Forensic traces Photos of the room show that somebody has wiped the floor around the body, possibly to remove blood traces – which a suicide would not have left; but army boots have left visible scuff marks in the polish. His eyeglasses have shattered in the scuffle, and those put on him are not his.
Suicide capsule  The standard Degesch capsule issued (left) is like one found in Herman Göring’s possession (below): half an inch wide and one and half inches long with a screw cap. It is too bulky to conceal in a mouth.

The Allied armies announce that Heinrich Himmler has killed himself, swallowing cyanide from a glass phial hidden inside a brass casing in a gap in his teeth. Movietone News even produces a capsule (left) said to have been found on Himmler. It is unused, the liquid intact. There is a problem. There is no gap in the teeth, no glass splinters are found, and the phial portrayed by the London Illustrated News would not have fitted inside the brass container. The suicide story has persisted.

Dental report  ‘Reichsminister Heinrich Himmler, Report on Dentition, Cadaver examined at 11 hr to 13.15hrs on 25 May 45 at 31a Uelsenerstrasse, [sic] Lüneburg, sgd. G R Attkins, Major’

The remains of tortoise-shell framed eyeglasses which Reichsführer SS Himmler wears on May 23, 1945. The first punch shatters them. Himmler is blind without eyeglasses. They will be sold in 2019 by descendants of Dr John St George Glyn, a medic of Capetown, one of four men present at the examination. Sgt. Glyn serves in a force of South Africans, and later works helping typhus victims found at Bergen-Belsen.
Lightning speed  The Allies flash the story of Himmler’s ‘suicide’ around the world. Two plaster death masks (left) are prepared.

‘BLACK MUSEUM’ OF THE METROPOLITAN POLICE, LONDON

Lüneburg  The house ‘prepared for prisoners like Himmler’ at Uelzener Strasse 31a in 1945 (above) is unchanged to this day.
Two colonels  Lieut.-Colonel Michael ‘Spud’ Murphy, left, would write that he brought Himmler over to a house prepared for such men. Lieut.-Colonel Sidney Noakes, allegedly one of the British MI5 officers who interrogated Himmler minutes before his ‘suicide’.

Below: First page of the ‘Post mortem examination to establish identification carried out at 11.00 hrs, 25.5.45’. It makes no mention of the freshly broken nose seen by the artist
Heinrich Himmler preserves the certificate recording his First Communion until the end. He is a Catholic and a devout churchgoer as a young man. For Catholics, suicide is a mortal sin.

PICTURE FROM THE DON BOYLE COLLECTION
Early photographs show Heinrich Himmler in sailor suit, with his older brother Gebhard and little Ernst and their proud parents. Their father is a respected teacher at the Wilhelm Gymnasium. It still stands on a main thoroughfare of Munich, below.
What a difference a uniform makes: Himmler in the 1920s: two faded photographs from a private album. In 1921 he is promoted to a Fähnrich, or ensign, of 11 Infantry Regt, Hoover Library, Himmler Collection.

Sioux chief He-asapa (Black Rock) in full regalia with buffalo and ermine skins and horned helmet trimmed with eagles’ feathers, denoting a warrior chieftain. From an oil by George Catlin, Berlin Museum of Anthropology.
In October 1919, Heini starts Diary No. 4. Tucked in the back are still some souvenirs – an ice-rank ticket and tiny snapshots (one enlarged, above) which suggest his mind is sometimes elsewhere.

PHOTO COURTESY OF THE HOOVER LIBRARY, STANFORD, CA.
‘My darling children’ Himmler’s father Gerhard is an eminent Classical linguist, a school principal, and Geheimrat – privy councillor. But Heinrich Himmler dotes on his mother, Anna, and younger brother ‘Ernstl’, standing to his left: ‘He’s another decent chap.’ Gebhard earns pocket money for his accomplished watercolours, ‘I like him frightfully.’ Gebhard makes the occasional liaison of which Heini disapproves.

PHOTO FROM DON BOYLE COLLECTION
Monument the Bavarian government plots with Hitler and the NSDAP to overthrow the bungling Weimar regime in Berlin. Hitler and Ludendorff stage a coup on November 8, 1923. It fails, after sixteen die at the Feldherrnhalle, including four police officers. The building becomes a holy place for the Party, and two SS men mount a guard of honour on the memorial on the east face, designed by Hitler’s architect Paul Ludwig Troost.
Historic photo  The Party’s photographer Heinrich Hoffmann pictures the coup participants, and each signs the photo – Dr Weber, Frick, Col. Kriebel, Gen. Ludendorff, Hitler, Brückner and Röhm.

Soldier for Ernst Röhm  Heinrich Himmler plays a minor role in the putsch. Ernst Röhm issues to him an ID for the Reichs-Kriegsflagge militia, on October 17, 1923, a few days before the Hitler coup.
Murder of a monarch  Tsar Nicholas II, head of Russia’s ruling Romanov dynasty, seen above greeting Jewish worthies in 1911, is overthrown in February 1917. He is murdered on July 16–17, 1918 in Ekaterinburg. Yakov (formerly Solomon) Mikhailovich Sverdlov orders the murder, with Vladimir Lenin. The killers, now all identified as Jews, bayonet the Tsar and the empress with their servants and children. After they rape, strip and rob the daughters, below, the murderers mutilate their charred bodies and throw them down a well. There the bodies lie undiscovered until 1979; a second site is found in 2007. In 1998 President Yeltsin calls it a shameful chapter in Russian history. Lenin, grandson of the Ukrainian Moses Blank, is also of concealed Jewish descent.
Kurt Eisner, walking in Munich with his wife and Minister Hans Unterleitner. Eisner ends the Wittelsbach dynasty, and proclaims a Soviet republic in Munich, with himself as prime minister. He is assassinated soon after.

Top: Max Levin, founder of the Munich Spartacist Bund, July 1919.

PHOTOS: HEINRICH HOFFMANN / U.S. NATIONAL ARCHIVES
Margarete Boden’s childhood home in Goncerzewo, twelve miles north-west of Bromberg in Pomerania. She is photographed standing on the steps aged ten with her father and her siblings in 1904.

From Marga’s Album, IN USHMM

**Opposite page:** *Margarete*, future wife of Heinrich Himmler, and her parents’ house later, outside Berlin. *Rear:* A pre-war Berlin Address Book lists her and her clinic under ‘Siegroth, Margarete.’
**She has that certain look** Gebhard is dating Paula Stölzle, respectable daughter of a local banker, she sits for a Dachau artist, Ferdinand Mirwald, which earns Heini's displeasure. Heini hires a private detective to dig into her 'past,' badgers his parents, and confronts Gebhard with the results – which are thin indeed by today's standards. Paula is dropped, and Mathilde Wendler wins the hand of Gebhard.

*Picture courtesy Frau Mag. Daniela Mirwald, Vienna*

**In full coulour**

Himmler (seated second in front row) with senior members of the Apollo fraternity.
Horsing around  Marga horsing around with a sister in a 1911 play.

No photographs appear to survive of Himmler’s wedding to Margarete Boden on July 3, 1928 in Zepernick. She does not get on with Heini’s parents, and gives them a wide berth. That changes with the birth of Gudrun in 1929.

Captive’s fate  In May 1928, Himmler introduces Marga, centre, to the family. His father wears a smile of the rictus variety, while Heini looks like a recently hanged man. His face shows all the joy of a mediaeval captive, aware of the fate in store for him.

PHOTOS FROM MARGA’S ALBUM, IN THE USHMM
The bibliophile At twenty-four, Heinrich Himmler keeps (above) a record of books he has read, and where (usually on rail journeys). No. 213 is Werner Jansen's *Gudrun*, and No. 222 Dr Richard Hoffmann's *Stark wie der Leu, gläubig und treu – Strong as a Lion, Faithful and True* – the memoirs of an army chaplain who has spent 29 months on the Western Front. Himmler jots brief comments in his shorthand, but it falls into disuse.

Newcomer Himmler, Marga, and, Gudrun, in summer, 1930.
With Gudrun, the BMW 'Dixi' becomes a feature of Marga's photo album from 1929 to 1931, though there are no pictures of her actually riding in it.

**Under licence** The 'Dixi' is the first automobile that BMW ever builds – actually a British Austin Seven, manufactured under licence.
Reinhard Heydrich with sons Heider and Heiko visit a barber in Fehmarn, 1936.

Below: Himmler breakfasts with Klaus Heydrich in Fehmarn, an island in the Baltic, 1938. Klaus is Lina’s last son, and will be run over and killed in 1943.

All pictures from Lina Heydrich’s albums, courtesy Jean Vaughan and William Rasmussen
Lina Heydrich in 1940; top, Reinhard in 1932
Party Rally. Himmler has removed the wire reinforcing ring from his cap. It gives it a softer look, but was not authorised.
Badges and Ranks  

Himmler wears the insignia of an SS Oberführer. It is 1929, as he is also wearing the diamond-shaped Party Rally badge on his pocket – the commemorative badge for the 1929 Nuremberg Rally. When Erhard Heiden resigned, Himmler was given the title ‘Reichsführer,’ but it did not have official status until after June 1934. In the picture Himmler also wears on his tie the circular NSDAP badge.
Christmas 1935  Adolf Hitler gives a precious Glashütte gold watch to Himmler, who in 1945 passes it on as a farewell gift to SS Obergruppenführer Walther Eggemann of the Leibstandarte’s famed 1st Panzer Division, just days before the Lüneburg events leading to his killing. It still keeps good time.

Marching In 1929 Himmler heads a column of the growing National Socialist Party on a propaganda march through the streets of Hamburg, in North-West Germany. He keeps the photo in his private album.

Hugo Boss, a well-known clothier of Meisingen, becomes a manufacturer of the SA, SS, and Hitler Youth uniforms.

HOOVER LIBRARY

ALB NECKAR-ZEITUNG, JANUARY 1935
On the Hesselberg, 1930  Himmler with Adolf Hitler, who appears unconcerned by the gag on public speaking imposed on him. Himmler wears a pair of eyeglasses – a rarity among the top National Socialists.
Sommer 1932 Juli
Summer 1932 photos in Marga’s album. Gudrun with her father and an aunt

FROM MARGA’S FAMILY ALBUM AT THE USHMM

Above: Heini smiles proudly on leaving Villa Lindenfycht in 1937

FROM GUDRUN’S ‘SHEPHERDESS ALBUM’ AT THE USHMM
In 1937, Heinrich Himmler and Marga buy a house on the shores of Lake Tegernsee at Gmund, and here they raise their family, including Gudrun and a foster child, Gerhard von der Ahé. Gerhard’s father has been murdered by the Reds; Gerhard eventually joins the Waffen-SS, serves with distinction and survives the war. Marga saves the house from ‘de-Nazification’ measures, as she has raised most of the purchase money.

Squire of Gmund

Studio portrait of Gudrun
April 1932. She tells us in 1993 that she will spend the rest of her life writing a book to clear her father’s name. She seems not to have finished this Sisyphean Task.
Daddy retains his bonhomie, however irksome Gudrun can become. He is careful not to upset his foster son, Gerhard von der Ahé.

First day at school, June 1936: Gudrun, right with a friend, is nervous, like any other

To his beloved parents. Mr and Mrs Geheimrat Himmler, Heinrich sends postcards with Prince Philipp von Hesse like this scrappy one from Rome on December 2, 1932.
Gudrun with Pappi at a sports meeting in 1937. A stickler for detail, he specifies how many pipes and drums are to be in each SS band, and the length of the tassels. Himmler – here saluting Hitler with Karl Wolff – also perfects the Parademarsch
Himmler is assessed by Göring privately in 1935: ‘Very energetic. Very suitable organiser for any jobs,’ but also: ‘Often has quite odd hobby-horses’

Himmler’s 1935 pocket diary (below) seems normal
He stoops to kill  It is August 1933, and Captain Ernst Röhm is too ambitious. Picture shows (right) the SA Chief of Staff, Röhm, with Heinrich Himmler, the Reichsführer SS – still an SA formation – and Kurt Daluege, the commander of the East Gruppe of the SS. On June 30, 1934 Röhm’s time is up. He is shortly murdered in his cell. The Berlin press (below) applauds Hitler’s swift action.
On vacation  With Marga, Himmler visits the Rhineland town of Caub in October 1936, but Marga’s mind is already elsewhere. A street photographer snaps them strolling through Wiesbaden. They vacation for a month in Italy and North Africa in 1937.

The SS ‘Order’ Castle  Having turned down a rival site in Caub, in 1934 Himmler selects an abandoned early seventeenth century castle at Wewelsburg in Westphalia for his SS ‘Order’ and until 1945 devotes time and treasure to getting the construction details right
Felix Kersten becomes Himmler’s masseur in 1939. He listens to everything going on around him, and publishes a well-known diary; it has been taken at face value by incautious historians. The diary earns him postwar the Legion d’Honneur, but he dies of a heart attack in April 1960 on the way to collect it.

Kersten has no problems with being photographed alone. But when he is with Himmler, he is more circumspect, and frowns at photographers.

Still tinkering Himmler, Wolff and SS-Gruppenführer Heinrich Schmauser, commander of Oberabschnitt South, inspecting 34 SS Standarte at Weilheim in December 1934. The caps and uniforms are pre-1936.
Nuremberg Rally, 1935  Himmler is in his element at the Party Rally in 1935, seated in the front row with Karl Wolff and Martin Bormann, chief of the National Socialist Party

– FROM MARGA’S FAMILY ALBUM, COURTESY OF THE USHMM
In 1933, Reichsführer Himmler and Karl Wolff open ‘Sonder-Konto R’ at a Munich bank.

Niceties Many write to Himmler in 1936 expressing sympathy on his Father’s death; he thanks them, by printed card. Below: Karl Wolff is informed in April 1961 that Miss Himmler has ‘declined’ the five hundred marks gift he has sent her. HEIDEMANN COLLECTION
German voters sweep the NSDAP into power on January 30, 1933. A Party photographer takes a triumphant photo of Adolf Hitler and his Party caucus, including Rudolf Hess (back row, right, with the Reich Chancellor). But Joseph Goebbels, and Heinrich Himmler, seated at the right, must still wait for Cabinet office.

HEINRICH HOFFMANN / U.S. NATIONAL ARCHIVES
In March 1933, under American leadership the ‘Jews of All the world’ declare open war on Germany – and a damaging economic boycott. After they decide around 1970 to trade on the resulting misfortune, they prevail on newspapers, and the provocative 1933 headline vanishes from newspaper archives – almost.
Picnic in the woods Himmler spends rare weekends in 1939 punting on the lake, or at picnics with Marga and her sisters and Reinhard Heydrich in plain clothes
Decoy  The 1939 Party Rally is planned in detail, but only as a decoy to deceive the foreign Intelligence.

Like the three Musketeers  As the years go past Wolff, Himmler, and Heydrich become inseparable friends – until one of them is murdered
The SS numbers grow

Starting with just eight men on November 9, 1925, the day the SS was founded, and around one hundred on December 31, 1925, by the end of 1931 it has swollen to 14,964. Here a crack unit leads a parade on Odeonsplatz, Munich. The SS numbers 52,174 on the day that Hitler wins office in January 1933. By the end of 1938 it will more than quadruple in size, with 238,159 in the Allgemeine SS and its new military arm, the feared Waffen-SS – formerly the Verfügungstruppe. The SS grows to a combined total of 465,798 men in 1942. Their commander throughout is Heinrich Himmler, this extraordinary, unprepossessing man.

PHOTO: PIXPAST
‘The field-marshal’s married a hooker’ While Himmler is in Italy, a crisis brews in Berlin. The security service wrongly identifies army C-in-C Werner von Fritsch (picture left) as a homosexual, and compromises Werner von Blomberg, the war minister – seen above with his bride at his mother’s funeral in January 1938. Heydrich is blameless – but not uninvolved. All the principals often meet. Below in the front rank from left: Heydrich, Goebbels, Himmler, Hess, Hitler, Blomberg, Fritsch, and Admiral Raeder.
After the Anschluss
Hitler visits, together with Himmler, the industrial town of Leoben in Styria, Austria, greeted at every railroad station by bouquets from citizens. In Leoben they inspect troops, in Austrian army uniforms, which they will soon exchange for German field grey.

— PIXPAST
After the shooting of a German in Switzerland in January 1936, the unprovoked murders by Jews multiply. On November 8, 1938, a young Jewish gunman enters the German embassy in Paris, asks for the ambassador – who is not there – and fires five shots into the First Secretary, young Ernst Vom Rath. Vom Rath dies a few days later, and the Germans take revenge.

Hitler and Joachim von Ribbentrop himself attend Vom Rath’s funeral, below.

‘This thing with the Jews,’ sighs Marga Himmler, as their delayed vacation begins. ‘When will this scum leave us alone, so we can get on with enjoying our lives?’ Her (rare) remark about the Jews is written without context in her diary of November 14, 1938.
Jewish murderer Herschel Feibel Grynszpan, a penniless teenager, is arrested by French police at once and questioned about who gave him money to buy the gun – and raincoat.
Himmler’s Big Night  Newsreel cameras and microphones wait on the plinth of the Feldherrnhalle on Munich’s Odeonsplatz on November 8, 1938, as thousands of SS men form up to swear allegiance. ‘I vow to you, Adolf Hitler, as Führer and Chancellor of the Reich, my absolute allegiance until death. So help me God.’ The SS is here. But where are Hitler and Himmler?
— Elsewhere, disturbances are breaking out all over Germany. It is Dr Goebbels’ ‘Kristallnacht.’  

HUGO JAEGER
The educated rival  Dr Joseph Goebbels is gauleiter of Berlin and has succeeded Himmler as director of propaganda. Himmler loathes Goebbels, tries to undermine him, then gives up.

Hitler sends for Goebbels, who issues secret instructions on November 10, 1938 halting the pogrom he has begun (below).
In touch  Himmler has gone on vacation, but keeps in close touch with SS Gruppenführer Karl Wolff – care of Gestapo HQ in Berlin.

Making history  Thanks to Hitler, in the next month one stolen province after another is returned to Germany. In March 1939 the Germans regain their port of Memel, hidden under the Lithuanian name Klaipėda. Himmler goes to Memel to arrange Hitler's triumphal entry, and he and Karl Wolff write to the latter's wife a card with postage stamps already overprinted with the old German name, Memelland.
Model prison camp

Himmler’s first camp at Dachau is praised by the French Red Cross as a ‘model internment camp’. Dachau prisoners are used by the Allach porcellain factory to produce works like the Dancing Girls (left). Himmler likes showing off the camp, as on April 25, 1939 (below).

FRIEDRICH BAUER / JOE PAGNIANO COLLECTION
Heinrich Himmler, is now Hitler’s right-hand man. He is sent to Warsaw in February 1939 (below) in an attempt to talk the Poles round; he meets Kordian Józef Zamorski, his counterpart as national police chief. His lofty adjutant Alvensleben hovers in the background.
18. III. 39.

[Initialen und Zusatztext]
Hedwig Potthast

Himmler’s private secretary has been born in Cologne on February 5, 1912. He writes her on July 18, 1939 (far left), a tad formally: ‘Please be so good when you have the time and read the two booklets for me, and tell me later what you think. I hope you’ve got – or have again – digs. Meanwhile get better, and all the best. Heil Hitler! H. Himmler.’ A few days later he pens on a regular correspondence card, ‘I survived the Day of Art well, but the day was somewhat tiring, lasting at night until 2 or 4 o’clock. The work still piles up but can be managed. I am sending you a book which I hope you will like. Special thanks for reminding me of the various days of note. My best wishes for your further good recovery, and see you again here in Gmund at the end of the month. Heil Hitler, Yours faithfully, Heinrich Himmler.’ She keeps them all, in the original envelopes.

Left: Hedwig’s photo in her sports certificate. Above, from her 1933 proficiency certificate, issued by Handelshochschule Mannheim, Hochschule für Wirtschaftswissenschaften.

Both photos in Bundesarchiv file N1126-38
Changing guard, 1939  Handpicked officers of the SS regiment *Leibstandarte* ‘Adolf Hitler’ change the guard at the New Reich Chancellery

**The chief of staff**  Karl Wolff joins the SS and rapidly advances to becomes Himmler’s chief of staff and one of Hitler’s favoured generals. Already an *Obersturmbannführer* in this January 1934 portrait, he wears the silver aiguillette of an adjutant. Remarkably, he avoids prosecution and will escape execution by the Americans, as he achieves a cease fire in Italy in 1945, and Alan Dulles speaks for him. His diaries are voluminous — but have vanished.

*Picture from Karl Wolff’s papers, now part of the Gerd Heidemann Collection*
Top of the stairs  By 1939 a jovial Heinrich Himmler has reached a high point in his career; in New York, *Time* magazine features him on their front cover as ‘Hitler’s Himmler.’ Gudrun worships the man who is her father. Married to him, Marga Himmler accepts her fate and buckles under.
Himmler’s later HQ. All that remains of ’Hegewaldheim,’ now in Poland, are the steps down to the Zabinker lake. They were identified by the author (in check shirt) in 2018; the house itself was blown up in 1945. Above: Himmler’s 1939 pocket diary, the last days of peace, shows Himmler often dining ‘with the Führer’ – or playing tennis.