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Jünger, Ernst

By [Richard Kühl](#)

Jünger, *Ernst* (Hans Sturm)

Writer

Born 28 March 1895 in Heidelberg, Germany

Died 17 February 1998 in Riedlingen, Germany

Ernst Jünger was a German writer. His book *Storm of Steel (In Stahlgewittern)* is considered one of the best-known literary accounts of the experience of the First World War.

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1. Early Life

Ernst Jünger (1895-1998) grew up in a middle-class German home. Just after finishing his secondary education in 1914, he volunteered and was sent with an [infantry](#) regiment to the [western front](#). He was promoted to lieutenant at the end of 1915, and he participated in the [Battle of the Somme](#) in 1916, the Battle of Cambrai in 1917, and the [Spring Offensive in 1918](#). The “*Stoßtruppführer*” (assault group leader) was awarded the *Pour le mérite* in 1918

2. Storm of Steel and “New Nationalism”

After the war, Jünger served first in the new *Reichswehr* (German military defense forces), during

which time he wrote *In Stahlgewittern* (1920, english translation: *The Storm of Steel*, 1929), *Der Kampf als inneres Erlebnis* (*The Struggle as an Inner Experience*, 1922), and the novel *Sturm* (1923). His initially self-published debut, based on his own wartime diaries,^[1] described the war from the point of view of a front-line officer. Because of the precise details of the depicted wartime experiences, including the horrors of war, the book was partly received positively by [pacifists](#) and among others, had an influence on [Erich Maria Remarque](#) (1898–1970), author of *All Quiet on the Western Front*.

However, that was not Jünger's intention. After leaving the *Reichswehr* in 1923, he became a prominent character of the soldierly “new [nationalism](#).” In 1924, *Storm of Steel* was republished in a nationalistic version (which he took back in 1934).^[2] The heroic portrayal of a new type of soldier, born out of [modern warfare](#), was now put forward. It was followed by *Feuer und Blut* (“Fire and Blood”, 1925), *Das Wäldchen 125* (1925, english translation *Copse 125*, 1930), and numerous political articles in nationalistic journals, in which he preached against the Weimar Republic. He wanted a “national”, “social”, “armed” and authoritarian future state (“state of the front-line soldiers”) that would eliminate the “bourgeois order” of the Weimar “system” and work towards a new World War.^[3] Jünger’s relations to the Nazi Party were characterized by a certain distance from an early point in time, as his goal was not to affect the masses, but to educate and mobilize a revolutionary elite. He disapproved of the “legalistic” methods of the Nazi Party.

3. “Planetary” Vision

Around 1930, Jünger turned away from direct political agitation. In 1929, *Das abenteuerliche Herz* (“The Adventurous Heart”), was released as another way of achieving the “German revolution”; at the same time, the book established his literary reputation as an author of “magical realism”. Later works, especially his major essay *Der Arbeiter* (“The Worker”, 1932), marked Jünger's “planetary” change of perspective and the beginning of his perception as a time-analytical solitary person who interprets history with a cold “stereoscopic vision”.

Richard Kühl, Eberhard Karls Universität Tübingen

Section Editor: [Christoph Nübel](#)

Notes

1. ↑ Jünger, Ernst: *Kriegstagebuch 1914-1918* (edited by Helmuth Kiesel), Stuttgart 2010.
2. ↑ Jünger, Ernst: *In Stahlgewittern*. Historisch-kritische Ausgabe, 2 volumes (edited by Helmuth Kiesel), Stuttgart 2013.

3. ↑ Jünger, Ernst: Politische Publizistik 1919-1933 (edited by Sven Olaf Berggötz), Stuttgart 2001.

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Kiesel, Helmuth: **Ernst Jünger. Die Biographie**, Munich 2007: Siedler.

Schwilk, Heimo: **Ernst Jünger. Ein Jahrhundertleben. Die Biografie**, Munich 2010: Piper.

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