



Bericht uit Berlijn

Otto de Kat

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Voorjaar 1941. Oscar Verschuur, Nederlands diplomaat in Bern, krijgt in een onbewaakt ogenblik geheime informatie over het voornemen van Hitler om Rusland binnen te vallen. Het bericht komt uit betrouwbare bron: zijn dochter Emma, wier man in Berlijn op het ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken werkt. Oscar beschouwt hem als een goede Duitser. Hij weet dat hij dringend alarm moet slaan. Voor iemand met zijn contacten is het niet moeilijk de geallieerden te informeren over wat er te gebeuren staat, en wanneer. Maar Oscar aarzelt. Hij beseft dat zijn dochter ernstig gevaar loopt als hij de details van operatie Barbarossa onthult. Het geheim van Oscar is van een omvang die hij eigenlijk niet alleen kan dragen. Maar de enige man die hij in vertrouwen kan nemen zit in Londen - net als Oscars vrouw Kate. Na een reis door een Europa dat steeds dieper in oorlog verwickeld raakt, komt Oscar daar uiteindelijk aan. Zijn onaangekondigde bezoek heeft even onverwachte als dramatische gevolgen.

Bericht uit Berlijn Details

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Tripfiction says

Novel set in Berlin and Berne (“Welcome to the heart of Europe”)

Top secret information shared. The fall out is considerable....

It is 1941. Oscar, a Dutch diplomat, is living in Berne, his wife, Kate, is nursing at a hospital for war casualties in London. Their relationship and lives, lyrically described by the author, are “much as sparrows perching on the same clothes line: fairly content, fairly tame. Their embrace seemed to have lost its necessity and the distance between Berne and London did not make them yearn for one another“. Their daughter, Emma, is living in Berlin with her husband, ‘the good German’ Carl. War is raging.

Emma has overheard that Operation Barbarossa is scheduled for the 22nd of June – just a couple of weeks hence – the massing of German troops on the Eastern front, gearing up for an attack on Russia. The Allies are unlikely to know about this. She shares this secret information with her father, because he will know what to do. Oscar finds himself going through hoops of mental acrobatics to work out what he can – and indeed – should do with the information. Inevitably, he feels, the information once made public will immediately lead back to the source, to his daughter, and that her life will then be in danger. But what of the moral implication, that thousands of people who could be saved if the information is delivered into the right hands? ... A real turmoil for him.

Oscar mulls over his situation. Who can he tell, who will believe him? Meanwhile, he has lost his heart to Lara whom he meets up in the mountains in Switzerland, their affair initially is more of longing looks, brushed contact and walks in the snow. Meanwhile, Kate, in her capacity of nurse in London, has been tending Matteous from the Congo, and she sorts out a bedsit for him once he is has recuperated from his injuries. He is intent upon learning to write sufficiently well so that he can find his mother, who was taken away in an ambush in his home country. Kate seems to be falling for him.

This is a beautifully written and translated short book that captures the imagination. Yet it is too loosely woven to really punch home the morals with which Oscar is grappling, or link the tenuous relationships between the characters. It is unclear where the author really wants to go with the storyline and the ending is like a bit of a side show – it demonstrates that Oscar has a dark and secretive side. Ultimately the story flounders and lacks real, satisfying depth.

The locations of Berlin – Dahlem, and Berne, “the capital of sun and snow”, are well captured

Will this be a memorable book? Quite possibly it will fade over time but an enjoyable read for the here and now.

KOMET says

"NEWS FROM BERLIN", in its basic essence, is a story centered upon 4 main characters scattered across Europe in the late spring of 1941. First there is Oscar Verschuur, a Dutch diplomat posted to Switzerland, a neutral nation standing apart as one of the few oases on the war's periphery. Second: there is Oscar's daughter Emma and her husband Carl, a German she had married a few years earlier. Both work for the Foreign Ministry in Berlin, whose boss, Adam Trott, a smart, discerning and warm-hearted anti-Nazi [and

real historical figure], nurtures hopes of being able to save Germany from itself. Emma and Carl take a brief holiday to Switzerland, where Emma informs her father over lunch in a Geneva restaurant of the date of the imminent German attack on the Soviet Union. Its codename: Operation Barbarossa. Emma's reason for disclosing this explosive tidbit of information to her father is her hope that thus armed with this vital secret, he'll inform his superiors and friends in Britain with the aim of frustrating Hitler's aim for new conquests, Russian oil, and Lebensraum.

And thirdly, there is Kate, Oscar's wife, who is living in London, where she works in a local hospital helping to administer care and bolster morale among wounded Allied soldiers. Oscar and Kate living apart across frontiers I thought a little odd. But as the story unfolds, it becomes clear to the reader that a certain state of separateness suits them both.

After returning to Berlin, Emma informs Carl that she disclosed the date of Barbarossa to her father. Though greatly displeased, he kindly admonished Emma to be more circumspect in future. He appreciates her reasons for informing Oscar of the impending invasion. But there is the spectre of the Gestapo. He loves his wife so much that the prospect of her possibly ending up ensnared by the Gestapo makes him fearful for both their lives. Indeed, at one point, Emma is taken to Gestapo headquarters on Prinz Albrechtstrasse for questioning. Apparently, one of their spies noticed her whispering something to Oscar over lunch in Geneva. Emma manages to keep her cool and eludes suspicion.

Oscar is hesitant about sharing the news of Barbarossa with Morton, a friend of his in Britain with connections that go all the way up to Churchill himself. Nevertheless, he takes a nocturnal flight aboard a Swiss airliner from Lisbon to Bristol, from where he catches a train to London for a meeting with Morton. Later he surprises Kate by stopping by her flat. It is hardly an auspicious reacquaintance for husband and wife.

This novel had the potential to be a potboiler. Instead, it simmered ever so infrequently and in a few instances, it seemed that matters would become intense, that some kind of dramatic showdown would erupt. After all, if the Soviet Union could be informed in time that its ally Germany was set on attacking her in less than 2 weeks, perhaps Stalin would change sides and deliver Germany a jarring rebuff. So, while "News from Berlin" was interesting to read, there was no sustainable dramatic tension which could have made it much better than it was.

Kelsey says

This book is simply lovely. There is no other word that comes to mind for me to properly describe this work of art, so forgive me if I sound jumbled but... this book has thoroughly put me on edge, yet made me very happy to have picked it up on a chance that I enjoyed one single page whilst browsing through a bookstore.

I'm going to keep this review short & sweet for the simple fact that this book cannot be properly described, one must simply read it. It is under 200 pages so this should not be difficult. In these 200 pages, Otto de Kat takes us on a poignant journey between a Dutch family that has been separated by this terrible war. He has managed to connect them together so beautifully, exploring the most human emotions that one must feel during uncertain times. He explores the burden of carrying secrets and sharing them with those you are closest too, the utter consequence of keeping those secrets for fear of sacrificing the safety and security of those you love.

It is truly a 200 page epic, and I recommend that anyone interested in WW2, or those who are interested in character studies of such emotional proportions pick this up. I thoroughly enjoyed it, and Otto de Kat has a

wonderful way of engulfing you into a story, and charming you with few sentences.

Annelies says

Mooi, die ingehouden communicatie, die ingehouden spanning. Ik waardeer zijn schrijfstijl.

Fredr says

The ebb and flow of the characters lives was beautiful and tragic and how everything was wrapped inside a war and events that were approaching in the war. The descriptions of the mountains of Switzerland and the London and Berlin neighborhoods when all there is madness around kept your mind wandering. The loss in each of the characters in their own world were heart wrenching.

Myriam says

‘Bericht uit Berlijn’ is een oorlogsroman, want hij speelt zich af in 1941 aan de vooravond van Operatie Barbarossa waar de hoofdpersoon, de diplomaat Oscar Verschuur, weet van krijgt door zijn dochter Emma die met een Duitse ambtenaar getrouwd is. Maar hoe cruciaal dit gegeven ook is, het is bijna een fait-divers, de oorlog lijkt niet meer dan een reeks krantenkoppen in het bestaan van Oscar die veilig in Bern zit. ‘Die Nation’, extra editie. ‘Bismarck vernietigd’ stond er in kapitalen over de hele voorpagina en, beneden de vouw, veel kleiner: ‘Kreta bijna zeker verloren.’ Berichten van het front, opgeschreven door een journalist, door loodzetters leesbaar gemaakt, door jongens rondgebracht, en zo achtergelaten op een tafeltje met wit linnen erover, naast een glas wijn, op een zomerse avond. Zulke teksten zwermde de wereld over, en werden gelezen zonder dat iemand ze werkelijk kon doorgronden. Een krantekop van lege letters, bloedeloos en hol: Bismarck vernietigd, Kreta vrijwel zeker verloren. Oscar las de krant, hij wist wat daar geschreven stond, maar doel treffen deed het niet.’

En dan krijgt Oscar een geheim voorgeschoteld, zo groot dat hij de loop van de geschiedenis zou kunnen wijzigen, ware het niet dat hij voor de veiligheid van zijn dochter vreest.

Meer dan een oorlogsroman is ‘Bericht uit Berlijn’ dan ook een liefdesroman, een stille en ingetogen mijmering over datgene wat altijd de keuzes van de mens bepaalt en beïnvloedt: het kind, de beschermeling, de (eerste) grote liefde... In het huwelijk van Oscar en Kate is niet veel te beleven: ‘Hun levens zaten dicht tegen elkaar aan, als mussen op een drooglijn, tamelijk tevreden, tamelijk tam. (...) aan de randen was het eenzaam, ze leken allebei min of meer ontheemd of ontstegen aan elkaar.’ Beiden worden tijdens de korte crisisperiode geconfronteerd met deze eenzaamheid en met de diepe geheimen van hun leven. Oscar wordt verliefd op een andere vrouw, in de zorg voor een jong oorlogsslachtoffer herbeleeft Kate haar eerste en enige grote liefde. ‘Het was alsof er onwaarschijnlijk ver weg in haar van alles werd uitgepakt, raadselachtige enveloppen werden opengescheurd, een gevoel alsof er diep in haar gebladerd werd in papieren die daar opgeborgen lagen.’

Oscar moet een keuze maken: zijn oversten inlichten over de ophanden zijnde Operatie Barbarossa of niet. Zijn keuze zal alle onderlinge relaties veranderen.

‘Bericht uit Berlijn’ komt langzaam op gang, het ‘pakt’ niet meteen – het is een beetje ontheemd, zoals de personages. ‘Huis? Oscar hoorde het woord, maar er kwam geen klank in.’

Wanneer de klank in het verhaal komt is het een bitterzoete, vol vergeefsheid. Een zachte, diepe toon die lang blijft nazinderen.

Ronan McDonnell says

A poignant story of an unusual historical perspective - the non-combatant diplomats in Europe during the second world war. It's a story of disintegration of bonds, and how yet they remain; how we look at responsibility from looking after those around us to a wider view, and how that in turn holds those closest to us; it's a floating story about the search for belonging and being needed. It's many things, but all done quietly and tactfully, but with a soft directness. So very Dutch!

Nettie says

A lovely book. A quick read that I wished it had continued for at least another 100 pages. The characters were interesting and the descriptions of the settings made you want to be there. It left me wondering what happened to the four main characters. If you enjoy WWII novels then this is one that you'll want to read.

Maria Beltrami says

Set between Berlin and Bern in the tense days before the opening of the Russian front by Hitler, News from Berlin is above all a love story, or rather, the story of more loves, united and divided by war, fear and cowardice. The book is very interesting, and some of the characters are very well defined, the atmosphere of fear and suspicion that poison their relationship is almost palpable.

Some points, however, are not solved, and some of the reasons of Oscar, what should be the main character through whose moves are clarified those of all the other, very unclear.

Thank MacLehose Press and Netgalley for giving me a free copy in exchange for an honest review.

Ambientato tra Berlino e Berna nei concitati giorni precedenti l'apertura del fronte russo da parte di Hitler, News from Berlin è soprattutto una storia d'amore, o meglio, di più amori, uniti e divisi dalla guerra, dalla paura e dalla codardia. Il libro è molto interessante, e alcuni dei personaggi sono molto ben delineati, l'atmosfera di paura e di sospetto che avvelena i loro rapporti è quasi palpabile.

Alcuni punti però non sono risolti, e alcune delle motivazioni di Oscar, quello che dovrebbe essere il personaggio principale attraverso le cui mosse si chiariscono quelle di tutti gli altri, decisamente poco chiare. Ringrazio MacLehose Press e Netgalley per avermi fornito una copia gratuita in cambio di una recensione onesta.

The Bookies Bookstore says

"Oscar, a Dutch diplomat in neutral Switzerland, has come to know when a German attack will come. What should do do with the information? A WWII moral dilemma. A very fine book." Bookie Dona

Sabrina Kammer says

2. Weltkrieg im Jahre 1941. Oscar Verschuur, der in dieser Zeit in Bern stationiert ist, erhält geheime Informationen bezüglich Hitlers Plänen gegen Russland. Die Quelle ist verlässlich, denn seine eigene Tochter Emma ist mit einem Deutschen verheiratet, der im Ausenministerium arbeitet. Oscar weiss, dass er diese Nachricht an die Alliierten weitergeben muss. Aber er weiss auch, dass sein Treffen mit Emma nicht geheim geblieben ist. Er muss sich entscheiden, ob ihm seine Familie wichtiger ist, als die Information.

Das Buch hat mich sofort angesprochen, als ich den Klappentext gelesen habe. Ich bin seit längerer Zeit sehr interessiert an Büchern, die während des 2. Weltkrieges spielen. Zudem komme ich aus der Schweiz und ein Teil des Buches spielt auch hier. Dies hat mich doppelt neugierig gemacht.

Die Geschichte finde ich generell sehr interessant. Es sind verschiedene Aspekte, denen man in diesem Buch begegnet. Nicht alles ist offensichtlich, es gibt auch viele Botschaften, über die man auch noch nachdenkt, wenn man das Buch zuschlägt.

Als Leser wird einem vor Augen geführt, welche Konflikte die Menschen während der Kriegszeit mit sich selbst austragen mussten. Jede Handlung hätte Konsequenzen haben können, nicht nur für einen selbst, sondern auch für die Familie. Mit dieser Angst muss Oscar versuchen umzugehen und einen Weg finden, wie er mit dem Gehörten leben soll.

Doch es gibt noch ein paar andere Aspekte in dem Buch, die einem sehr zum Nachdenken anregen. Ich möchte hier nicht verraten Welche, da ich sonst zu viel verrate. Auf jeden Fall gibt das Buch dem Leser viele neue Eindrücke mit auf den Weg.

Ich bleibe aber nach wie vor unschlüssig zurück, was das Ende angeht und auch ein wenig bezüglich der Beziehung von Oscar und seiner Tochter. Das war mir dann doch zu schmal und zu kurz geschildert.

Der Schreibstil des Autoren fand ich gut, auch wenn ich mich zuerst daran gewöhnen musste. Er ist sehr speziell, aber durchaus erfrischend.

Generell muss ich zu 'Eine Tochter in Berlin' sagen, dass dieses Buch - meiner persönlichen Meinung nach - zu den etwas Anspruchsvolleren gehört. Das sollte man sich vor Augen halten, wenn man sich für dieses Buch entscheidet.

Passend zur Zeit ist auch das Cover. Das gefällt mir gut, da hat sich der Verlag etwas dabei überlegt.

Fazit

Da es ein oder zwei Schwachpunkte hatte, die mich noch immer gespalten zurücklassen, bekommt das Buch von mir 4 Sterne.

Lisa says

I love it when a book that's on my wishlist waves at me from the new books shelves at the library! There it was, News from Berlin which Grant at 1st Reading had so enticingly reviewed, so of course I brought it home. And read it straight away because it's only just over 200 pages long and I couldn't put it down. Otto de Kat is the pen name of Dutch author, publisher, critic and poet Jan Geurt Gaarlandt. The book jacket tells me that his award-winning novels have been widely published throughout Europe and Man on the Move (2009) was the winner of Holland's Halebijn Literature Prize. News from Berlin is translated by Ina Rilke who also translated two books by noted Dutch author Hella Haase that I have read, so I knew the translation would be good.

And it is. The translation is excellent. News from Berlin is a sophisticated psychological thriller, exploring the moral choices that arise during war. In June 1941 Dutch diplomat Oscar Verschuur is in neutral

Switzerland engaged in a number of covert activities including assistance to refugees. The Nazis (who seem to be welcome in 'neutral' Switzerland) are keeping a close eye on him of course, and he has to be careful because his daughter Emma in Berlin is married to a German called Carl who is also engaged in activities under the radar, and his wife Kate is in London (where she is absorbed in the care of an injured Congolese soldier caught up in Belgium's support for the allied cause against the Nazis in Africa). Right at this time Oscar has also met, and seems to have fallen for, a very gorgeous but enigmatic woman called Lara who might, or might not, be someone to be wary of. And all these characters are in a state of flux, not only stateless, but also at risk of the war reaching them even when theoretically safe in neutral countries like Switzerland and Portugal.

To read the rest of my review please visit <https://anzlitlovers.com/2018/08/08/n...>

Erin says

Find this and other reviews at: <http://historicalfictionreader.blogspot...>

I've multiple confessions to make and I hope you don't mind, but I want to start by getting them off my chest. First off, I've had an ARC of Otto de Kat's *News From Berlin* on my kindle since July 2015. I'd been intrigued by the premise, but wasn't actually inspired to pick it up until I found myself looking to rebound from a disappointing run-in with Kelly Durham's *Berlin Calling* last December. I also imagine the title as spoken by Jim Carrey impersonating Walter Cronkite in *Bruce Almighty* every time I see it, but that last admission seems far less damning than the other two. I wish I could say this is the first time I'd sat an ARC so long, but it'd be a blatant lie and as to rebounding, well, let's just be happy we're talking books rather than relationships.

I think it safe to assume that if you're still with me at this point you want to know how I actually felt about the book. I won't assume you've forgiven my transgressions, but when push comes to shove it's not how you came to a novel that matters, it's how it made feel about the content and in that regard, I think *News From Berlin* has a lot in common with *The Wherewithal*. There is a loose parallel in terms of time periods, but the similarities I refer to have more to do with the open-ended thoughts the narratives leave in their respective wakes. The conclusions feel right, but both books inspire lingering questions about the ideas and themes expressed between their pages.

A working knowledge of Operation Barbarossa is not required to follow the historic events of the narrative, but a basic familiarity with the invasion affords greater insight to the significance of the information that falls into Verschuur's possession. I didn't feel the cast of particular note, but it should be mentioned that *News From Berlin* wasn't written as and doesn't pretend to be character-driven fiction. The author is deeply invested in the political and emotional themes of the story and that is where his work truly shines.

Cedric says

Thin story, thin plot. The point, if any, is how keeping secrets corrupt personal ethics. It's actually a novella of characters framed around a seemingly thriller device, but the latter is actually irrelevant to an uninteresting account of a bunch of middle class people.

Greta says

Dutch author "Otto De Kat" (nom de plume) tells an interesting story of a small family of three Dutch who have scattered in different directions during WWII. Dad is secretly helping refugees in Switzerland as a diplomat. Mom is helping the wounded in a London hospital. Daughter is living in Berlin with her anti-Nazi German husband. The news from Berlin affects them all and others in very personal ways. I look forward to reading more of Jan Geurt Gaarlandt writing as "Otto De Kat".
