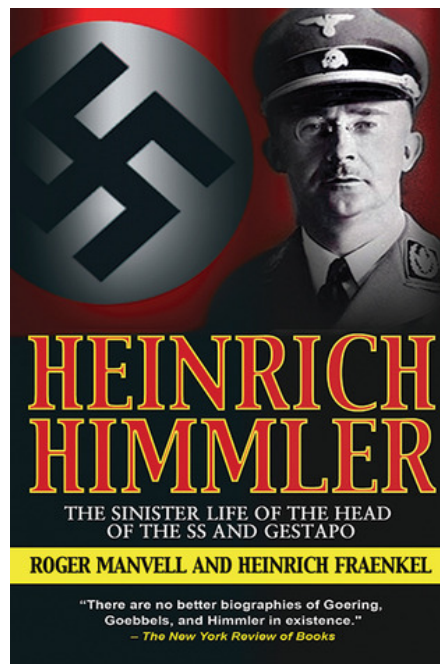




Heinrich Himmler: The Sinister Life of the Head of the SS and Gestapo

Roger Manvell , Heinrich Fraenkel

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Authors Roger Manvell and Heinrich Fraenkel, notable biographers of the World War II German leaders Joseph Goebbels and Herman Goring, delve into the life of one of the most sinister, clever, and successful of all the Nazi leaders: Heinrich Himmler. As the head of the feared SS, Himmler supervised the extermination of millions. Here is the story of how a seemingly ordinary boy grew into an obsessive and superstitious man who ventured into herbalism, astrology, and homeopathic medicine before finally turning to the "science" of racial purity and the belief in the superiority of the Aryan people.

Heinrich Himmler: The Sinister Life of the Head of the SS and Gestapo Details

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From Reader Review Heinrich Himmler: The Sinister Life of the Head of the SS and Gestapo for online ebook

The FountainPenDiva, Old school geek chick and lover of teddy bears says

There's a saying about the banality of evil. Heinrich Himmler, one of Adolf Hitler's henchmen and one of the architects of the Final Solution, proves the point. The man didn't have horns or a cloven foot. He didn't have the word EVIL stamped on his forehead. In fact, from all descriptions of those who knew him, he was a rather fussy, nondescript office-type bureaucrat who suffered from bad health his entire life. So how was it possible that someone so ordinary could wreck such havoc on millions of innocent people and help destroy an entire country? Moreover, how did so many good people enable such a murderous regime to operate unchecked for so long?

This was an incredibly fascinating study of not just Himmler, but those around him vying for the attention of a charismatic megalomaniac while also trying to keep and retain power for themselves. It's about conspiracy and co-conspiracy. It's about socially-sanctioned prejudice turned into state-sanctioned murder on a scale that still boggles the imagination (and that some wish to deny simply because the idea *is* so horrific). It's about the mental gymnastics and hypocrisies such people contorted themselves in order to justify to themselves the necessity of evil.

Lastly, this isn't just Himmler's story as researched by Manvell, but a warning that those who refuse to learn from the past are doomed to repeat it. Look at Germany pre-WW2: war-weary, under economic strain, high unemployment, uncertain. Sound familiar?

Razvan Zamfirescu says

Dementia nazista nu poate fi inteleasa fara a-l cunoaste pe Himmler. Vioara intai in procesul de exterminare a evreilor, principalul inginer al teoriilor rasiale, pionierul aplicarii arianismului in cadrul unei organizatii (SS) si principalul vinovat de ororile care au avut loc in Europa cotropita de razboi, Himmler adeseori este uitat si lasat in umbra lui Hitler.

Este foarte adevarat ca fara Hitler, Himmler nu si-ar fi putut pune in practica ideile fanteziste, schemele diabolice si planurile ingrozitoare de exterminare in masa a unui popor.

Insa, in acelasi timp, nazismul nu cred ca ar fi ajuns sa faca toate aceste ingrozitoare crime daca nu ar fi fost mintea diabolica a lui Himmler care a gasit persoanele potrivite sa duca la bun sfarsit ideile sale de epurare rasiala.

Dementia lui Himmler cred ca este unica in istorie, aceasta scurta biografie infatisandu-l pe acest monstru conform cu actiunile sale bolnave: un individ egocentrist, plin de preconceptii, periculos de credincios unor idei de tip religios, cu un puternic complex de inferioritate datorat fizicului sau.

Pentru ca nu a putut sa faca parte din gruparile armate pe care le admira atata si pentru ca fizicul sau era al unui individ pe care, in mod normal, l-ar fi trimis la reciclat, Himmler si-a pus daruit toata energia in a face lumea asa cum considera el ca ar trebui sa arate. Nu a precupetit niciun efort, nu si-a precupetit sanatatea nici mintea nici familia. S-a dedicat intru totul in a construi o lume care sa nu mai nasca oameni cu un fizic precum al lui care sa nu poate sa-si serveasca statul asa cum si-ar dori... Aproape ca i-a iesit.

Acest volum nu te poate ajuta sa-l intelegi pe Himmler pentru ca dementia lui nu poate fi inteleasa, insa te poate ajuta sa intelegi ca fara el, regimul nazist poate ca nu ar fi putut sa extinda la o scara continentală genocidul secolului XX.

Cerisaye says

Written in 1965 before the Second World War became history not popular memory, this Himmler biography is now rather dated. It sets out to show him as a sinister figure and yet, despite the evil Himmler aided and abetted by the end of this book I saw him more pathetic than monstrous.

It is now more than ever necessary to remind us the men and women who supported and carried out Nazi policies were human beings with feelings, failings, personal relationships, strengths and, yes, some good qualities, just as we all are. Yet, due to circumstances, the times they lived in, political ideology, social and economic turmoil, and the choices they made, ordinary people became capable of appalling acts of cruelty, brutality, callous disregard for other groups of people they considered less than themselves.

By the end of the book I understood a little better what kind of man Himmler was. A petit bourgeois bureaucrat with delusions of grandeur, some very odd ideas about race and blood and procreation. A loving father with two families who flirted with the idea of official endorsement of bigamy. A pen pusher who desperately wanted military glory. An acolyte unable to contemplate questioning or going against his idol, Hitler, until the very end when Himmler's sense of self-preservation took precedence. A deluded man responsible for the worst SS atrocities who believed he could replace the Führer, with Western Allied support.

I have the Longerich biography lined up next.

Paula says

Interesting history book, the timeline was sometimes hard to track.

Amanda says

Manvell and Fraenkel conducted years of meticulous research both with primary documents and those who actually knew Himmler to bring about a biography of the man infamous for being in charge of the S.S., Gestapo, and concentration camps that made the terror of Hitler's reign possible. They seek to provide a well-rounded look at Himmler's entire life for those with some familiarity with the events of World War II.

This was a fascinating and difficult book to read, not because of the writing style or the atrocities recounted, but because the authors succeeded in putting a human face on Heinrich Himmler. They state early in the book that the easy thing to do is to call those who commit atrocities monsters, when in fact they are human beings like us, and that makes the fact that genocide occurred far scarier than the existence of monsters. The authors succeed in thoroughly analyzing Himmler as a person and what personality traits and circumstances came together to create a person who would participate in such atrocities. I highly recommend this to those with an interest in WWII in particular, but also to anyone interested in the prevention of future genocides. It offers great insight into how these atrocities came to be.

Check out my full review.

Quanita says

As horrendous as WWII was, there continues to be more to learn that makes it even worse. Himmler was a procrastinator who saw himself as larger than life while at the same time afraid of his small shadow. He designed a concentration camp that he felt should be the model for all camps - at the same time feeling himself to be a caring and humane man. His beliefs on racial purity, marriage and child rearing, his adultery, and his rivalry with other Nazi leaders is the basis of this book. I only gave it four stars because I felt there was next to nothing about his childhood, only his life in the "party" and a bio should have those years covered. But than again, he was such a fearful man he probably sent his youth being invisible.

AndrewP says

Among the leaders of the Nazi regime, Himmler was the one who initiated a lot of the 'final solution program'. Even after reading this book, it's hard to understand why his total disregard for human life was only directed at the Jews and Slavs. In all other respects he was only bureaucrat, albeit a rather clever and devious one, and totally ineffective in most other areas. He thought himself to be a great leader and general, but his attempts to actually control military forces all ended in defeat.

All accounts seem to indicative that he was a very quiet and unimposing figure compared to most of his colleagues. This introverted personally meant that he was easily bullied into procrastination and non-action by people like Hitler and Goering. When speaking of Goering's love for hunting he was known to have believed that "People should be brought up to love animals, not hunt them for sport." Kind of strange considering the atrocities he perpetrated on human beings. Towards the end of the war he did make some attempts to end the suffering in the concentrations camps and had some of the people there shipped to Switzerland and Sweden. But, that stopped when Hitler found out what was going on. Himmler could never stand up to Hitler so the program continued. Hitler also ordered that concentrations camps blown up so the Allies never found about them. We know that never happened.

From the historical viewpoint this was an informative, but very disturbing, biography. As with most books of this type, there are large number of names and dates mentioned. Luckily there is a decent index.

Mike Smith says

A dated (some of the history has been refuted) and sometimes disjointed biography of Heinrich Himmler. The authors do have a tendency to jump around in the chronology. Overall a good primer to the life of Himmler.

Sid Cole says

Great book.

S says

Interesting, but a little difficult and confusing. The author points out that something is a fact, then contradicts himself towards the end of the book.

otherwise, not particularly enjoyable read, but full of information. Not a juicy book.

Steve says

Manville writes a pretty good book on this excuse of a man who was Hitler's right-hand man in the extermination of millions during World War II. Manville portrays Himmler and a geeky, self-serving, kiss-ass while possessing the power to kill at will. I also found Himmler's Aryan race philosophies quite disturbing -- especially the honor code (if there could be a honor in the SS) dictating how members should be breeding with "good Nordic stock" while also promoting that good German women should be willing to bear six to eight children -- married or not. I also find it interesting that Himmler was not really considered a "soldier" -- a title he valued to have, but more of police chief in charge of maintaining racial purity through the horrific efforts of the holocaust. When he finally when finally got his wish to command, he proved inept, although believing he was meeting the wishes of Hitler...who eventually saw Himmler as a traitor for trying to weasel a way out of his horrific crimes. An interesting read...it will amaze you on how much of a weasel this character was.

F.B. Veneziano says

Heinrich Himmler: The Sinister Life of the Head of the SS and Gestapo

This book is well written, however, I've learned more about what than about why. Perhaps it's a question that cannot be answered. The many sides of the Nazi's are mind-boggling. Fathers, sons, husbands, and killers that revel in the torture and death of others.

It was, none the less, a good and informative read. More like a textbook than a story, but I enjoyed it.

Jean says

This book is book three of a trilogy; the other two books were "Joseph Goebbels" and "Hermann Goring". I understand this was the first in-depth biography of Himmler. This book on Himmler was first published in 1965.

Roger Manvell (1909-1987) died in 1987; he was born in London England. He was the first director of the British Film Academy. He was the author of many books on film making and on Nazi Germany. In 1975 he became a professor at Boston University. Manvell wrote this book with Heinrich Fraenkel (1897-1986). Fraenkel was a well known biographer of Nazi War criminals. Fraenkel was born in Leszno, Poland. At the time of his birth it was known as Posen, Germany. Fraenkel immigrated from Nazi Germany to Britain. He was also a well known chess player.

Himmler was the head of the SS and he supervised the extermination of millions. The authors follow his life from boyhood to his death. He is thought to have developed the Nazi "science" or racial purity theory and the idea of the superiority of the Aryan people. The book covers some of the most difficult periods of the Nazi rule.

I found the book a fascinating study of Himmler and the people around him. This book goes into how the Nazis rose to power in Germany and what they did with this power. The book is well written and meticulously researched. The authors reviewed all the archived documents on Himmler as well as diaries, correspondence and other materials. They also interviewed people involved with Himmler including his family.

Audible Studies produced and published this as an audiobook in 2013. Joe Barrett has won multiple "earphone awards" for narration of audiobooks. Barrett's narration of the book was excellent.

Ubiquitousbastard says

I might be a strange person, (okay 'am,' and was a strange teenager) but I read this specifically because the cover looked all evil and I wanted to read about some evil crap. Yeah...it's very hard to review books about WWII/Nazis. Simply put, I think that there have been eviler people in the world besides Heinrich Himmler. ...and there, I've been burned at the stake for heresy. I mean, my overall impression of him was that he was a fanatic with some pretty freaking weird-ass beliefs. Add in some awkward dorkiness, some love of power and nationalism and I think that about covers it. Yes, he had responsibility in the Holocaust, but I don't think he was laughing maniacally when it happened.

I think this book was supposed to convince me of that last statement, but I just didn't see that myself. Also, telling me someone is evil is not enough to convince me, and being involved in actions that result in millions of deaths isn't quite enough either. Unless we can all FINALLY agree that Stalin (and most of the communist leaders) was/were evil. Then I can change my definition of what evil is.

Oh, and thanks for the surprise corpse pic, Mr. Fraenkel.

Fred Lombardo says

An excellent biography of a most flawed and evil man. The most striking fact was the apparent lack of conscience and his only thought for pleasing Hitler. A man who couldn't think for himself and only lived to serve a most heinous regime. His behavior, though I shudder to give Himmler any excuse for his behavior, stuck me as a man with a mental disorder which manifested in an inability to and seemed crippled by an absence of his own personality. He seemingly could not think for himself and bent to any opinion forced upon him, and indeed grasped for someone else's methods and thoughts. In those terrible circumstances, he could not be anything but one of the most reviled men in modern history. A very astute dissection of the life of a poor excuse for a human being.
