

A-Doh! Hitler: Fuhrer's spelling woes revealed as postcard resurfaces at roadshow after 100 years

The then 27-year-old soldier had trouble with the German word for 'immediately'

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Rare find: Hitler's postcard resurfaces after 100 years

PA

Adolf Hitler was surprisingly keen to return to the front line after being injured in the First World War - and he had trouble with his spelling.

The rare postcard surfaced at a family history roadshow almost a century after being sent by the future dictator to his comrade Karl Lanzhammer.

Recovering in the German city of Munich in December 1916 after suffering a leg wound in the Battle of the Somme, the then 27-year-old soldier wrote of his intention to "report voluntarily for the field immediately".

Historians say this demonstrates his attachment to his new network of army friends as much as his militaristic zeal.

Dr Thomas Weber, an expert on the period from the University of Aberdeen, said: "What's clear is Hitler desperately wants to return to the front and that's rather unusual, even for soldiers who were generally willing to fight in the war and thought Germany's cause was a just one."

"By 1916, if they were on home leave, they tried to stay as long as they could, while Hitler desperately wants to get back to the front."

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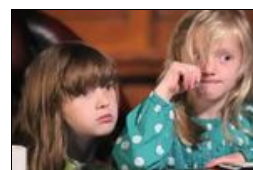
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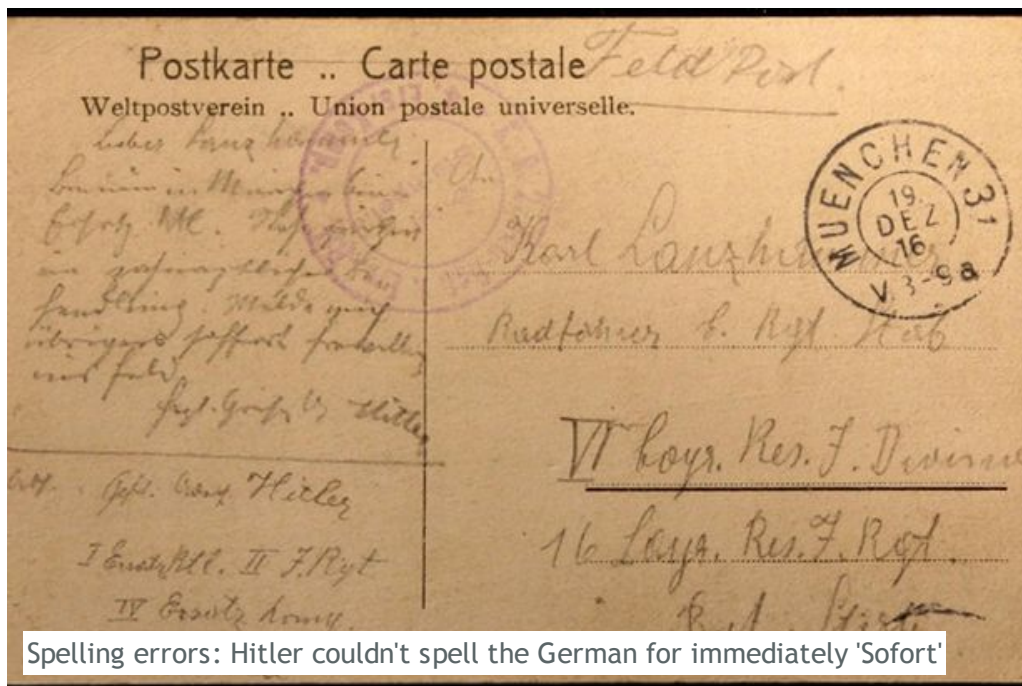
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Spelling errors: Hitler couldn't spell the German for immediately 'Sofort'

PA

"We know from other sources he disliked the sentiment on the home front, where the war was being increasingly criticised, and what he wants is to return to his surrogate family on the front line."

Less unusual is the spelling mistake he makes in the German word "sofort", meaning "immediately", which he spells with two 'f's.

"We know from other letters he wrote that there were occasional spelling mistakes," Dr Weber said. "But that was well in line with other soldiers of his background."

The addressee of the card was a member of Hitler's regimental headquarters, supporting the idea he had cut his ties with his pre-war acquaintances.

"It's interesting because it gives further evidence that Hitler was just communicating with fellow members of the support staff at the regiment headquarters with which he was serving in the First World War," Dr Weber noted.

"Hitler doesn't stay in touch with his family during the war, he doesn't really stay in touch with his pre-war acquaintances."

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Soldier to Fuhrer: Hitler fought on the frontline in the First World War

Reuters

The postcard is said to be among a very small number of documents from Hitler during this period.

It reads in full: "Dear Lanzhammer, I am now in Munich at the Ersatz Btl (battalion). Currently I am under dental treatment. By the way I will report voluntarily for the field immediately.

"Kind regards A. Hitler."

The missive came to light when its owner, who wants to remain anonymous, took it to a Munich roadshow run by Europeana digital innovation project set up by Oxford University and the British Library - after inheriting it from his stamp-collecting father.

Dr Stuart Lee, of Oxford University, one of the digital experts attending the roadshow, recalled feeling "a shudder run through me" when he was handed the postcard.

"I found it hard to believe that at a local event to record ordinary people's stories, I was seeing a previously unknown document in Hitler's own hand," he said.

The postcard is thought to have since been sold.

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Mike Brailsford

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"courageous" soldier



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