

ES/SS 445 Fall 2005

**Isak Dinesen (Karen Blixen), "Letters from a Land at War"
(written 1940; published 1948)**

This essay provides a "distanced" perspective on Nazism and Hitler's Germany; it is written by a cautious visitor from the North in March 1940, a writer who attempted to maintain a "neutral" stance toward to the political developments of the times. It is one of a number of Scandinavian texts which attempts to "explain" Nazism as a "phenomenon."

Please prepare to discuss at least four of following questions in class on Monday, Oct. 10:

1) "Foreword": What is the narrative perspective or stance in the text? (To whom does the author seem to be addressing her remarks)

2) "An Old Hero in Bremen": What is the purpose of this section dealing with General von Lettow and old "Imperial Germany"? What are Blixen's ideas/ideals concerning the warrior/hunter/enemy??

3) "Great Undertakings in Berlin": How does Blixen define or "explain" Nazism? She makes many analogies and comparisons to other "phenomena". To whom and what does she compare Nazism? Is she satirizing or condemning the National Socialists?

4) In relation to the above question, find a two passages which support your point and be prepared to read them aloud to your group.

5) "Strength and Joy": What is the main idea this chronicle? What are the author's views on art in the context of Nazist propaganda?

6) Conclusion (last two pages): How would you describe the perspective on WWII expressed in the conclusion of this text?

Learn more about Karen Blixen, on the website <http://www.karen-blixen.dk/engelsk/default.html>. On Monday we will begin studying Occupation and Resistance in Denmark, check out the website: <http://www.milhist.dk/start/inwwii.html>.