

Falk Richter

Seven Seconds / In God We Trust

translated by Dr. Marlene J. Norst

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Voices: 6-8 male and female voices

Actors seated at a table behind microphones as if at a press conference. They speak directly to the audience.

(To be spoken quickly, with emotional intensity and constantly changing tones of voice. The tone of the propagandistic TV programs must be copied exactly even exaggerated but now and again there are quite matter of fact tones)

- a direct hit

- a crash

- an explosion

- loud very very loud

We hear a hit, an explosion, very very loud, lasting seven seconds

- stop

A tape recorder is stopped and rewound, we hear the direct hit in the quick rewind also the text being rewound back to " a direct hit".

- a direct hit

- a crash

- an explosion

- something's caught fire just seven seconds after the last computer check

- and according to that everything was OK

- I don't get it. What's wrong?

- I'm on fire

- I'm beginning to spin

- he's looking out of the window

- the runway, is that the runway?

- he's somewhere or other

- 10, 000 metres above sea level
- above the arctic sea
- the desert
- the ocean?
- the desert
- caves, weren't it caves? but of course, desert caves ten thousand metres above the desert. When he looks down he can see nothing, nothing, absolutely nothing
- what country, what country is this? I've only got the co-ordinates
- a couple of coloured dots on my computer screen, looks like that new computer game: Sega Megasearch2: Behind Enemy Lines
- there's no runway ten thousand metres above sea level or the desert of course there's no runway
- of course there isn't
- there's nothing, absolutely nothing, nothing, everything's dark
- caves deserts ice dust a bit of dust, do any people actually live there? do we know them, these extra-terrestrial beings who bury themselves in their caves. What do they think when they see our pilots in the sky?
- they can't see us, they can only hear us
- I've got such a funny feeling that, perhaps, we shouldn't really be here
- because we don't belong here
- at this height, in this place, at this point of time. Just such a funny feeling
- that noise fuck something's wrong fuck fucking Jesus Christ something is wrong
- is it the motor? is it the engine? There's no radio contact to base, something's wrong with his machine, it sounds so fuck somehow fuck fuck fuck shit wrong

something's wrong

- he's looking out of the window

- he's looking at the monitor

- nothing nothing nothing

- fuck shit help

- and he's got no idea where he is here

- behind enemy lines

- this is where those cave people live and they don't believe in our God

- they only believe in some other God, not in ours, and they threaten our way of life, they don't want our way of life, they live in caves and hate us

- suddenly there's a direct hit

- a crash

- an explosion

- loud very very loud

- Stop

(break)

- he's thinking about his children at home

- Illinois Colorado Texas

- Amy Paul and Bill

- together in the suburban house what an idyllic scene the garden hose the little plastic duck and Penny the dog

- Amy's on the swing and his wife Marge just tearing open a bag of donuts and tipping them out on the table

- the table beside the little fishpond with the tadpoles that Bill's so fond of because he finds them so cute and is breeding them under the direction of their Biology teacher Mr. Jones as part of Roosevelt High School's Home-study Bio-project together with his friends Dick and George and Jeff from the Boy Scouts he's studying these cute tadpoles under the microscope and dissecting them
- Close-up of the tadpole which little Dick is gleefully disembowelling and dissecting
- Close-up of the plane's computer showing only a couple of glowing dots and the command "launch missile now"
- Close-up of Marge biting into a chocolate donut complete with chocolate icing cream filling and cherry in the garden beside the flag near the pond she is thinking about her husband: "Where's he now, I wonder, what's he doing now?"
- Brad is looking at his monitor
- something's wrong
- why's this computer saying "launch missile now" when I want to land?
- that's a funny noise
- alone up here alone
- suddenly a direct hit a crash an explosion. What was that? bloody hell, what was that? I haven't touched a thing
- but the computer is on automatic
- if the pilot doesn't react, the computer switches to autopilot and the explosive is launched automatically
- something or other's exploding something or other ten thousand meters below him
- he's looking out of the window: No idea what that was, but whatever it was, it doesn't exist any more
- Screams? Does he hear screams?

- no just faintly the sound of a detonation mixed with the sound of his own machine faintly quite faintly and he sees nothing

- night deep black night dark nothing absolutely nothing

(The US National anthem in Country and Western style played on a guitar)

- Amy Paul Bill and Marge are sitting in the sun it's a beautiful day

- a very very beautiful day a bit hot but pleasant because they're sitting in the shade and eating donuts,

- Donuts from the Dunkin Donut Drive Thru next to the Walmart Store, right next door to the McDonalds in the Drive Thru Mall beside the freeway off-ramp at the edge of the desert

- their dear little home for which they saved long and hard and built themselves with the help of their parents, their friends, the rest of the extended family which in such situations still sticks together and not only at Christmas time

- not only at Christmas time

- the freeway off-ramp at the edge of the desert where there's nothing absolutely nothing

- what was that? damn fuck shit? what was that I just hit? You can't make out a fucking thing, that could be anything at all down there, could I be flying in the wrong direction? is what's below here the right country?

- or could he be flying over the wrong desert?

- could he perhaps be approaching Amy Bill Paul and Marge?

- who are eating donuts thinking of Papa and know nothing about what's happening outside their small world in distant lands, nothing, absolutely nothing?

- they know that Papa's gone hunting

- evil people

- evil people we don't know

- but apart from that they don't know much
- fuck where am I?
- that damn engine noise, what is it ? there must be something wrong , damn shit fuck, something or other has gone wrong
- and what the monitor's showing now makes no fucking sense at all
- is he saying "fuck" ?
- "is he saying fuck?"
- yes, I mean isn't he saying "Jesus help me" or "Lord, be with me" I mean well I'm just thinking, yes I'm just simply thinking, Brad wouldn't say "fuck", after all Brad knows that God isn't pleased when we use bad words
- exactly, if we've got to chase bad people then we shouldn't be using bad words as well while doing so
- exactly because God's got to catch on that we're one of the goodies and that's why we mustn't use bad words or God might possibly think we're actually one of the baddies and then fuck damn shit this damn plane might even crash in this shit polar desert
- cave
- desert cave no ice
- in this desert cave because then God wouldn't send his good angels to guide the plane safely back on their angel wings and you'd crash without catching that one bad man everyone's looking for
- that one bad guy with the atom bomb in his hand
- the little anthrax envelope
- the test tube with uranium that he'll immediately throw into the air conditioning system of some Underground train in New York Seattle or LA
- exactly we show this one bad guy running through New York sweat on his brow crazy look the Koran in his hand singing singing these weird arabic litanies or

whatever they sing no idea running through the crowds thinking “ I’ll kill all of you fuckers” hating all and sundry godless totally godless looking for the best place to insert the little anthrax envelope into the air conditioning system of the World Trade Center the World Bank the Pentagon the White House the President’s Ranch right now

- *interrupts* while Brad in his plane is speaking to God and God gives him the right instructions for dropping his Daisy Cutters so as to prevent, other crazies from surfacing from their desert caves and causing unrest and he says “help me Jesus, help me Jesus, I must liberate the world from all the evil that exists out there, it’s a bad world out there don’t forget there is an evil world out there”

- he’s got to get him that crazy guy who can’t be found who changes his location all the time together with his whole network that seeks to destroy us because it hates us, because it hates our civilisation which is why we must send out all our fighter bombers to catch him , him and his whole network that grows day by day and becomes bigger and bigger and more dangerous until he and it are eventually well what exactly?

- destroyed

- but there’s practically nothing left of that world outside our world, thinks Brad, and gradually I’m beginning to lose oversight over all those strikes there keep being more and more strikes and not less and we’ve already been flying for decades now with God by our side in order to liberate the world from evil and still this one character can’t be found, no sooner have we flattened one country than he reappears somewhere else and everything starts all over again

- our aim is to create black dead level tracts of land, our aim is to ensure that there’s no world except our world

- except the small peaceful beautiful world of Amy Paul and Bill and Marge who lie in the sun and eat donuts and as we speak are slowly beginning to drag the television set into the garden because in a minute there’s going to be one of those really educational programs that show you how it’s best to enclose everything important in plastic, food of course but also important documents or memorabilia, photos of days gone by, yes they even show you how to make one of these terrific plastic laminators yourself.

- in the sun at the edge of the desert beside the highway

- that links them to the next reasonably sized town where every Sunday after church, because of course they don’t shy away from the two hour drive either that it takes to appear punctually in the church every Sunday in order to heck

how do I know whether this family's really interesting? This stupid family with its tadpoles and its TV? Are we interested in them? Are we really interested in what this guy is thinking just before he crashes?

- does he crash?

- he can't find the landing strip

- and the family?

- he's going to die soon anyway and this family, that says its prayer every morning and raises the flag in the garden and sings the National Anthem beside the fishpond with the tadpoles right there where they've put a picture of Daddy in his aircraft-carrier so that none of them will ever forget him, so that they'll always think of him, because Bill and Paul are in the boy scouts and of course want to be pilots on an aircraft carrier too like their father George and their Uncle Franklin and their Grandfather Vernon and his father too they were all aircraft pilots a whole army of aircraft pilots this family all of whom were born somewhere in the desert of Colorado or Utah or Texas and when they meet at Christmas or Thanksgiving they exchange technical and strategic details sit around a camp- fire sing boy-scout songs all of them in their uniforms and talk about the President about weapons God and camping in the open air about the military band reunion on the aircraft carrier and about flying over caves and that the world is evil and that we must defend ourselves because we must protect our womenfolk and free the pathways of the world for God money and our conception of democracy

- A detonation

- Close-up: Marge running panic-stricken through the supermarket a hectic fear in her face, the masking tape, I've got to rush and get that roll of masking tape, I just hope that the masking tape isn't sold out again, I've got to cover up the windows, God, my children, my children, we'll all starve, she stuffs everything she can lay her hands on into the shopping trolley.

- they'll attack us

- they'll attack us

- O God

- Great God protect us

- a warning has been issued

- it's been shown on all the monitors in the Homeland for some minutes, all programs were interrupted: Something's going to happen, nobody knows what but it's dangerous, it's going to be dangerous, the public has been asked to buy all the supplies they can fit into their shopping trolley, to black-out their windows and not to leave their houses any more

- the supermarkets are sold out emptied

- the streets are swept empty

- Amy, Bill and Marge sit in the garden, fear, fear is in their faces, reconnaissance planes circling around in the sky, it could happen at any moment in any place in the land

- a poison gas attack in the underground

- a hijacked plane

- a harmless suitcase explodes on the carousel

- a shopping mall is blown sky high

- a lorry filled with explosives races into a hotel lobby

- a petrol station next to a factory building explodes

- the Minister for External Affairs says: tapes have been found that definitely prove that

- videos have been found that definitely prove that

- things are getting dangerous, we don't know exactly when and where, we only know that it will happen and could affect any one of us, any one at all, we're all in the greatest danger

- God be with us

- we must defend ourselves

- we must get them, before they get us

- we are in danger
- Let's pray for peace and meanwhile we kick their ass
- I'm not going to leave this house again, Brad, till you have put things right, she thinks and looks towards the east, finish them off, finish them off for good and all, so that we can live in peace, we haven't done anything to anyone, we only want to enjoy a bit of happiness on earth in peace, that's all, and she continues to look towards the east because she knows, somewhere on the horizon, somewhere far away from here, there he is, her husband and he's floating somewhere in the air and he's fighting somewhere there in the air for her, the children and
- he's lost his direction
- his computer's gone crazy
- Brad is one of those characters who bomb weddings or embassies of friendly countries, simply because they've pressed the wrong key
- we all know how easily that can happen. The computer develops a life of its own, it just does what it likes
- a direct hit a crash an explosion
- a hospital
- a direct hit a crash an explosion
- a kindergarten
- a direct hit a crash an explosion
- the Red Cross camp
- there are people screaming, are there people screaming?
- he can hear something
- are those screams? Are they still alive?
- no he doesn't hear anything up there

- and he doesn't see it either, nobody sees it
- there are no pictures that show what Brad is doing he's pressing a key that's all we don't see anything he doesn't see it nobody in the homeland sees it nobody sees these pictures these pictures remain invisible
- doesn't he hear any screams?
- they don't scream they're dead straightaway
- no they burn slowly seven seconds screaming then silence
- he sees a message on his monitor: mission completed and turns
- back to base
- a detonation

suddenly a sharp cut : fanfare, Hollywood-type film music, a voice like a film advertisement

- IN GOD WE TRUST
- Marge puts on the TV
- Her favourite series
- every Tuesday: Report from the Front
- direct from the aircraft carrier IN GOD WE TRUST
- that's the name of this aircraft carrier "IN GOD WE TRUST" and that's what's boldly written in bold letters on the sides of the giant tanker that carries 2000 men and women "IN GOD WE TRUST" and there these 2000 men and women wait in their small bunks for action
- IN GOD WE TRUST
- these pilots are stars everyone in the homeland knows them
- we see them running along the deck

- we see them gearing up their machines to go full throttle
- we know them well, we love them, they're protecting us, they're risking their lives for us
- everything has to be perfect
- IN GOD WE TRUST isn't just a name, it's a way of life
- they are mobile
- they can be mobilised at any time anywhere in the world in a few hours
- if there's an emergency anywhere in the world, we're ready
- everything's so incredibly tense and exciting, all these men, who know exactly what's what with their big highly-trained bodies waiting somewhere or other on a secret shore of some ocean on this earth, who never ever make a mistake, Marge thought Emergency Room was fantastic but these men here are even better, after all they're risking their lives every single day for our well-being
- for our lives
- for our beliefs
- IN GOD WE TRUST
- this show here really beats everything, for one thing because it's true, because it's live, because it's somehow real and because we could really all die any second
- this aircraft carrier is a small floating village complete with cinema church shopping mall fitnesscentre and all the rest of it, Burger King, MacDonalds, Wendys, Pizza Hut, Starbucks, Nike-Town and Diesel and of course Dunkin Donuts everything in miniature, so that it can be fitted below deck and five runways and an amusement park, there are more human beings living on an aircraft carrier like that than in Bill and Marge's village near the freeway off-ramp

- they're singing the national anthem
- they're raising the flag singing the national anthem saying the prayer in unison thanking God that they are fighting on the right side, not on the wrong side
- thank You
- thank You
- thank You
- and then they polish their aeroplanes
- you've got to be so careful that you don't make a mistake I mean if you just leave a rag lying around on the air strip it can be a matter of life and death: where's that rag, where in Heaven's name is that ruddy rag.
- and Lucy has a part in the show too, her husband is on a different aircraft carrier on active duty somewhere in another war and her child is waiting at home alone and watching in turn the program about Mum's tanker on Tuesday and Dad's tanker on Wednesday
- war there's war all over the world we're in action all the time
- these hot spots never give us any peace, as soon as we have fixed one another one flares up it's all so tense and exciting, it's really fantastic
- we must free the world from all the evil doers and freedom haters in the world
- united we stand
- in God we trust
- then they do their exercises
- in the Work-Out-Room after breakfast
- sit-ups
- each of them does three hundred

- and that's all monitored to make sure they're doing the exercises correctly
- sit-ups push-ups and then those crunches to the side or whatever they're called
- well they all look pretty snappy
- all of them could easily play the main part in a porno-film no worries
- which of course
- but naturally
- they would never do
- because they believe in God
- yes that's the joke these characters really do believe in God
- and the President
- and that God has personally appointed the President
- like the Pope
- or Tutankhamen or someone like that
- exactly they believe that God chooses the President, that's what they were told and that's what they believe
- after doing sport they then all go together to the TV-room which is about as big as three churches, pray together once more and look at the approximately 250 monitors where their President is giving a speech
- he says threat fear shock danger self-defence
- Terror
- Terror

- Terror
- Terror
- Terror
- Terror
- Terror
- fear
- threat danger evil people
- Terror
- Terror
- we must defend our country from
- Terror
- they're silently gobbling up their high-tech nutrition and watching the President's lips spell-bound
- his father was already President
- and his father before him was also President
- and his son will most probably soon be President and his brother is the Minister for External Affairs and his sister advises him in matters of security
- exactly even though the people vote for their presidents in huge exciting TV shows where everything is very colourful and tense with neck to neck races TV duells and photo-finishes the candidates still all belong to the same family - to the same clan
- the votes are counted according to some strange system that nobody understands
- with strange voting cards that go through strange counting machines that nobody really quite understands

- and the public office always belongs to the same family the same clan
- it's strange one always has the feeling that nobody has voted for them yet these vote-counting-machines always spit out the same results
- you simply can't get rid of this clan no matter how you vote they just stay in office
- power intrigue, war blood
- Terror
- now they're all repeating in unison
- 2000 men and women sitting together in a huge TV hall as big as three churches are repeating what the President is proclaiming
- Terror
- Terror
- Terror
- Terror
- Terror
- they have to remember this word, this word is important
- Terror
- we must fight
- Terror
- we must defend
- our way of living

- whatever that may be, we can't exactly say, but that doesn't matter

- a direct hit

- a crash

- an explosion

- loud very very loud

We hear a detonation

- sometimes I dream that everything's different, that everything isn't like this, that everything's different

- different how?

- I don't know: Brad would be here with me and

- she's forgotten

-she's forgotten the time, what it was like before this war broke out

- it broke out some time or other and

- and

- there was a time before that a time, that was different

- this war's been going on for a long time

- and the coalitions are changing on a daily basis

- whoever was still our friend yesterday can already be our enemy today

- I cannot comprehend that

- don't trust anybody longer than ten minutes and don't trust anybody who speaks a different language from you

- we see pictures in which our President is sitting beside

presidents of other lands in a friendly fashion

- they're discussing some kinds of treaties and laughing into the camera

- a little while later they attack us

- or we attack them?

- and then again people repeatedly appear of whom nobody has ever heard and

- a detonation

- and now Wagner or Strauss

- a plane takes off

- go

- three seconds and it's flying through the night like the Sword of Vengeance

- take off

-the next one

- every three seconds now

- go

- every three seconds a new plane takes off

- in the clear starry heavens above there's a squadron over the sea now like a flock of swift proud birds flying into battle for our country

- for our freedom

- for our way of life

- two thousand of these birds are flying proudly through the night

- that's a beautiful sight there's a beauty in their

strength their precision

- I'm not pro-war or anything like that, I reckon everybody has the right to live life as they see fit and I reckon everybody ought to have the right to be happy, my motto is: don't encroach on my space and I won't encroach on yours
- That's why he loves this job: flying over foreign countries at night, alone in the plane, a comforting sound, you've got a lot of time to yourself, I used to be in an office working with a fucking bunch of back-stabbers and all that shit wasn't my thing
- sometimes they watch videos
- of the countries they're flying against
- whose names they can't really pronounce
- these dictators nobody can be expected to remember their names, anyway they all sound the same
- this is the 15th mission he is flying
- he is 32 years old
- not the youngest any more
- been at it for quite a while
- he's flattened more than seventy square kilometres of earth in his time
- neutralised it
- nobody can hide there any more, he knows that for sure and he's proud of it. He knows that his work makes sense: In the area that he has liberated no attack can ever be planned, from there no danger can face Marge and the children
- don't ask me about political systems, I haven't a clue, doesn't interest me either, I'm not one of your knowledge-freaks, I'm not one of those characters,

who have to know every last detail, what sort of religion they have here, the name of their capital, what sort of language they talk, not the foggiest, but that isn't my job, after all, they haven't employed me as a philosopher

- we're all one big family here

- IN GOD WE TRUST

- everybody sticks together here

- and that's important in times like these when you can no longer trust anyone

- office job? I'm not the type to spend the whole day hooked up to a computer getting fat-bellied and everybody thinking only about money, or having it off with the intern that's not for me, I'm realistic, I'm a fighter pilot and yes, I did vote for this President, I liked him, he's a bit like me, not a head-in-the-clouds old Professor from a debating society but someone who can assert himself ..someone who can, occasionally, take drastic measures if the need arises, someone you can understand without looking the words up in a foreign dictionary

- a detonation

- of course now and again we have to take a sedative Thorazin or Venlafaxin

- a direct hit

- a hospital

- a crash

- four hundred civilians

- an explosion

- an access road has been cleared

- sport is so damned important it's a distraction
- Terror
- if the President says it's war, then it's war
- Terror
- world politics isn't a debating society for boring old farts with beards, you've got to be able to take decisive action
- Terror
- I can't sleep, I haven't been able to sleep for a long time
- a detonation
- a direct hit
- all the new weapon systems go into action here
- it's all so exciting it's all so damned exciting
- a crash
- even if it's only because they have to be tested
- within a radius of six hundred meters everything's been wiped out
- an explosion
- Marge sees none of these pictures, nobody sees these pictures, these pictures are not shown, even the pilots only see a few glowing dots, a sketch on their monitor
- areas as large as a football field, are wiped out in a matter of seconds
- we are prepared, we stand at the ready, we're only waiting to go into action
- we're ready to have a go at them anywhere, anytime
- Terror

- IN GOD WE TRUST

- these pictures must never be shown

- and that's why our young heroes fly at night

- it's dark

- night

- the photo in the newspaper is some sort of sketch, can't recognise anything

- the video of this action looks like a computer game

- and you didn't know anything?

- I was certainly not conscious of anything no

- those were hospitals schools kindergartens

- no that, that I didn't know, none of us knew anything about that

- the coalitions change so quickly I can't keep up with them any more

**- just don't trust anyone more than ten minutes
that's the best advice**

- three thousand children, did you know that?

- no

- and that was a factory producing aspirin not a munitions plant were you aware of that ?

- no

- three thousand civilians in just two days

- I'm sorry, I didn't want that to happen

A loud detonation, then the recording tape is rewound, there follows the noise of a motor like that in the interior of an aircraft.

- something has caught fire just seven seconds after the direct hit

- I'm going into a spin

- I don't know where I am my computer just does what it likes, I've lost control

- a detonation

- suddenly everything's happening automatically, a direct hit, a crash, an explosion, a direct hit, a crash, an explosion, it won't stop, I can't do a thing, my computer does what it likes, missile launched, missile launched, we've got so many weapons here, we've got to get rid of them, we have to drop the damned stuff, whether we want to or not, they keep sending new supplies from the Homeland and we're fast reaching the stage where we don't know where to drop them any more, everything's gone down there anyway, now we're throwing half of the stuff into the sea, simply because we haven't got enough storage space on board it's all got to go can't be helped we've got to get rid of the stuff

- no I never wanted to, to look at these countries after an attack, never wanted to, it'd be a strange feeling to meet people there who live there where we went into action no I'm glad that basically I don't know anything about them I really don't want to know anything about them

- a detonation.

- four thousand?

- a detonation.

- another four thousand, a chemical plant? a church? I can't tell

- a detonation.

- two thousand five hundred and thirty three

- a detonation

- who is the enemy we are fighting, is it ourselves?

- a detonation.
- a hit a crash an explosion
- A detonation in slow motion.
- another seven seconds till the next strike
- the time it takes to wipe out this area totally within a radius of eight hundred meters
- for the first time he can feel the time
- he counts backwards now seven six five four three
- it's slowing down he thinks of the children of the house at the edge of the desert
- what am I crashing into, I can't see a thing two one
- silence
- please get me out of here
- a detonation in slow motion
- a crash
- a direct hit
- four thousand
- a crash
- a direct hit
- an explosion
- three thousand seven hundred and fifty
- which country? which country is this?

- a crash a direct hit an explosion

- five thousand seven hundred and ninety three

- a crash a direct hit an explosion

- three thousand and forty nine

- a crash a direct hit

- four thousand three hundred and twenty two

- a crash a direct hit an explosion

- two

- a crash a direct hit

- seven hundred and fifteen

- a crash a direct hit

(break)

- if I'm to be honest

- yes

- this film that is to say in your film

- yes

- I don't know but

- yes

- nothing happens

- well actually three million people die in the film and you can see that

- you see graphics

- yes

- you hear detonations

(Pause)

- I mean it's dark and you hear detonations the whole time but

- yes

- there's no plot

- heads of families fly off in the night drop everything they have on board by way of new weapons systems and fly back again at dawn sit down in front of the TV go to the gym write emails to the family at home and fly on

- I don't know but yes...boring

- you mean how these people die?

- yes I have to say monotonous always the same thing

- yes but that's exactly the point : the monotony of mass extermination

- perhaps it would have gripped me more if we could have seen a child dying slowly but these masses that kind of thing doesn't move me and there wasn't somehow any no the whole thing didn't really have any drive sorry

- but it wasn't really meant to

- yes but

- yes

- but that's the whole point: the monotony of this endlessly repetition this stupidity and

- yes but no I'm sorry but no it didn't move me no...no it didn't really touch me all these people after all I don't even know them I don't even get to see them before they die I no...sorry but, no