



Himmler

Peter Padfield

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Remarkably, this is the first full-length biography of a man often seen as the very personification of evil. Heinrich Himmler was not only head of Hitler's SS police and Gestapo, but was also in charge of the death camps in the East. The account of Himmler's life and his impact on the rise and fall of the Nazi state make a gripping and horrifying story. But more than this, it is a profound moral and intellectual inquiry into the nature of evil in the human character.

Himmler Details

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Author : Peter Padfield

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From Reader Review Himmler for online ebook

Tim Robinson says

The author has an axe to grind and is the very worst kind of amateur psychologist. In seeking the source of Himmler's monstrosity in his childhood, he looks for something that isn't there, and finds it. In reality, Himmler was a perfectly normal Bavarian child and nothing in his diary extracts is at all surprising or revealing.

If you read only one book about Heinrich Himmler, may sure this isn't it.

Alex says

Great book on the dual personalities of the man who was the most wanted war criminal second to Hitler himself.

Meghan Hasselberg-Reitz says

Longggg read. But decent book for any WWII buff to read!

Glen says

Provides interesting insights into the life and death of Himmler ... From chicken farmer to architect and leader of the SS ...

Garrett Curry says

Personally, I thought this book was well prepared. It illuminates a lot about not only Heinrich Himmler, but also about the Third Reich that I didn't already know. Very informative.

J M Davis says

Worthy but wordy!

Well researched and full of detail, I nevertheless finished this book with some relief - it is far too long. Padfield clearly had the measure of his man whilst writing this biography, but his endless interruption of the narrative story of Himmler's life with speculative passages regarding his motives or state of mind became tiresome after a while. Clearly, there would be little point to a biography of Himmler without some

examination of the sentiments and beliefs which drove him or the neuroses which affected his choices and actions, but I rather think Padfield enjoyed speculating on these, to the overarching detriment of the book. I have to admit, however, that this is one of the most comprehensive and detailed studies of any of Hitler's paladins that I have ever read.

Paul says

Been ill so not posted or read much last few months but I return with five stars for this. The author regularly uses supposition to suggest Himmler's mind set or motives but I found this most enjoyable and this is every bit as good as Peter Longrich's superb offering. I read the author's Donitz too and I really like his style as well as excellent research and understanding he has of the subject matter..

Kane Faucher says

A thick, authoritative tome of evident scholarship weighted by meticulous research detail. There were a few too many orphaned speculations that the book might have done better to leave out rather than leave unexplored. It does tend to wander away from its subject at times, which account for the occasional sequencing issues (perhaps understandable given the complexity of Himmler's relations with other Party members and the author's diligence in providing useful reference to the context of the war). Padfield attempts to draw too heavy a line between Himmler's psychological experiences as a child and adolescent and his adult behaviour - which is fine for some causal connection, but a bit too heavy without more than just some testimony and his diaries). Overall, a fairly dense and masterful account of a tormented, devious, possibly sociopathic, pseudo-orientalist, clerk-ish terror instrument who created a state within a state.

If history and frequent appeal to historical documentation is not to your liking, you might give this a pass.

Mari Stroud says

Just give me the facts. Your psychological insights ain't that deep, bro.

Erik Graff says

I read this alongside Wachsmann's history of the German concentration camps, Himmler having been in charge of them.

Basically, this is a biography of Heinrich Himmler, arranged chronologically. Most of it concerns his public life with the NDSAP and SS, but the author also attempts to explain him psychologically with reference to his childhood and adolescence. The enigma of Himmler is how a moralist, personally affable and considerate and genuinely sympathetic to animals, could have directed the most methodical killing machine in human history.

whatos says

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Paul Bryant says

I read John Toland's 1000-page-plus biography of Hitler and I was enthralled. There isn't a dull page in the whole book, it grabs you and propels you with increasing velocity through the almost unbelievable events, and en route you meet the gang who made the Third Reich possible, and what an unlikely crew they were. Out of all of them, the weird figure of Himmler intrigued me the most. Here was the most mild-mannered, myopic schoolmasterish of men, just the type who'd bore you to death on a long train journey talking about the decline in the correct use of punctuation, or some cranky theory about Freemasonry. And within a few years he became the second most powerful Nazi leader. How? So I hoped that Peter Padfield's huge biography would tell me. Unfortunately this book reads like a first draft, before the editor has got to work. The author can't seem to turn the giant piles of material he has into a readable story. He seems overwhelmed, and so his book plods and becomes tedious.

He has three enormous areas to cover - the SS, the Holocaust, and the War. The empire of the SS was vast and its organisation was extremely complex, not to say confusing. Himmler and the SS were also engaged in various organisational struggles with other Third Reich institutions. So we get a lot of that infighting. And when the War starts, Padfield feels the need to retell it in detail, during which time Himmler is, so to speak, mostly off-stage. That was just silly. And finally the Holocaust is better dealt with in many other books.

As for Himmler himself, and you know, Himmler should be the USP of any biography of Himmler, I think, the feeling I am left with is the same as when the police finally catch some notorious serial killer - *this guy did all that??* Even when you have all the facts, you still don't believe it. I was fascinated by Padfield's explorations into Himmler's lunatic racist fantasies, which are very chilling indeed because you are always aware that he had the power to put them into practice (and did sometimes - not all the time, because *even the other top Nazis thought he was a bit over the top!*).

"Next on I've Got a Secret, we have Mr H. Mr H, would you hold up your card to the audience and tell them your secret?"

The card says "I Was the Second Most Powerful man in the Third Reich"

The crowd murmurs indignantly.

"Okay, panel, who would like to start this one off? Groucho?"

Stefan says

Himmler was a well written and researched biography of an individual who had a profound impact on modern Germany, this is not a definitive biography but it is without doubt one of the best biographies on Himmler widely available in English. The author did a careful examination of Himmler's early life which I found particularly enlightening. I also found the portion of the book concerned with Himmler's young adult years and his early rise to power (that is before 1939) to also be extremely interesting and informative. However, I found the latter half of the book after 1939 became slower, more tedious, and for me, more boring. This is partly because I've read a fair bit on Himmler's life during world war 2 but very little of his life before 1939. Overall, a well written biography that was generally highly interesting. Himmler is disturbing and painful to read biography about a bizarre, unassuming man who masterminded a horrific program of murder that followed his perverted reality.

4triplezed says

For me, as a reader of WW2 history for over 40 years, the figure of Heinrich Himmler looms large. At one point the 2nd most powerful individual in the 3rd Reich. A veritable minister for everything. But oddly one of those characters who I had never really read about in too much depth. So with Peter Padfield's 1990 biography I had high hopes of learning as to what made this sinister individual tick. I have, unfortunately, finished this lengthy book feeling let down by what I can only describe as a lost opportunity.

He quotes from Himmler's diary and with that builds a "psychological profile" quoting everyone from Hugh Trevor-Roper to Buddhist thought to build his (obvious) disdain for Himmler's mental state. This was not what I was expecting but I found it initially extremely interesting. Added in between all this "psychological profiling" was a short history of various other terrors perpetrated in the name of ideology. Witch hunts in Bavaria 400 odd years previously through to the Spanish Inquisition and how they equated to "public demands" (my words) to "find a scapegoat for social frustration" (Padfield's words). Padfield quotes Trevor-Roper and Henry Kaman in that the "community itself" "impose" on tyrants" their general social beliefs and the tyrants are able to act accordingly. The problem was that the author did not stop there. Chapter after chapter he referred to Himmler's thought process to events by subjective psychological opinion that became far too intrusive to the story that should have been told.

I will also ask as to who this book is aimed at in terms of readership. As a lay reader of the rise of the Nazis to power and with that WW2 history I would suggest that a book on this subject would have been aimed at those that were aware of general historical events. The author wrote almost with a dual purpose that went either into very detailed discussion of events or was quick to give a short overview of others. If an individual had read little on the Nazis and WW2 this is the last book I would recommend if they were looking to read about the life of Himmler. As someone who had read extensively on the Nazis and WW2 I became very frustrated at times at the length of information I was already aware of with not a mention of the subject at hand, Himmler.

That leads to another criticism, why have a biography about an individual and then write large tracts about events he seemed to have little or no involvement in. The Night of the Long Knives is a prime example. Plenty of detail about the event but hardly a mention of Himmler. This leads me to consider that the book

lacks focus. Going off the subject at hand and nonsensical sentences to the subject at hand abound. A glaring example is Chapter 14. The discussion is in relation to Himmler discussing with his staff etc. that the allies breaking up under the strain of their supposed "unnatural" alliance and the eastern borders of the Reich being pushed back to the Urals. The author writes.....

"Consequently it is possible, even probable that when he spoke of pushing out the eastern borders to the Urals, and of the great German future which he saw beyond the hard present, he believed it. Equally, much of the time, and in the small wee hours of the night he must have known it was all a chimera. In early September, as the Red army occupied the Rumanian oil fields and invaded Bulgaria, and Finland dropped out of the war against Russia, he took to his bed with stomach cramps, that sure indicator of his psychic health. Kersten found him in agony with the Koran lying by his bedside. 'I can't bear the pain any longer,' Himmler told him."

The chapter ends with that comment about pain and the Koran lying beside him. In discussion on this book I was informed that Himmler had actually been discussing at this point in time the recruitment of Bosnian Muslims so therefore he was possibly familiarising himself with their beliefs. I referred to the index and it has under Himmler a subheading attitudes: religious: and includes this page. Hardly. It now looks like a throwaway line. Himmler also had ulcers hence the pain. The discussion of Bosnian recruitment to the SS had been discussed in an earlier chapter and never does the author discuss an ulcer.

The writing style can also be pretentious. After Himmler has taken cyanide the author writes "Did images of Bavaria flood the timeless moment as the poison stunned his nerve centre...Das Braunek dort so freundlich schaut, zum Geirgerstein als seine Brut... 'What a miserable creature is man... The heart is turbulent until it rests in the ground".

The ironic thing about all my own personal observations of this lengthy book is that for long periods I enjoyed the information offered. If toned back the psychological analysis would not have bothered me, cut out superfluous information and focus the book on the subject and there was a wonderful read in this.

So what did I learn about Himmler that I did not know? I know that I need to read up on Karl Wolff, SS-Obergruppenführer in the Waffen-SS and Himmler's right hand man for long periods and a man who denied knowledge of a hell of a lot after the war. This individual was seemingly stuck like glue to Himmler for long periods and received some brutal criticism from the author. In fact I found myself constantly referring to internet to find out more about this paradox of a man.

Himmler himself I can only describe as the most boring megalomaniac mass killer I have read about. He was good to his wife and mistress and his children. He was polite and chivalrous to women in general and had a very romantic view of the fairer sex. He was well read and even had copies of banned books. Even at the bitter end he was polite and genial to all he spoke to and never forgetting to give presents at Birthday and Xmas etc. He was a workaholic and took on any tasks to come his way. He was ordered by Hitler, for example, to take over as commander-in-chief of Army Group Upper Rhine, a position he knew himself he was hardly equipped for but did as he was loyal to the point of stupidity to "his Fuehrer".

In the end though he was a Nazi and Hitlerite of the highest order and nothing can ever save this man from history's condemnation as this book makes utterly clear. His racial views the author quotes extensively. These are frankly tedious to put it mildly. The racial theories of National Socialism are beyond the pale and to have had to sit through some of this stuff would have made me personally want to drink poison than be subjected to long winded, up to 8 hours at one conference, discussions on Nazi racial theory. Apparently the SS and Hitler Youth, among others, lapped it up. His building of the SS into a killing machine is described in detail, as are the methods in the concentration camps be that the murder of not only Jews but also the medical experiments among a few examples the book covers. No matter how often I have read on this appalling

subject I am never ceased to be amazed by man's inhumanity man.

Himmler was a cowardly sycophant who followed Hitler without question. He was responsible for crimes against humanity through his unwavering beliefs in a moribund ideology. He had not one redeeming feature.

Scott says

My Finished review ::

<http://nursepastorfatherhusband.blogs...>

Some thoughts as I read ::

<http://nursepastorfatherhusband.blogs...>
