




FEATURE

Could Hitler Really Have Survived the War?

Historian Luke Daly-Groves examines the lingering conspiracy theories

By Barbara Finkelstein



You've heard it a hundred times, and you're about to hear it again: *Adolf Hitler didn't really die in the bunker, but survived and traveled covertly to South America where he lived out his life with Eva Braun at his side.*

The story has long been a favorite of conspiracy enthusiasts, with a variety of supposed proofs being offered, each of which seems born of some sort of agenda and is invariably followed by other evidence—usually just as compelling—debunking it.

So, what's the truth?

Author Luke Daly-Groves believes he knows, and makes his case in his recently published book, *Hitler's Death: The Case Against Conspiracy*.

Not long ago, Daly-Groves tells *Ami*, an interview on Britain's Sky News TV caught his attention. A man named Gerrard Williams, who had written a book titled *Grey Wolf*, was asserting that Hitler had escaped to South America after the collapse of the Third Reich.

Daly-Groves, a history PhD candidate at the UK's University of Leeds, heard Williams insist that Hitler escaped to Argentina via submarine shortly after April 1945 and lived there until the age of 73 as the husband of Eva Braun and the father of two daughters.

As for the historians who have accepted the official version of events in the *Führerbunker*—that Hitler shot himself in the head and Eva Braun had taken cyanide—Williams thought them dupes of a cynical disinformation campaign engineered by British and American intelligence agencies.

"I came away with more questions than answers," Daly-Groves says about his reason for writing *Hitler's Death*, published earlier this year in the UK. Had Williams and his coauthor really uncovered declassified documents in US and UK intelligence files that proved not only Hitler's survival, but American and British complicity in his escape?

Daly-Groves' investigation began by reading all the books he could find about

Hitler's last days, including memoirs of intelligence officers, eyewitness accounts from the bunker, Soviet files and an array of materials claiming Hitler had been sighted in Spain, Egypt, and even Charlottesville, Virginia. "I approached the task with an open mind, being prepared to investigate wherever the evidence led me and report my findings according to what the evidence suggested."

The plots he stumbled upon were more often the stuff of a low-budget film than hard, evidence-based research.

One popular conspiracy theory sets forth that Hitler's henchmen murdered and burnt the bodies of two body-doubles, paving the way for Hitler and Braun to escape undetected from Berlin to South America.

In the course of his research, Daly-Groves discovered that American and British intelligence agents began their investigations immediately after the Soviet Union's strategic offensive assault on Berlin in April 1945. One of these investigators was Hugh Trevor-Roper, a British historian and agent who interviewed eyewitnesses and examined primary documents.

In *The Last Days of Hitler*, Trevor-Roper quoted Hitler's dictated will: "My wife and I choose to die in order to escape the shame of overthrow or capitulation. It is our wish that our bodies be burnt immediately in the place where I have performed the greater part of my daily work."

Play
your
cards
right.

CREDIT CARD



732.987.7765

WWW.SELLMILESNOW.COM

Feature: A Historian Rejects Claims of Hitler's Postwar Survival

**Hitler's elaborate
30-room bunker in Berlin
during its excavation by the
Soviets**

Daly-Groves also noted the testimony of a Hitler aide: "Otto Günsche, Hitler's personal adjutant and bodyguard, having received orders from both Hitler and [Martin] Bormann [Hitler's private secretary], set about making preparations for the disposal of Hitler's body..."

According to Daly-Groves, Günsche observed that the "lifeless bodies of the newly-wed couple were carried outside the bunker into the Reichschancellery garden. From the bunker doorway, a rag doused in petrol was lit and thrown onto the bodies, causing them to burst into flames."

"I concluded that Gerrard Williams' theory was unfounded," Daly-Groves said.

A loose cannon posits a theory

Yet another popular theory purports that Hitler was murdered by his doctors on the orders of Heinrich Himmler, the chief architect of the Holocaust.

The main advocate of this version of events was Colonel W. F. Heimlich, an American intelligence officer in postwar Berlin who accused Trevor-Roper of ignoring crucial evidence that would have proved Heimlich's assertion.

Recently declassified American military intelligence files at the National Archives and Records Administration, however, reveal that higher-ranking American intelligence officers suspected that Heimlich was a loose cannon who was "attempting to capitalize on sensational rumors."

In Daly-Groves' opinion, "Heimlich was out of his intellectual depth with the Oxford-trained Trevor-Roper, and he resented him."

Ultimately, Heimlich published a book called *Who Killed Hitler* in which he asserted that the Reichschancellery garden, where Hitler and Braun were supposed to have been buried, wasn't excavated until December 1945, more than seven months after the fall of Berlin.

"Heimlich may not have known that the Soviets had dug up the remains of Hitler and



Eva Braun in 1945 and reburied them, believing that another corpse in the chancellery building was Hitler," Daly-Groves said. "Realizing their mistake, they re-exhumed the actual remains of Hitler and Eva the following day. These were autopsied on May 8, nine days after Hitler and Braun's suicides.

"As my book demonstrates," the author tells *Ami*, "Anglo-American intelligence agencies were often more concerned with those spreading rumors than with the rumors themselves. This fact is crucial for effectively challenging the claims made by numerous conspiracy theorists."

Soviet-style fake news

According to Daly-Groves, the conspiracy theorists got a boost in 2009 when Nick Bellantoni, an archeologist and bone specialist at the University of Connecticut, traveled to Moscow to analyze a skull fragment the Soviets thought belonged to Hitler. Bellantoni's DNA testing proved beyond a doubt that the skull, complete with bullet hole, did not belong to Hitler, but to an unidentified woman.

"This allowed conspiracy theorists to claim that, *aha!*, the Soviets never actually had Hitler's skull," Daly-Groves explains. "All of a sudden, Gerrard Williams had seemingly scientific proof to bolster his theory that Hitler and Braun had escaped to Argentina, with the help of Martin Bormann."

What Williams conveniently *didn't* acknowledge was another personal artifact in the Soviets' possession: Some teeth found near the spurious skull were indisputably Hitler's, as ascertained by a dental assistant in Hitler's inner circle and corroborated last year by French forensic pathologist Philippe Charlier.

“What the skull could not prove, the teeth did,” Daly-Groves insists.

Ironically, the Soviets—specifically Stalin—fomented a rumor that Hitler escaped to Spain in the chaos of the Berlin offensive. But the Soviets’ reason for spreading rumors of Hitler’s postwar existence is baffling to Daly-Groves.

“No documentary evidence has yet been produced to explain why the Soviets repeatedly stated that Hitler was alive, despite possessing large quantities of evidence to the contrary,” he says. In fact, Stalin had seen the autopsy report concluding that Hitler had committed suicide by poison. The report may have been mistaken with regard to method, but the fact of suicide was unmistakable.

Stalin also learned that the NKVD, the Soviet secret police, identified blood on Hitler’s sofa and concluded that it was consistent with Hitler’s blood type.

Keeping Hitler “alive” may have offered political benefits for the Soviets. “A potentially resurgent Hitler would have strengthened Soviet claims to German territory,” Daly-Groves explains. “Moreover, an external threat like the existence of Hitler could be advantageous to Stalin’s totalitarian aims of quashing dissent across all the Soviet republics.”

Does this all matter?

“**C**onspiracy theorists like Gerrard Williams like to say that history is wrong,” Daly-Groves says. “We’ve been lied to’ is one of their catchphrases that gives them an easy and quick position of authority. In actuality, the conspiracy theorists are very selective with the evidence they use. They’ve gone through several volumes of intelligence files and picked out stories reported by various individuals with dubious motives that support whatever theory they set out to prove. If, for example, they decide that Hitler escaped to Argentina, they ignore competing claims that Hitler had been

spotted just about everywhere in the world.”

Daly-Groves insists he thoughtfully considers any new evidence cited by conspiracy theorists to support their theories. “But based on the evidence, I concluded that it is unfathomable that our intelligence agencies would have allowed a figure like Hitler to get away. Why would they actively encourage people to distrust democracy, and distrust our intelligence services? For our intelligence services to function, trust in them is absolutely vital.”

If Daly-Groves faults conspiracy theorists, it is primarily for their obtuseness about Nazi ideology. Moreover, Hitler’s inglorious end is a fitting metaphor for the innate destructiveness of Nazism.

Suicide was not an “unusual form of death for Hitler and Eva to have chosen, and due to the circumstances,” he suggests, “it was one that many other Nazis chose to take as well. Members of the Hitler Youth shot their comrades and themselves when their defensive positions were overrun, homeowners jumped to their deaths in despair at losing everything, husbands and wives committed suicide together, and mothers and fathers killed daughters and sons before killing themselves.”

Advancing the notion that Hitler escaped, thereby fooling the British, Americans and Soviets, “romanticizes Hitler and ignores the nihilism inherent in Nazi ideology that resulted in his demise. By researching Hitler’s death, historians research not merely the death of one man, but rather the death of the Nazi regime.”

Daly-Groves points to the Nazis’ most gruesome expression of nihilism—the belief that life is meaningless—by recalling that Joseph Goebbels’ wife, Magda, collaborated with a bunker doctor after Hitler’s death to poison all six of her children as they lay on their beds. Joseph and Magda’s own bodies were relatively easy to identify as there was little petrol left to burn them, “most of it,” Daly-Groves concludes, “having been used up earlier on Hitler and Eva.” ●



Grandeur Estates

OPEN HOUSE

Fri - Sun Aug 18

Luxurious homes in construction

now at 6279 Route 42

1/4 mile from the town of Woodbourne

Chasidish crowd

*Looking forward
to greet you personally*

G. Mutzen
646.539.1649

