? So then we said, "What next?" My mother was becoming fearful, and every time the doorbell rang we were scared stiff. And it was the week after, in the middle of the night, the bell rings. My oldest sister opened up and we heard her argue. My sister and I were lying in bed and we were just so scared. So we hear the word,

"Lore", so my oldest sister comes to our room and in a nightgown I had to go out into the hall and here stand these two soldiers who said, "You have to come with us," and I said, "I have to come with you?" They said "Yes." I had to get dressed and go with them. I had NO idea where they were taking me. My mother wrung her hands: "Where are you going to take her?" They said, "This is none of your business." (laughs) Can you imagine how I felt?

S: *How old were you then?*

L: Ok, that was when I was 19, right, 18 or 19. 18, yes, yes, or was it 19?
1920...1939...19. Nineteen.

* * *

So, I couldn't take anything with me, just my clothes. Well, where that came from dawned on me a little later. I had taken up piano again. My teacher was Mrs. Pongratz. Mrs. Pongratz was a Party member. She was the only piano teacher in our neighborhood, right? She also played in our cathedral, she was very well known, and I felt well, to hell with it, all she does is teach me music. But that was not all she did, because every time she was talking about how I should join and she was showing me pictures and I said, "No, I don't want to." Then I stopped and I said I did not want to have lessons anymore. It must have been half a year that I had lessons and that was all because I just couldn't STAND her. And one day when she came, my oldest sister had opened the door and said, "Here is Frau Pongratz again. She wants to know whether you would join the Party or the BDM," and I said No and I went out and I threw her down the stairs. I gave her one push. And she grabbed herself, thank god she didn't hurt herself, but she did fall down. Now, I swear to this day she was instrumental in that business.

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[piano playing]

* * *

Susi, you should not do that! That's terrible. I want to hear that!

* * *

That's an old Austrian folk tune, and it's also a Swabian one, which is very funny. I can't play that, I've had this way back in February, I haven't played it since.

* * *

So anyway, here I was in this car with these two military guys and they were driving and driving through the night, out of the city, and I kept asking them, "Where are you taking me?" and they wouldn't say one word. Not a single word came out of them and I was scared to hell and I really, truly thought at that time that they were taking me out somewhere and putting me against a tree and shooting me. That's exactly what I thought. And I was crying and I was...I was just crying! So here we drive in, and I see these low buildings, and we came into a village and beyond that village there was an airport called Dornstadt, and that is where they took me.

* * *

And that is where I had to line up with god knows how many men and a few other women and we were drafted to work there. The first week we had to clean out all the barracks. You know, real filthy, hard labor. They were originally detention barracks. They had taken the prisoners, probably political prisoners, out and made this one of the small airports that were sprinkled all over Germany. So first we had to do all the scrubbing and cleaning, then we had to help in the kitchen and then eventually you were asked what other skills you had. So I told them I could type, which of course they knew anyway because you were very well investigated, so you didn't do any lying, and then they put me in the offices.

* * *

I, you know, you don't know in the beginning, you're very, very cautious, and they were questioning me and I would keep my mouth shut because I thought, "My God, I've already gotten into enough trouble; they probably just want to set me a trap!"

S: *But couldn't your family help you out?*

L: No, no! I was not permitted to have any contact with my family. The only contact was that when I became better acquainted with the other people, they were the ones who got information and they were the ones who brought the first letter from my sister, and in that letter was written that mother was diagnosed as having a cancer, incurable cancer. So I was pleading and pleading and pleading and pleading because of my mother, and the one who intercepted for me was Dr. Leuchner, so that's when we found who we all were, right? That's when they started to give me a weekend...let's see, the first weekend...Ok, that was August. September, October, November, I was out there on Christmas, it must have been in spring...It was a long time, I'd say over half a year before I was permitted to go home. I mean, you were driven in, and you could just visit at home and then you were driven out again. You had to be there.

S: *So were you always under guard?*

L: Oh yes, you had to be very careful, and that is why we were always told, "Watch out, watch out, watch out, watch out." And when we talked, I mean when Mr. Drummer had his desk here and I mine here and Graf Reutner here, we were just whispering to each other.

S: *But didn't anyone try to sabotage the Nazi's orders?*

L: Oh yes. That was Oberndorfer, who was the Commandant, and Dr. Leuchner and Mr. Drummer. And Schneck, Hermann Schneck.

S: *So what did they do?*

L: They had all kinds of confidential and secret documents about air attacks here and there-- and they never materialized, because they destroyed the papers. For example, planes should have gone off from our airport for destruction but they never took off because there was no command given. And they always wondered, "Why the hell don't we do anything, why is there no action?" So they started flying around, and there was one very snappy young lieutenant who was doing all kinds of wild flying, coming all way down and going all way up in his Messerschmidt and he never had any action (laughs).

S: *So how did you manage to get out of there?*

L: Dr. Leuchner was pleading that they should let me go home because my mother was very ill, and he was responsible for my release, so that I was home before my mother died. Two months before my mother died they released me.

* * *

And then when my mother died, I was home for some time and then I looked for another job and that is when I got the position at the car factory, Kasebor, and that is where I worked, in the office... That would have been 1941-1943...

* * *

I mean, our anger was, why should there have been a war to begin with? There was no earthly reason for any war! We didn't need more room; we had enough room. I mean, there are other small countries. So this expansion idea was the first thing that got to you. Why should we march into someone else's territory? We have nothing to do there!

S: *The White Rose was an anti-Nazi group. Most were students at the University of Munich.*

L: Well, that had to do with fighting the Nazis when the pamphlets came out from the Scholl siblings, which were brought to our city, which were distributed.

S: *Hans and Sophie Scholl and four friends were the nucleus.*

L: That happened in schools, that happened in various universities, that happened in private houses. Whoever knew about it got some.

S: *Sophie Scholl, age 22*

Hans Scholl, age 24

Willi Graf, age 25

Christoph Probst, age 24

Alexander Schmorell, age 26

Kurt Huber, age 50

The Scholls were from Ulm, so my mother knew about them (but she wasn't in the group)

L: You know, they were distributed by someone else and you found them. You found them in the street, you found them maybe somewhere in a railway station; they were just put there.

S: *In 1943, the six were caught and executed.*

L: You did not talk about that...

S: *And many others were killed in the following months.*

L: You were asked about it, but you didn't talk about it, you didn't know anything about it, you just never heard about it.

S: *They did what we would not do, she said.*

L: There were various underground organizations...

S: *Because they were willing to risk their lives, she said.*

L: I mean you didn't know, because no spoke about it.

S: *I can't remember the war stories my mother told me when I was young. But I remember looking a lot at a picture book of the Second World War.*

L: My sister-in-law, the wife of my oldest brother, came down with a very severe gall bladder operation, but we had practically no hospitals left anymore and her doctor had moved to Stuttgart, so the arrangement was made that she was going to be in that hospital. And my sister and I decided to go and visit her. My sister came with some kind of a...I mean, she just claimed she couldn't go, so I went alone. And my brother handed me the flowers and was very glad that I was going because he couldn't leave. And that is when this ghastly attack occurred in the hospital. And she was absolutely hysterical. I did not see her, because they found me out on the highway. And if anyone was hysterical, it was my brother, because he hadn't heard anything. They saw the light...the sky red in our city from those attacks. That is about ninety miles. Can you believe that? They were just coming in in wave after wave after wave. They smashed just about everything you can possibly smash. I think that attack was, for me, aside from the one on the 17th of December where we lost everything--I mean my sister and I the inheritance of the houses, when they were bombed--those two in my estimation were the most terrifying, because Stuttgart lost 3/4 of its population that night and so did we on the 17th of

December. I would not even recall anymore how many hours I had been wandering through that city. I think you have this feeling that you are losing your mind and you lost your mind. I mean, I had no idea where I was going and I didn't care at all. I was just blindly going through this burning and this mass of...of...of...I don't know how to describe it, it was pure hell. I mean ending up on a highway, with hands stretched out, this is how they found me. Somewhere, a Red Cross car picked me up. They didn't even know who I was. I couldn't tell them anything. They did everything they could until I finally came somehow out of this shock and I could say I'm from Ulm. That's how they took me back. You can't imagine the reception I got. I mean they bombarded me with questions and the nurses said, "Please, we will tell you all about it. We found her out on the street."

S: *I can't imagine it.*

L: Oh it is...it is inconceivable. It is inconceivable. Why do think I'm so violently anti-war? No! Every person who says, "No, we should fight somebody. No, we should have war.", they should go right in it and should get hit right and left, just as we were hit. And they would never again say, "We want a war." I really, truly believe...Oh, obviously you get some crazy ones who do nothing but fight, you know.

S: *So what did you do after the job in the car factory?*

L: From 1943 to 1944, I was executive secretary in a cement factory, until my sister got so terribly sick.

S: *In August 1982
I went to an army depot in rural New York
with 2500 other women
to oppose yet again
yet again another
war.*

L: I tore that out..."Tracking down the truth about the terrible secret"...[quoting from a news clipping]. "A great many people knew Nazis were systematically killing Jews. Franklin Delano Roosevelt knew and Winston Churchill knew. Stalin and the Russians knew, the Pope and the Vatican knew. The Poles, the Dutch, the Danes, and the French knew...

S: *(voiceover) They, the Americans, found out in September 1942.*

L: ...the neutral Swedes and the Swiss knew, the Germans at home knew, and the Jews who

would be victims knew." And a lot of them did not know. It's very difficult to explain. A few knew, and many, many did not know. It was the main leaders of the countries who knew, but the people did not know. And I will say this to the end of my days: We did not know that the Jews were gassed or killed. They were put into the concentration camps and that's all we knew.

S: *So you did know about the camps?*

L: We, our family, knew of only one camp and that was Dachau. And in Dachau, according to the investigations, only at the very end of the war were there killings.

S: *NO. From 1933-1945, 30,000 people were either shot, killed in medical experiments or worked to death.*

** * **

The memorial flame at the ovens.

** * **

And after I blame the Germans

OR WISH THAT MY MOTHER COULD HAVE DONE SOMETHING

ANYTHING

I ask myself what I would have done

AND WHY THE AMERICANS DIDN'T BOMB THE RAIL LINES TO THE CAMPS

They were begged to do it

** * **

(Simon Wiesenthal letter close-ups follow)

Dear Friend,

I need your help in combatting a new wave of anti-Semitism that is sweeping Europe...It is being fueled by Americans who are supplying both leadership and materials...Police raids in 2,000 German homes last year disclosed stacks of Nazi propaganda...West German police were startled to find that this hate-filled propaganda was created and printed in Lincoln, Nebraska, by the National Socialist Party of America...That group has known chapters in 33 American cities.

L: Horrible. Horrible. I felt ashamed being a German. Embarrassed. And to this day and always will, no matter what. Because I hear it, I get it from right and left. It is a persecution to the end of my life and I don't deserve it. But that's the way it is.

S: *What happened on the last day of the war?*

L: To be precise, it was a Saturday when an army truck went through the streets, when it was proclaimed that we would be shelled and that we should remain in the bunkers and that we should not come out until the army occupied the city. The shelling was absolutely ferocious and then there was total stillness. And then we heard the panzer...what is that called in English?...the tank?...the tank. And we were literally all Saturday and Sunday just in the bunkers without ever moving out. Until the gates were opened and you saw them there and you didn't know what was going to happen. And it was just a few days later when it was proclaimed that Hitler had committed suicide, that Berlin had been captured, and the war was over.

* * *

And that is when the reaction came. You sat silent and you simply cried. And you continued to cry, because there was this tremendous...I mean, you couldn't believe that there would be no more running, no more bombing...I know it took me a long time before I realized that it's really over.

* * *

But then of course came the occupation and another wave of, of terror, just because for the occupation. And I think...it was the old people, old men and...I have seen old people beaten, they were herded onto trucks and I kept thinking what if it were my father, what if it were my mother...And I could have killed them all! (cries)

* * *

Oh, how could one ever forget it? You know, it's funny Susi...No it isn't funny, but my father was such a gentle man and my mother was a good woman but sometimes she got very, very angry, and I have been spanked a couple of times, but when I think of the brutalities I had to see in my life

--that people can live and be so brutal--it's really difficult to understand.

S: *The sign says: Nuke them till they glow, then shoot them in the dark.*

* * *

But can you tell me more about the occupation?

L: Well, the interesting thing is: When the leaflets were distributed about the occupation army, we were told that it is not known yet which nationality would occupy our city. We were warned of the French because of their extreme hatred of Germans, which we could certainly understand, but we could not understand the hatred of the Americans, as we experienced it. I mean glowing hatred towards the Germans...which of course was when they came in first, right? I'm not speaking of later on, I'm speaking of the beginning.

S: *During what period?*

L: May, June '45, towards summer. And my parents house was of course still there, so we

were driven out of the house. They just came and said, "Out!" And that's when my brother took us, oh, what was that village? Grimelfingen. It was an old restaurant that took in refugees, so we went there and we did not know when we were able to come back again. And he went back (to Ulm) and he did not come back, and we were terribly scared that something had happened to him. So we were just told to wait. You could not do anything, you were just like a prisoner out there. And he came back after two weeks and said we could return. But, he said, you'll be surprised what you see. Susi, you cannot conceive the inside of our house. Every piece was smashed. Cut into, wallpaper torn off, ketchup thrown all over, every jar and every glass smashed. We had barely a window in the whole house that was not smashed. Every single room was defiled. Now this was, mind you, we had gone through the whole bombing, and this is what they did. They into a house, they got so drunk...and that is where my real...I really hated them. All I could say was, well, if they want to be liberators, then good night--they are no better than anybody else. That is all you could think. We cleaned and cleaned. It was just unreal.

S: *Then why did you work for the American Military Government during the occupation?*

L: Because when I had to look for a job again they evidently were looking at that time for secretaries and they had priority selection, so you had to go there first.

S: *Isn't that where you met dad?*

L: That's right. And that's when I finally could give my sister some support--with food and, you know, they had good food, I would take leftovers home. God, it's unbelievable. You can't imagine what it meant to see the first donut and eat the first donut. We literally cried over it. You ate every little morsel of it. It was...(laughs)...Yea, after all that you don't waste food anymore. You just don't.

S: *Sometimes she says*

One day I might swim out so far that I wouldn't make it back to shore.

L: I think that the war has very definitely changed my entire life. And sometimes I wish I could go back and be in that last year of school again, with my father still living and no war in sight. And I often think about what I would have studied and as I said, my serious interests were medicine and horticulture or botany and music. I loved to sing.

S: *At other times she says*

Having the lake near me has saved my life.

L: I have been often very sad that I could not do what I really wanted to do. And somehow

the meeting of your father was...like a straw. I thought, ah, now God is good after all, I couldn't do it then, eventually I will do it. Because I started the piano after the war. With ice cold fingers and in this old fur coat I would sit there and practice in gloves, right? And I remember very clearly talking with your father about it and saying, "Someday I can regain what I feel I have lost, because I could not go to a university and study." And he said, "Oh don't worry about it, you will be able to do this and you will be able to do that, you can play the piano and you can go and sing." Of course I had no idea just how poor we were going to be!

S: *They were married in Germany in 1950.*

L: True, I have told him I will do anything...I will do anything. As a matter of fact, I have gone as far as saying, "I want to get out of Germany and if someday you're tired of me and you don't love me anymore, well..." Of course that was always understood not if we had a family. And that was one thing which he told me when he came and said, "Here is my ring. I want a divorce and once you told me that if I don't like you anymore I can leave you." I said, "Paul, that was not meant after 15 years of marriage and what I have gone through with you! That was meant perhaps after one or two years having come to this country." Right? But of course as long as it was convenient for him to interpret it that way, that's what happened.

S: *And in the spring of 1950 they moved to America.*

L: So I hoped very, very seriously that I could also study but there was no possibility, because he didn't have the money and I went to work so that we could pay his tuition. So how in the world can you then say, "You can study too"? What I did, I audited a great deal, but that was not, I mean, I didn't get any credit for it.

S: *In 1980
(after raising three children alone)
she bought herself a piano and began to practice the scales.*

FOOTNOTES

1. Bund des Deutschen Madchen = League of German Girls.

2. Standard Southern German greeting.
3. High school final exams.