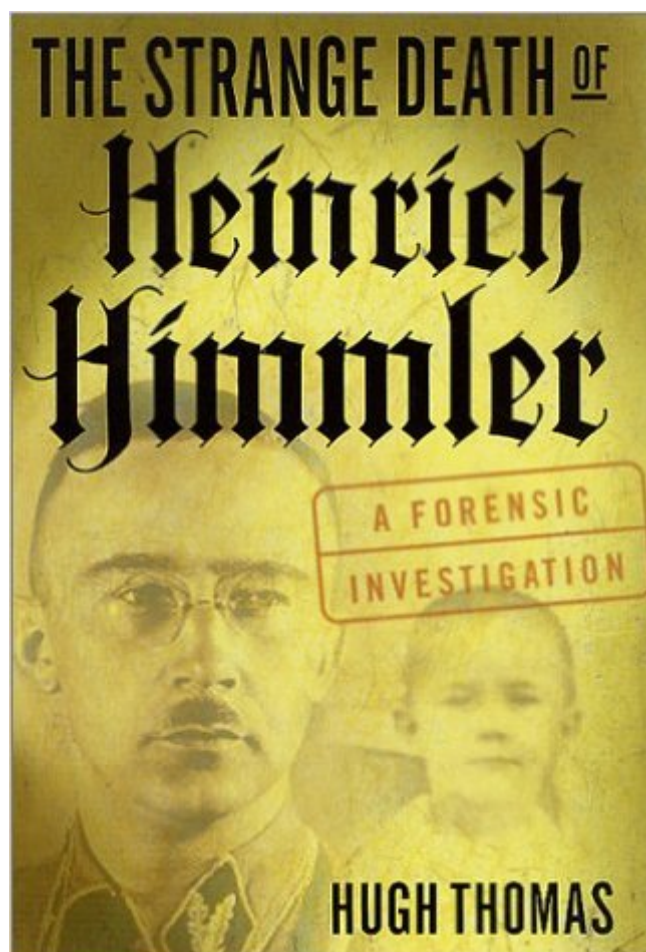


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The Strange Death Of Heinrich Himmler: A Forensic Investigation



Synopsis

On 22 May 1945, in the immediate aftermath of World War II, the Allies celebrated the capture of the most important member of the Nazi hierarchy, Reichsführer Heinrich Himmler. The SS leader was arrested and interrogated but committed suicide in Allied custody by ingesting poison from a capsule concealed in his mouth. Then he was buried at a secret site on Lüneberg Heath. But Himmler did not rest in peace, if Himmler it was who was buried there. Months later the British disinterred, re-examined, and cremated his body. Yet in 1946 MI6's most talented, if treacherous, agent, Kim Philby, was still not convinced that the story of Himmler's death made any sense at all. Philby realized that a man of Himmler's organizational genius, a plotter of great intricacy and sophistication who recognized Germany's inevitable defeat as early as 1943, was unlikely to have just blundered into the arms of the Allies. What really happened? Hugh Thomas set out to answer Philby's question and uncovered a maze of corruption, high finance, political gambles, and international intrigue. *The Strange Death of Heinrich Himmler* unearths not just Himmler's grave, but reveals secrets that have long remained buried, and shadowy figures who would rather stay that way.

Book Information

Hardcover: 288 pages

Publisher: St. Martin's Press; First Edition edition (March 22, 2002)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0312289235

ISBN-13: 978-0312289232

Product Dimensions: 6.2 x 1 x 9.6 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.3 pounds

Average Customer Review: 3.6 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (16 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #1,241,456 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) [#111 in Books > Biographies & Memoirs > Historical > Holocaust](#) [#933 in Books > Biographies & Memoirs > Historical > Europe > Germany](#) [#2365 in Books > History > World > Jewish > Holocaust](#)

Customer Reviews

I received the "Himmler conspiracy" book as a gift and struggled through most of it; my only surprise was that it is even worse than I had imagined. The book is poor research, poor forensic science, and not even very good conspiracy pulp. There are numerous sources on Himmler's death that the author has failed to mention, obviating the troublesome necessity of refuting them. Even a cursory

glance at the debriefings of Himmler's SS assistants who were with him shortly before his arrest, for example, attest to his intent to take his own life if made prisoner. The author similarly ignores myriad statements from British and German individuals, military and civilian, who were present at the various stages of Himmler's arrest, suicide, and eventual internment. Beyond the weak "research"--much of it apparently relying on translations rather than primary source materials since the author does not read German (?)-- is the central question of motivation. Why would the British or the Allies acquiesce in such a ruse? To avoid embarrassment at having "negotiated" with Himmler during the war's final stages? Rubbish! The Western Allies used plenty of ex-Nazis to counter the Soviet threat, from the technicians of Werner von Braum's shop to intelligence assets like Himmler's erstwhile svengali Walter Schellenberg. Some of these associations were unsavory, but neither London nor Washington has ever been overly reluctant to acknowledge them given the uncertain and dangerous period in which they were forged. Himmler had nothing to offer the Allies after the war. He would have been far more useful in the prisoner's dock at Nuremburg than as an intelligence asset.

At least the first 25 or 30 pages of this book are spent 'examining' the personality of Heinrich Himmler. The author offers no new insights into the Reichsfuhrer, he falls back on old suppositions and translations of books. Most notably he relies on the translations of Himmler's diaries. Personally, I have no respect for a 'serious' researcher who likes to state as fact something that he hasn't translated for himself. His portrait of Himmler's personality is the same old 'brilliantly scheming monster' that we've all seen before. It is dull and uninteresting, and falls back on old legends and anecdotes about Himmler without really touching on what kind of person he may have been. Granted, this isn't a biography, but still, a more objective presentation might have been a reasonable alternative. My biggest problem, though (and this is with just the first 30 pages) is the fact that the author basically shoots himself in the foot right from the start. He runs hot and cold between Himmler being not especially intelligent, then decides that the man WAS intelligent, then goes back and decides that he wasn't, and so forth. Clearly Himmler was an organizational genius, but if the author isn't willing to give Himmler credit for being at least semi-bright, how in the world does he expect the reader to believe the level of quick thinking and long-term planning that he goes on to describe? Beyond that, for a forensic expert, the author certainly has some antiquated ideas of post-mortem physiological happenings. I was initially very excited to pick up this book, but I lost my appetite before I even hit a double-digit page number, and was ready to throw the book into the street before I hit a three-digit page number.

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