**Mini-Lesson: Dialogue use in a memoir**

**Excerpt from *Unlikely Warrior: A Jewish Soldier in Hitler’s Army* by Georg Rauch**

**p. 3-5**

I shined my boots to a mirror finish and polished my belt buckle.  Then I rubbed gasoline on a tiny grease spot I had noticed on my uniform jacket.  I was nervous.  The other soldiers in the room had no idea of what I intended, why I was making such a fuss over my appearance when we were only schedule to attend rifle practice on the shooting range.

My heart thumping faster than usual, I left the barracks at five minutes before nine and marched across the enormous exercise grounds toward one of the administration buildings.  The November fog hung in the leafless chestnut trees; a bell in one of the neighboring churches began to toll the hour.

I had an appointment with the division commander, Oberstleutnant [Lieutenant Colonel] Poppinger, a man distinguished by his red nose swollen from French cognac and the gleaming Iron Cross that always hung around his fat neck.  Considering what a tiny cog I represented in the gears of the huge German military machine, my request to see Poppinger was somewhat similar to demanding an audience with God himself.

At 9:00 a.m. on November 10, 1943, I stood in front of Poppinger’s desk, facing both him and the large portrait of Adolf Hitler that hung on the wall at his back.  My boot heels clicked smartly together, my right hand snapped a lightning salute to the edge of my cap, and, in the overloud voice decreed by the German army, I yelled at Poppinger, “Funker [Telegraphist] Rauch reporting, sir!”

“At ease.  And what does he have on his mind?” Poppinger lounged behind his desk, regarding me with an expression that could almost be described as benevolent.

Thereupon I bellowed the sentence that I had been framing in my mind for weeks.  “Funker Rauch wishes to be permitted to report that he cannot be an officer in the German Wehrmacht [Army].”

With an astonished, almost idiotic expression on his face, the lieutenant colonel sputtered, “Are you crazy?  Did I hear you correctly?”

“*Jawohl [Affirmative], Herr Oberstleutnant!*”

Poppinger, who was almost a head taller than I, stood up.  His face was becoming crimson.  He came around the desk to stand directly in front of me and snarled, “We decide who will be an officer in the German Wehrmacht.  Whoever refuses to serve his fatherland as an officer, once we have deemed him acceptable, is a traitor.”

Turning toward the door where the orderly was standing, he said, as though seeking support, “The man isn’t in his right mind.  Denial of his abilities to serve his country as an officer - that’s high treason!”

By this time, his voice had risen almost to a screech.  With a visible attempt to regain control of himself, he returned to his chair, sat down, took a drink of water, and continued in a more factual tone, “I demand an explanation.”

Again I clicked my heels together.  As though charged by an electric shock, I pressed my hands flat against my thighs and shouted once again, “I don’t feel able to become an officer in the German army because I have Jewish blood.”

Poppinger sprang up, his face almost purple, and blurted out, “What did he say?”

“I have a Jewish grandmother.”

“*Mensch [Man]*, how did you get here in the first place?  Jewish grandmother!  You must be completely mad.” He motioned the orderly to his side and, after a few whispered sentences, turned again to me and said simply, “Dismissed.” The orderly took me to his office, where I explained in a considerably calmer atmosphere that I had included the fact of my having a Jewish ancestor in the personal data I had submitted when I was drafted.  He dismissed me then, and I returned to my barracks.

When I reentered my room, it was empty.  The bunk beds were all perfectly spread.  The straw mattresses had been shaken; on each bed two gray blankets were folded as though with a measuring tape and carefully laid over the rough, tightly stretched sheets, and all pillows were positioned in exactly the correct spot at the exact specified angle.  The smell of Lysol was pervasive.

I had no idea what would happen next as a result of my interview with Poppinger; nonetheless, I felt relieved.  I climbed up to my bunk and stretched out, deciding to enjoy the unexpected bonus of a few free hours to myself until the rest of my bunkmates returned from exercises.