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# **The Death of Adolf Hitler: British Intelligence, Soviet Accusations and Rumours of Survival**



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**A dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the degree of BA (Hons) History**

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**HY3991**

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## *Abbreviations*

<b>CAB</b>	<b>Cabinet Office [British]</b>
<b>CIB</b>	<b>Central Intelligence Bureau [Control Commission for Germany]</b>
<b>CIC</b>	<b>Counter Intelligence Corps [American]</b>
<b>DDMI</b>	<b>Deputy Director of Military Intelligence</b>
<b>DMI</b>	<b>Director of Military Intelligence</b>
<b>FBI</b>	<b>Federal Bureau of Investigation [American]</b>
<b>FO</b>	<b>Foreign Office [British]</b>
<b>GCHQ</b>	<b>Government Communications Headquarters [British]</b>
<b>HW</b>	<b>Government Communications Headquarters [British]</b>
<b>IB</b>	<b>Intelligence Bureau [Control Commission for Germany - British Element].</b>
<b>ID</b>	<b>Intelligence Division of the British Control Commission Germany</b>
<b>JCC</b>	<b>Joint Consultative Committee on Captured Enemy Documents [British]</b>
<b>JIC</b>	<b>Joint Intelligence Sub- Committee/Committee [British]</b>
<b>MI5</b>	<b>Security Service [British]</b>
<b>MI6</b>	<b>Secret Intelligence Service [British]</b>
<b>MI14</b>	<b>Military Intelligence Section 14 of the War Office [British]</b>
<b>NKVD</b>	<b>Soviet Secret Service</b>
<b>PW</b>	<b>Prisoner of War</b>

## *Abbreviations*

<b>QIC</b>	<b>Quadripartite Intelligence Committee [American, British, French and Soviet]</b>
<b>SHAEF</b>	<b>Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force</b>
<b>SIGINT</b>	<b>Signals Intelligence</b>
<b>SIS</b>	<b>Secret Intelligence Service (MI6) [British]</b>
<b>SMERSH</b>	<b>Soviet Counter-Intelligence agency; literally ‘Death to Spies’.</b>
<b>SS</b>	<b>Schutzstaffel; Protection Squadron [German]</b>
<b>TNA</b>	<b>The National Archives, Kew, Surrey.</b>
<b>USFET</b>	<b>United States Forces European Theatre [American]</b>
<b>WO</b>	<b>War Office [British]</b>

## *Illustrations*

**Cover Image:** Winston Churchill outside Hitler's bunker, June 1945.

**Figure 1:** Drawing by Hermann Karnau showing the location of Hitler and Eva's burial next to the word 'Ausgang'. TNA, KV 4/354.

**Figure 2:** Rough sketch by Hilco Poppen showing the location of Hitler and Eva's burial. TNA, WO 208/3787.

**Figure 3:** Diagram showing the position of Hitler and Eva's corpses on the sofa as viewed by Axmann. TNA, WO 208/3790.

# Introduction

## I

### Finding The Gaps: The Story So Far

On 30 April 1945, as the Red Army battled the last remaining fanatical resistance of Nazi Germany in the streets of Berlin and the Second World War in Europe was drawing to a close, Adolf Hitler retired to his private quarters in the Führerbunker one last time. What happened in that room continues to be a source of mystery, controversy and debate seventy years later. A historical consensus is yet to be reached regarding how Hitler died. Many publications have sought to solve the mystery.

Contradictory theories as to whether Hitler committed suicide by shooting and/or poisoning, was murdered or if he escaped have produced a somewhat confusing array of explanations. Historians such as Hugh Trevor-Roper have attributed the reason for such confusion to Soviet conduct.<sup>1</sup> Having captured Hitler's bunker in May 1945, the Soviets were in the best position to produce evidence of Hitler's death.<sup>2</sup> Instead, Soviet officials embarked on a campaign of misinformation, claiming in May 1945 to have identified Hitler's body with near certainty, then later asserting that he escaped to Argentina, or was hiding under British protection in Germany.<sup>3</sup> Theories of Hitler's escape have gained increasing popularity since 2009 when DNA tests revealed that a piece of skull thought to be Hitler's in a Moscow archive belonged to a woman.<sup>4</sup> In this climate of historical uncertainty, one must analyse the existing historiography in order to demonstrate how such theories have developed and outline the gaps in historical knowledge, some of which will be filled in this dissertation by a return to primary sources. As will be demonstrated, few historians have analysed British documents relating to Hitler's death, thereby overlooking evidence that could bring further clarity to this important historical issue.

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<sup>1</sup> Hugh Trevor-Roper, *The Last Days of Hitler* (London: Macmillan, 2002), p. xx. See also Ada Petrova and Peter Watson, *The Death of Hitler: The Final Words from Russia's Secret Archives* (London: Richard Cohen Books, 1995), p. 161.

<sup>2</sup> Trevor-Roper, *Hitler*, pp. x,xx,xxxix.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, pp. xx,xlv,xlvi. See also Donald M. McKale, *Hitler: The Survival Myth* (New York: Stein and Day, 1983), pp. ix,46-47,50-51,76; Anton Joachimsthaler, *The Last Days of Hitler: Legend, Evidence and Truth* (London: Cassell, 2000), pp. 22-23,59,246-247; James P. O'Donnell, *The Berlin Bunker* (London: J.M. Dent & Sons Ltd, 1979), pp. 301-302; Petrova and Watson, *Death*, pp. 14,16,44.

<sup>4</sup> David R. Senn and Richard A. Veems (eds), *Manual of Forensic Odontology, Fifth Edition* (Boca Raton, Florida: CRC Press, 2013), p. 19.



In 1947, Trevor-Roper published *The Last Days of Hitler*. Using evidence collected during his time leading the British investigations into Hitler's death, Trevor-Roper concluded that Hitler and Eva Braun committed suicide in the Führerbunker on 30 April 1945, Hitler by shooting and Eva by poisoning, their bodies were burned in the Reichschancellery garden, the final location of their corpses was unknown.<sup>5</sup> The evidence analysed by Trevor-Roper is mainly eyewitness testimony (the limitations of which he acknowledges) combined with documentary evidence such as Hitler's last will and testament.<sup>6</sup> In later editions, Trevor-Roper describes his frustration with the Soviets for denying him access to prisoners of war and other evidence.<sup>7</sup> Following the release of important eyewitnesses from Soviet prisons in the 1950s, Trevor-Roper updated his book to include new testimonies, which, he argues, agreed with his initial conclusions.<sup>8</sup> Also in 1947, Lieutenant-Colonel Byford-Jones published his perspective on the Hitler investigations.<sup>9</sup> Byford-Jones had a limited involvement in the British investigations and withheld information due to contemporary intelligence restrictions.<sup>10</sup> Nevertheless, the book is useful in demonstrating the differing opinions of some individuals regarding the evidence obtained by British intelligence (Byford-Jones in contradiction to Trevor-Roper questions the authenticity of Hitler's marriage certificate) and the early Cold War tensions in Berlin which coincided with the British investigations.<sup>11</sup>

Trevor-Roper's book was immediately criticised by the former Chief American intelligence officer in Berlin, W.F. Heimlich, who concluded using eyewitness testimony that Hitler was murdered by his doctors on the orders of Himmler.<sup>12</sup> He argues that Trevor-Roper ignored crucial evidence, rushed the investigation, led a one man show and conveyed preconceived conclusions.<sup>13</sup> Heimlich's arguments have been dismissed by historians as a matter of wounded pride (as his references to Trevor-Roper's lack of consultation with American colleagues suggest).<sup>14</sup> Nevertheless, the impression of a one man show is somewhat valid as other aspects of the British investigations not

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<sup>5</sup> Trevor-Roper, *Hitler*, pp. 178-183.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid*, p. xxi.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid*, pp. x,xxvii,xlvii.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid*, pp. x,xx,xxxvi.

<sup>9</sup> W. Byford-Jones, *Berlin Twilight* (London: Hutchinson & CO, 1947).

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 82-83.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 118-119.

<sup>12</sup> Herbert Moore and James W. Barret (eds), *Who Killed Hitler?* (New York: The Booktab Press, 1947), pp. 121-123.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 114,117.

<sup>14</sup> McKale, *Survival*, p. 132. See also Moore and Barret (eds), *Killed*, p. iii; Joachimsthaler, *Hitler*, p. 25.

involving Trevor-Roper have been overlooked by most historians. The theory that Trevor-Roper arrived at preconceived conclusions is furthered by authors such as Peter Levenda. Levenda claims that Trevor-Roper was appointed to lead the Hitler investigations by Dick White (future head of MI6 (Secret Intelligence Service)) because as a historian he would be able to manipulate evidence to counteract Soviet claims of Hitler's survival thereby overlooking evidence indicating Hitler's escape.<sup>15</sup> However, historians have not yet analysed recently declassified MI5 (Security Service) files containing correspondence between White and Trevor-Roper concerning the purpose of Trevor-Roper's book. This will shed more light on whether political considerations overshadowed the need to establish the truth about Hitler's death.

Certain questions raised by early accounts of Hitler's death could not be answered as Moscow maintained an official silence on the issue.<sup>16</sup> The Soviets released evidence only gradually. In 1965 a member of SMERSH (Soviet Counter-Intelligence agency) cast doubt on Trevor-Roper's conclusions by claiming that a Soviet autopsy on Hitler's body showed Hitler died from cyanide poisoning.<sup>17</sup> In 1968, Lev Bezymenski published documents from the Soviet investigations including an official autopsy report on what was claimed to be the corpses of Hitler and Eva.<sup>18</sup> The autopsy concluded that Hitler died from cyanide poisoning.<sup>19</sup> This enabled Reidar Sognaes to compare the autopsy with evidence from American archives, such as reports from Hitler's doctors and dentists which, Sognaes claims, prove that the body analysed in the autopsy was Hitler.<sup>20</sup> Some western authors such as James O'Donnell acknowledged the findings of the autopsy and combined eyewitness testimony to conclude that Hitler simultaneously took cyanide and shot himself.<sup>21</sup> This theory has been challenged by Anton Joachimsthaler who argues that this would be virtually impossible due to the instantaneous death

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<sup>15</sup> Peter Levenda, *Ratline: Soviet Spies, Nazi Priests, and the Disappearance of Adolf Hitler* (Lake Worth, Florida: Ibis Press, 2012), pp. 22,25,31,34. See also Hugh Thomas, *Doppelgangers: The Truth about the Bodies in the Berlin Bunker* (London: Fourth Estate, 1995), pp. 94,96.

<sup>16</sup> McKale, *Survival*, p. 111. See also Joachimsthaler, *Hitler*, p. 24.

<sup>17</sup> Reuben Ainsztein, 'How Hitler Died: The Soviet Version', *International Affairs*, Vol. 43, No. 2 (1967), pp. 307,314,318. See also Erich Kuby, *The Russians and Berlin: 1945* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1969), pp. 174,177.

<sup>18</sup> Lev Bezymenski, *The Death of Adolf Hitler: Unknown Documents from Soviet Archives* (London: Michael Joseph, 1968), pp. 44-51.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid, p. 49.

<sup>20</sup> Reidar Sognaes, 'Hitler and Bormann identifications compared by postmortem craniofacial and dental characteristics', *American Journal of Forensic Medicine & Pathology*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (1980), pp. 109-111. See also Sognaes, 'Dental evidence in the postmortem identification of Adolf Hitler, Eva Braun and Martin Bormann', *Legal Medicine Annual* (1976), pp. 197-200.

<sup>21</sup> O'Donnell, *Bunker*, pp. 182-184,276,299-301.

administered by cyanide.<sup>22</sup> The autopsy has been criticised by scientists and historians for various scientific oddities and inconsistencies.<sup>23</sup> Consequently, historians such as Joachim Fest and Joachimsthaler argue that Hitler's body was never found and the autopsy was fabricated Soviet propaganda.<sup>24</sup> Donald McKale argues that the method of Hitler's suicide became a political issue as Soviet officials were concerned that stating Hitler shot himself (a soldier's death) would encourage Neo-Nazism and thus insisted that Hitler poisoned himself, ignoring evidence that indicated the possibility of shooting.<sup>25</sup> On the other hand, McKale accuses western historians of arrogantly dismissing the autopsy results and by insisting Hitler shot himself, defending him in death as an anti-communist crusader.<sup>26</sup> McKale concluded that such ideological squabbles would continue to cloud the issue.<sup>27</sup> However, as the Cold War ended, new forensic evidence came to light.

In the 1990s, glasnost enabled Ada Petrova and Peter Watson to analyse Moscow's files on Hitler's death.<sup>28</sup> The files included what was claimed to be a piece of Hitler's skull damaged by a bullet hole.<sup>29</sup> Many Soviet documents were published verbatim in *Hitler's Death*, which claimed, like Petrova and Watson, that the skull provided the definitive conclusion to the mystery.<sup>30</sup> The documents state that Hitler and Eva's bodies were captured by the Soviets, two investigations into Hitler's death were completed in which Hitler's teeth were positively identified by his dentists, his cause of death determined by autopsy, the results given to Stalin, the bodies destroyed in 1970 and a piece of Hitler's skull and his jaws archived in Moscow.<sup>31</sup> Authors such as Hugh Thomas remained sceptical. Thomas claimed through detailed forensic analysis of the Soviet evidence that forensic fraud was committed to disguise the fact that Hitler was murdered and Eva escaped.<sup>32</sup> Aside from extremely dubious

<sup>22</sup> Joachimsthaler, *Hitler*, pp. 179-180.

<sup>23</sup> Daniela Marchetti, Ilaria Boschi, Matteo Polacco and Julia Rainio, 'The Death of Adolf Hitler – Forensic Aspects', *Journal of Forensic Sciences*, Vol. 50, No. 5 (2005), pp. 1148-1149. See also McKale, *Survival*, p. 188; Joachimsthaler, *Hitler*, pp. 227,252-253; Henrik Eberle and Matthias Uhl (eds), *The Hitler Book: The Secret Report by His Two Closest Aides* (London: John Murray, 2005), p. 283.

<sup>24</sup> Joachimsthaler, *Hitler*, pp. 167,174-175,180-181,222,225,227,252-253. See also Joachim Fest, *Inside Hitler's Bunker: The Last Days of the Third Reich* (London: Macmillan, 2005), p. 163; McKale, *Survival*, p. 188.

<sup>25</sup> McKale, *Survival*, p. 197. See also Trevor-Roper, *Hitler*, p. lvii; Ian Kershaw, *Death in the Bunker* (London: Penguin, 2005), p. 26; Petrova and Watson, *Death*, p. 75.

<sup>26</sup> McKale, *Survival*, p. 197.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Petrova and Watson, *Death*, p. 76.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid, pp. 76,85,90.

<sup>30</sup> V.K. Vinogradov, J.F. Pogonyi and N.V. Teptzov (eds), *Hitler's Death: Russia's Last Great Secret from the Files of the KGB* (London: Chaucer Press, 2005), p. 26. See also Petrova and Watson, *Death*, pp. 21,126-127.

<sup>31</sup> Vinogradov, Pogonyi and Teptzov (eds), *KGB*, pp. 18-20,23-26.

<sup>32</sup> Thomas, *Doppelgangers*, pp. 185-189.

conclusions which lack supporting evidence, Thomas's book, like most since Soviet evidence became available, fails to refer to any British primary source documents.<sup>33</sup> Thomas himself admits 'the part played by British Intelligence...has never properly been acknowledged'.<sup>34</sup>

The new evidence from Russia provided the impetus for a large variety of publications concerning Hitler's death. This included various memoirs of eyewitnesses from the bunker, each providing different perspectives on Hitler's last days.<sup>35</sup> The numerous discrepancies amongst eyewitnesses have been analysed in detail by many historians.<sup>36</sup> For example, Trevor-Roper's reliance on the testimony of Erich Kempka, who admitted to O'Donnell in 1974 that he told his interrogators whatever they wanted to hear in 1945 to save his own skin, has been heavily criticised.<sup>37</sup> Fest concluded that the method of Hitler's suicide will never be discovered due to the many eyewitness discrepancies.<sup>38</sup> O'Donnell criticises Allied interrogators for lacking objectivity and asking the wrong questions.<sup>39</sup> However, little research has been conducted into how British intelligence selected eyewitness testimonies and determined the reliable from the fictitious. Fest's book inspired the 2005 film *Downfall* which has received widespread acclaim from historians for its attention to detail.<sup>40</sup> However, the film has been criticised for failing to show how Hitler committed suicide.<sup>41</sup> This omission perhaps reflects Fest's argument that Hitler's method of suicide remains unknown. The revived interest in Hitler's last days also saw the publication of more wide-ranging studies. Historians such as Luke Bennet noted how the narrative of Hitler's death has become ingrained in popular culture symbolically and metaphorically with phrases such as 'bunker mentality' being frequently used in recent political discourse.<sup>42</sup> Other historians such as David Beisel focused on the mass

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<sup>33</sup> Petrova and Watson, *Death*, p. 100.

<sup>34</sup> Thomas, *Doppelgangers*, p. 91.

<sup>35</sup> Traudl Junge, *Until the Final Hour: Hitler's Last Secretary* (London: Orion, 2004). See also Heinz Linge, *With Hitler to the End: The Memoir of Hitler's Valet* (Barnsley, South Yorkshire: Frontline Books, 2009); Erich Kempka, *I Was Hitler's Chauffeur* (Barnsley, South Yorkshire: Frontline Books, 2012); Christa Schroeder, *He Was My Chief* (Barnsley, South Yorkshire: Frontline Books, 2012); Bernd Freytag Von Loringhoven, *In the Bunker with Hitler* (London: Orion, 2006).

<sup>36</sup> Joachimsthaler, *Hitler*, pp. 148, 150, 158-161. See also Moore and Barret (eds), *Killed*, p. 154; Fest, *Bunker*, pp. 175-176; Levenda, *Ratline*, p. 38; Thomas, *Doppelgangers*, pp. 101-105; Bezymenski, *Death*, p. 71.

<sup>37</sup> O'Donnell, *Bunker*, pp. 180-182. See also Joachimsthaler, *Hitler*, pp. 148-149; Levenda, *Ratline*, p. 36; Thomas, *Doppelgangers*, p. 96.

<sup>38</sup> Fest, *Bunker*, pp. 116, 175. See also Petrova and Watson, *Death*, pp. 110-115.

<sup>39</sup> O'Donnell, *Bunker*, p. 14.

<sup>40</sup> Tudor Georgescu, 'Hitler's Downfall Revisited', *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions*, Vol. 7, No. 3 (2006), pp. 373, 375.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid*, p. 376.

<sup>42</sup> Luke Bennett, 'The Bunker: Metaphor, materiality and management', *Culture and Organization*, Vol. 17, No. 2 (2011), pp. 155, 160-162, 167.

German suicide of 1945 and demonstrated that Hitler's suicide was neither unique nor inconsistent with his character as some authors and eyewitnesses claimed.<sup>43</sup> Such accounts supported Trevor-Roper's theories on the inherent nihilism in Nazi ideology which arguably stemmed directly from Hitler's suicidal tendencies.<sup>44</sup> Combined with analysis of Hitler's medical condition in April 1945, they undermined theories of Hitler's escape by supporting Trevor-Roper's argument that Hitler was physically and psychologically unable to escape from the bunker.<sup>45</sup> However, as numerous scientists argued in 2005, only DNA analysis of the remains thought to be Hitler's could completely solve the issue.<sup>46</sup>

Due to the extensive literature about Hitler's death, numerous historical inaccuracies have been perpetuated by historians reproducing the mistakes in other publications.<sup>47</sup> Joachimsthaler sought to rectify these historical untruths. Through analysis of international documents and eyewitness testimonies he concluded that Hitler shot himself in the right temple.<sup>48</sup> However, he analyses no British primary source documents.<sup>49</sup> Consequently, he presented an incomplete account with some possible untruths of its own. Joachimsthaler's analysis of a British perspective extends only to Trevor-Roper's investigations.<sup>50</sup> Nevertheless, Joachimsthaler's methodology demonstrated that when a historical issue is clouded by a mass of literature disseminating inaccuracies, it is essential to return to primary sources in order to regain perspective on official conclusions. This methodology is useful when new evidence emerges that confuses the issue further such as the 2009 DNA results which inspired a series of publications claiming that Hitler escaped the bunker.

In *Hitler, The Survival Myth*, McKale shows how many survival rumours which are popular today, such as Hitler escaping to Argentina leaving a double to be burnt in Berlin, have been repeatedly published in newspapers since 1945.<sup>51</sup> McKale does not blame such rumours solely on

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<sup>43</sup> David R. Beisel, 'The German Suicide, 1945', *The Journal of Psychohistory*, Vol. 34, No. 4 (2007), pp. 303-308. See also Christian Goeschel, 'Suicide at the End of the Third Reich', *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 41, No. 1 (2006), pp.153,155,157-158.

<sup>44</sup> Trevor-Roper, *Hitler*, pp. 4,43,64. See also Beisel, 'Suicide', p. 309; Goeschel, 'Suicide', p. 155; Fest, *Bunker*, p. 171.

<sup>45</sup> Trevor-Roper, *Hitler*, p. 63. See also D Doyle, 'Adolf Hitler's medical care', *Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh* (2005), pp. 75-80; McKale, *Survival*, p. 98.

<sup>46</sup> Marchetti, Boschi, Polacco and Rainio, 'Death', pp. 1147,1151-1152.

<sup>47</sup> Joachimsthaler, *Hitler*, pp. 8,40,179.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid, pp. 8,177.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid, p. 8.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> McKale, *Survival*, pp. 6,62,131,140-141.

Soviet conduct but argues that Western journalists through widespread publication of survival rumours and statements by officials such as Eisenhower that Hitler could be alive, aided their dissemination.<sup>52</sup> However, through detailed analysis of Soviet Cold War foreign policy, McKale, like many historians, argues that Stalin's political aims (discussed further in Chapter Two) provided the main impetus for such rumours.<sup>53</sup> Methodologically, McKale focuses primarily on newspaper analysis. Whilst this has advantages, such as the ability to demonstrate how various 'Hitler Waves' consisting of widespread media coverage about Hitler occur when new evidence emerges, newspaper analysis can only provide a limited perspective.<sup>54</sup> For example, although McKale refers to public opinion by assessing opinion polls, his analysis of the views of government officials is minimal and derives mainly from memoirs and other published works.<sup>55</sup> This represents a crucial gap in perspective as only by analysing the opinions of officials in classified documents can the true effect and substance of survival rumours be assessed. Analysing such documents is arguably necessary to disprove the new 'Hitler Wave' of conspiratorial publications produced by the 2009 DNA results.

The historical debate regarding Hitler's death since 2009 has been dominated by conspiracy theories. The most popular theory is provided in *Grey Wolf*, which received considerable media coverage.<sup>56</sup> Like similar theories, the book emphasises the 2009 DNA results, statements made by Soviet and American officials that Hitler had escaped, and criticises historians for using unreliable eyewitness testimonies.<sup>57</sup> It argues that Hitler fled to Argentina in 1945.<sup>58</sup> Although the authors analyse many Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) documents concerning the possibility of Hitler's escape, they fail to analyse any British War Office documents relating to Hitler's death and

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid, pp. 59-61,65. See also Petrova and Watson, *Death*, p. 15.

<sup>53</sup> McKale, *Survival*, pp. 40-41. See also Roberts in Vinogradov, Pogonyi and Teptzov (eds), *KGB*, pp. 10,12.

<sup>54</sup> McKale, *Survival*, pp. 106,146.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid, p. 32.

<sup>56</sup> Simon Dunstan and Gerrard Williams, *Grey Wolf: The Escape of Adolf Hitler* (New York: Sterling, 2011). See also Rick Dewsbury and Allan Hall, 'Did Hitler and Eva Braun flee Berlin and die (divorced) of old age in Argentina?', *Daily Mail* (18/10/2011), <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2050137/Did-Hitler-Eva-Braun-flee-Berlin-die-old-age-Argentina.html> [accessed: 02/04/2015] and Adrian Lee, 'Did Adolf Hitler Escape?', *Daily Express* (17/10/2011), <http://www.express.co.uk/expressyourself/277962/Did-Adolf-Hitler-escape> [accessed: 02/04/2015] and Sky News television interview with Gerrard Williams (16/10/2011), YouTube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JuLPMCxvBf8> and Sir David Frost interviews Gerrard Williams, YouTube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=03aEr4SqVpM>.

<sup>57</sup> Dunstan and Williams, *Wolf*, pp. xix,xxi,xxii. See also Harry Cooper, *Hitler in Argentina* (Hernando, Florida: CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2014), pp. 8,16,25-26,129; Ron T. Hansig, *Hitler's Escape* (Twickenham: Athena Press, 2005), pp. viii,53-54; Levenda, *Ratline*, pp. 18,21-25,27-28,40,43,173,229.

<sup>58</sup> Dunstan and Williams, *Wolf*, p. xix.

consequently overlook documents that arguably disprove their theory.<sup>59</sup> Academic historians such as Richard J. Evans have dismissed such theories but have failed to acknowledge or reassess the evidence surrounding Hitler's death in light of the recent DNA results.<sup>60</sup> The failure of academic historians to engage sufficiently in such debates has arguably fuelled the increase of conspiracy theories. Indeed, similar theories have recently been published such as *Hitler in Argentina*, which claims to provide 'solid proof' of Hitler's escape.<sup>61</sup> Such publications raise questions regarding the role of public history and outline the issues that arise when academic historians fail to fully engage in public history debates. Christopher Gilbert analysed public interpretations of Hitler's death in the form of *Downfall* parodies and concluded that such interpretations are harmless when presented as fiction.<sup>62</sup> However, as McKale argues, when presented as historical fact, the idea that Hitler escaped, thereby fooling the Allies, is dangerous, as it romanticises Hitler, ignores the inherent nihilism in Nazi ideology that resulted in his demise and suggestions made by books such as *Grey Wolf* that the western democracies allowed him to escape may encourage neo-Nazism.<sup>63</sup> Such theories should therefore be challenged.

Much of the literature about Hitler's death is written by 'amateur historians', authors who unlike academic historians are not trained to practice history but are often skilled in other areas such as journalism.<sup>64</sup> Professor William Rubinstein analysed a variety of similar historical subjects which have attracted a large amount of conspiratorial publications by amateur historians, but which academic historians generally ignore.<sup>65</sup> Rubinstein argues that this is because subjects such as 'who was Jack the Ripper?' tend to lack the wider context which academic historians consider important to engage in a detailed study.<sup>66</sup> Some historians may therefore question why the seemingly narrow topic of Hitler's death requires a detailed analysis. However, as Petrova and Watson point out, the search

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid, pp. 337-338.

<sup>60</sup> Richard J. Evans, *Altered Pasts: Counterfactuals in History* (London: Little Brown, 2014), pp. 84-86.

<sup>61</sup> Cooper, *Argentina*, p. 2.

<sup>62</sup> Christopher J. Gilbert 'Playing with Hitler: Downfall and its Ludic Uptake', *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, Vol. 30, No. 5 (2013), pp. 419-420.

<sup>63</sup> McKale, *Survival*, pp. 199-205. See also Dunstan and Williams, *Wolf*, p. XXX.

<sup>64</sup> William D. Rubinstein, *Shadow Pasts: History's Mysteries* (Harlow: Pearson, Longman, 2008), p. 2

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid, p. 4.

for Hitler's method of death became a search for his character.<sup>67</sup> The way in which his regime ended was intended to be a Wagnerian Twilight of the Gods, an example to posterity. Combined with the recent surge of survival rumours and media coverage, the question of Hitler's death has acquired further cultural significance. By researching Hitler's death, one is not merely researching the death of one man, but rather the death of the Nazi regime, a vision of Europe, the legacy and character of those ideas and the beginning of the Cold War.

## II

### **Filling The Gaps: A New Approach**

Although a vast amount of literature has been produced about Hitler's death, insufficient attention has been given to the British investigations. Such investigations extended beyond Trevor-Roper's account and consist of international and interdepartmental co-operation conducted before and after Trevor-Roper's investigations. Whilst a large amount of research has focused on Soviet documents, there has never been a full analysis of the British investigations into Hitler's death. Consequently, this dissertation will implement Joachimsthaler's methodology of returning to official records but in the more refined form of a case study, focusing solely on British documents, which Joachimsthaler overlooks. Qualitative analysis of a wide variety of documents from the National Archives will be implemented in order to provide as close to a full perspective on the British investigations into Hitler's death that can be obtained with the documents currently available to historians. Analysis of Foreign Office documents will distance this dissertation from the narrative of Trevor-Roper's 'one man show' which is prevalent in the existing historiography. Trevor-Roper's investigations will be analysed, but from new thematic angles using new evidence from recently declassified MI5 and Cabinet documents, not present in the existing historiography. It is hoped that by returning to underused and overlooked documents, this dissertation can shed further light on the mystery surrounding Hitler's death and provide a foundation for future case studies using archives throughout the world.

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<sup>67</sup> Petrova and Watson, *Death*, p. 75.



There are some limitations to relying solely on official documents. It is particularly difficult for historians to research the workings of intelligence agencies which are by their very nature intent on remaining as secretive as possible.<sup>68</sup> All records of MI6 are withheld from public use on these grounds.<sup>69</sup> However, recent legislation has enabled the release of various MI5 documents, which, as will be seen, sometimes contain MI6 documents that provide an insight into its activities.<sup>70</sup> However, even declassified documents provide challenges to historians. For example, important decisions made by officials are sometimes not documented and can even be made over the telephone.<sup>71</sup> Moreover, declassified intelligence files go through a process of selection and only a minority of files enter the public domain; the majority are destroyed.<sup>72</sup> This limits the scope of perspective which historians can provide. Nevertheless, as Keith Jeffery argues, the assembly of fragments from a wide variety of documents can provide a larger picture.<sup>73</sup> Furthermore, the majority of intelligence files available to the public concern Second World War topics which makes this dissertation able to provide more detail than studies about later periods of intelligence history. Indeed, the War Office files on Hitler's death are extensive. Consequently, this dissertation is able to provide a detailed analysis of official conclusions, methodologies and acknowledge previously unpublished contributions of intelligence officers.

This dissertation is divided into three chapters of mainly primary source analysis. Chapter One analyses the opinions of British intelligence officials concerning rumours of Hitler's survival to draw conclusions regarding the credibility of recent conspiracy theories. Chapter Two assesses whether Cold War political considerations affected the selection of evidence and conclusions provided by British intelligence. Most use is made here of new evidence from recently declassified MI5 and Cabinet documents to provide a fresh insight into the internal and international co-operation of Anglo-American intelligence agencies. Chapter Three provides an analysis of the evidence which

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<sup>68</sup> Jonathan Evans in Christopher Andrew, *The Defence of The Realm, The Authorized History of MI5* (London: Penguin, 2009), p. xv.

<sup>69</sup> Stephen Twigge, Edward Hampshire and Graham Macklin, *British Intelligence: Secrets, Spies and Sources* (Kew, Surrey: The National Archives, 2008), p. 8. See also Stephen Dorril, *MI6: Fifty Years of Special Operations* (London: Fourth Estate Limited, 2000), p. xiii.

<sup>70</sup> Dorril, *MI6*, p. xiii. See also Twigge, Hampshire and Macklin, *Intelligence*, pp. 7-8.

<sup>71</sup> Richard J. Aldrich, *The Hidden Hand: Britain, America and Cold War Secret Intelligence* (London: John Murray, 2002), p. 638. See also Dorril, *MI6*, p. xiv.

<sup>72</sup> Aldrich, *Hidden*, pp. 5-7. See also Keith Jeffery, *MI6: The History of the Secret Intelligence Service 1909-1949* (London: Bloomsbury, 2011), p. xi.

<sup>73</sup> Jeffery, *MI6*, p. xiv.

convinced British intelligence of Hitler's suicide and assesses how this evidence and future historical conclusions may be affected by the 2009 DNA results. This dissertation will therefore be the first to combine all elements of the British investigations, including new evidence from recently declassified files, in a single study and thus fill the gap in the literature between case studies of Soviet documents and works that do not analyse British documents in enough detail, if at all. It will also be the first to challenge recent conspiracy theories using archival material and assess the significance of the 2009 DNA results, without resorting to conspiratorial conclusions of Hitler's escape.

## Chapter One: Rumours of Survival

### I

#### ‘Sheer Poppycock’: The Foreign Office Investigates

Most publications about Hitler’s death only discuss Trevor-Roper’s investigations.<sup>1</sup> In doing so, they give the impression that Britain was inactive throughout the summer of 1945 and only began investigations when the Soviets claimed Hitler was hiding in the British Zone. However, the Foreign Office was investigating the ‘Facts about Hitler’s death’ as early as 2 May 1945.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, British officials were receiving and commenting on information about Hitler’s last days from international sources and providing details to Winston Churchill to respond to parliamentary questions on the subject, prior to Trevor-Roper’s involvement.<sup>3</sup> Much of the information analysed by Foreign Office officials concerned survival rumours. Many rumours derive from newspaper articles, similar to those discussed in McKale’s book. One can provide a more detailed assessment of the basis and credibility of recent conspiracy theories by analysing the opinions of British officials, and enhance existing historical knowledge by providing an official perspective on the survival rumours analysed by McKale.

‘Hitler Still Alive Says Moscow’ is a headline typical of many British newspaper cuttings collected by the Foreign Office in July 1945.<sup>4</sup> British reporters had been told by a Russian officer who discovered a charred body believed to be Hitler’s that it was a ‘very poor double’. From 11 September 1945, a plethora of survival rumours sent from the British Embassy in Moscow accumulated in the Foreign Office, beginning with the claim that Hitler was seen in Hamburg, living under an assumed name.<sup>5</sup> In a telegram of 12 September 1945, Frank Roberts informed the Foreign Office of an article in the Russian journal *Pravda* which claimed that the Deputy Burgermeister of Berlin was ‘convinced Hitler was alive’ and that all Russian newspapers of the 11<sup>th</sup> stated that British intelligence officers

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<sup>1</sup> Some of the documents analysed in this chapter are also analysed in Richard Overy, *Interrogations, Inside the minds of the Nazi elite* (London: Penguin, 2001), p. 101. However, this is in the context of the Nuremberg trials and lacks detail. There is no publication specifically about Hitler’s death in which the documents are referenced.

<sup>2</sup> The National Archives (TNA), FO 371/46748, Roberts (Moscow) to FO (02/05/1945) and WO communication concerning ‘Fact’s about Hitler’s Death’, (04/05/1945).

<sup>3</sup> TNA, FO 371/46748, ‘Draft Reply to Parliamentary Question No. 19’, (15/05/1945).

<sup>4</sup> TNA, FO 371/46749, *News Chronicle*, *Daily Telegraph* and *Daily Herald* (05/07/1945).

<sup>5</sup> TNA, FO 371/46749, Roberts (Moscow) to FO (11/09/1945).

were searching for Hitler (who had recently changed his appearance by ‘plastic operation’) in Hamburg.<sup>6</sup> One puzzled Foreign Office official wrote ‘This peculiarity that Hitler is still alive in the British zone or in the Argentine keeps cropping up’ and requested clarification.<sup>7</sup> In a reply which arguably summarised the views of British intelligence on all survival rumours, one official responded ‘I believe this to be sheer poppycock. The “plastic operation” which “changed Hitler’s appearance” was probably carried out with a service revolver in the Führerbunker’.<sup>8</sup> The Foreign Office was confident in its dismissal of survival rumours due to the evidence that had been accumulated suggesting Hitler was dead (discussed further in Chapter Three). It is sufficient to comment here that the Foreign Office was impressed by an intelligence report produced by SHAEF (Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force) on 30 July 1945 which concluded that ‘Despite Russian scepticism, it seems probable from all we know of Hitler’s last days, he chose to die in Berlin’.<sup>9</sup>

Not all of the survival rumours investigated by the Foreign Office came from Moscow, although it appears that most rumours were inspired by the Soviet accusations. In October 1945, Eisenhower was temporarily convinced by his ‘Russian Friends’ that Hitler was alive, but later retracted his statement after a discussion with Trevor-Roper on the evidence available to the contrary.<sup>10</sup> Despite the initial confusion caused by Eisenhower’s remarks, the Foreign Office believed ‘there are no reasonable grounds for supporting that Hitler is anything but dead’.<sup>11</sup> Having confidence in that conviction must have made it tedious for Foreign Office officials to receive reports from the Dominions Office stating that ‘in view of the suggestion that Hitler may be in Argentine’ it may be useful to know that an ‘ardent Nazi’ is living in Buenos Aires if there is any ‘substance’ in the rumour.<sup>12</sup> One official replied ‘It is very doubtful that this will be of useful help to anyone’.<sup>13</sup> ‘Very doubtful indeed’, confirmed his colleague. At other times, the Foreign Office viewed such reports with a sense of humour. A report received in November 1945 from the British Legation in

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<sup>6</sup> TNA, FO 371/46749, Roberts (Moscow) to FO (12/09/1945). See also Frank Roberts, *Dealing With Dictators* (London: George Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1991), p. 93.

<sup>7</sup> TNA, FO 371/46749, FO Minutes (12/09/1945).

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> TNA, FO 371/46749, ‘Hitler’s Last Days’, SHAEF Memorandum (30/07/1945).

<sup>10</sup> TNA, FO 371/46749, *The Times* (13/10/1945) and Roberts (Moscow) to FO (09/10/1945). See also Trevor-Roper, *Hitler*, p. xlvii.

<sup>11</sup> TNA, FO 371/46749, FO Minutes (09/10/1945).

<sup>12</sup> TNA, FO 371/46749, Letter from the Dominions Office (29/09/1945).

<sup>13</sup> TNA, FO 371/46749, FO Minutes (29/09/1945).

Copenhagen claimed that a Danish lady informed them that her friend who had previously predicted an RAF raid before it happened, had dreamt that Hitler was disguised as a monk, having shaved his moustache.<sup>14</sup> Commenting on this, one official stated ‘I hope the lady’s dream is true’ as ‘we could then await with suspense’ the amusing scenario of Hitler’s return as a monk.<sup>15</sup> The statement of one Foreign Office official that ‘there will be no end to stories of this kind’ has proved to be prophetic.<sup>16</sup> Indeed, the War Office continued investigating survival rumours until 1949 and some authors have attempted to publish such rumours as fact as recently as 2011. The reasons why such rumours were continually investigated, however, was not because of any doubt that Hitler was dead, as will be made clear in the following analysis of the War Office investigations into rumours of Hitler’s survival.

## II

### **‘Baumgart is telling lies’: The War Office Investigates**

It has become something of a tradition for historians in publications about Hitler’s death to describe the fantastic locations in which Hitler has been reported to have been seen alive after April 1945 all over the world. The survival rumours received by the War Office are no exception to this. In an MI14 (established in 1940 to provide intelligence on Nazi Germany) ‘Dossier on Adolf Hitler’, created prior to Trevor-Roper’s investigations, Hitler was reported to have been seen in Ireland disguised as a woman and in Egypt having converted to Islam.<sup>17</sup> Such rumours were described as ‘wild’ and usually obtained little or no comment. However, other rumours were taken more seriously and investigated thoroughly during and after Trevor-Roper’s investigations. For instance, in September 1946 an investigation named ‘Operation Conan Doyle’ was undertaken following ‘spiritualist revelations’ that a woman named Eva Hücker was in fact Eva Braun.<sup>18</sup> A Mr. and Mrs. Hall had informed MI14 that they had received messages from Mr. Hall’s dead father, who was a spiritualist, regarding a man named Stanley Knight who committed suicide after contracting venereal disease from Hücker. It was claimed that Hücker lived in Hanover with Hitler who had undergone a ‘facial operation’ and was

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<sup>14</sup> TNA, FO 371/46749, Letter from British Legation Copenhagen (29/10/1945).

<sup>15</sup> TNA, FO 371/46749, FO Minutes (29/10/1945).

<sup>16</sup> TNA, FO 371/46749, FO Minutes (26/09/1945).

<sup>17</sup> TNA, WO 208/4475, BBC monitoring service, ‘Hadji Hitler’ (25/10/1945) and ‘Hitler in Ireland’ (16/06/1945). See also Twigge, Hampshire and Macklin, *Intelligence*, p. 97.

<sup>18</sup> TNA, WO 208/3791, ‘Operation Conan Doyle’ (04/10/1946) and MI14 signal report, p. 182 and Hirsch to Lethbridge (28/09/1946).

disguised under the name Heinrich, wearing a blonde wig.<sup>19</sup> Although MI14 considered the story was unlikely to be true, they requested it to be investigated as many people still believed Hitler was alive and disproving such rumours would help prove his death. Accordingly, British intelligence officers managed to trace Hücker and discovered that she was a prostitute who bore no resemblance to Braun.<sup>20</sup>

One survival rumour was taken more seriously by British intelligence and investigated for six months since September 1947. This was the report of Frau Anderson, given to a British intelligence officer in Germany. She was concerned that not many people in Berlin believed Hitler was dead and reported that it was widely believed in Hohenlychen that 'Hitler was definitely seen to take a lake-side walk on 24th April 1945'.<sup>21</sup> She also claimed that it was believed that a Fieseler Storch (German light aircraft) carrying Hitler used to land frequently on a grass slope in the area so he could visit Dr. Karl Gebhardt in the SS sanatorium there.<sup>22</sup> Although it appeared to be a 'wild goose chase', the War Office initiated investigations.<sup>23</sup> The story was reported to USFET (United States Forces European Theatre) with a note stating that Anderson's story coincidentally coincided with a similar story reported by Carmen Mory in July 1945 that Skorzeny's paratroops (famous for rescuing Mussolini) had rescued Hitler and other top Nazis from Berlin, taken them to a secret airfield in Hohenlychen and helped them escape.<sup>24</sup> It was stressed however that Mory was most unreliable as she had made a series of inaccurate statements before her suicide after being sentenced to death for war crimes at Nuremberg.<sup>25</sup> This particular survival rumour was disproved on 11 March 1948 when the War Office received interrogation results from both Gebhardt and Skorzeny.<sup>26</sup> Gebhardt was certain that Hitler did not visit him and that no plane landed near the sanatorium in the last days.<sup>27</sup> Skorzeny stated that no high Nazis were evacuated by his unit and if Hitler had been evacuated by his men, he would have

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<sup>19</sup> TNA, WO 208/3791, Hirsch to Lethbridge (28/09/1946).

<sup>20</sup> TNA, WO 208/3791, Lethbridge to Hirsch (09/10/1946).

<sup>21</sup> TNA, WO 208/3791, Air Intelligence HQ (12/09/1947).

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> TNA, WO 208/3791, Memorandum (09/10/1947).

<sup>24</sup> TNA, WO 208/3791, Hodges to Potter (10/12/1947) and TNA, WO 208/3787, 'Report on possible fate and location of Hitler, Bormann and Fegelein' (27/10/1945).

<sup>25</sup> TNA, WO 208/3791, Hodges to Potter (10/12/1947).

<sup>26</sup> TNA, WO 208/3791, Moe to Deputy Director of Military Intelligence (DDMI) (11/03/1948).

<sup>27</sup> TNA, WO 208/3791, Interrogation of Karl Gebhardt (24/02/1948).

known.<sup>28</sup> It was emphasised in correspondence to USFET that ‘no undue importance’ was attached to the ‘implication of Hitler’s survival’ and that the reason for investigating was in case ‘other leading Nazis had visited the Sanatorium’.<sup>29</sup> Clearly, British intelligence did not doubt that Hitler was dead but felt it was important to ‘properly evaluate’ such rumours in light of any information they may provide with regards to other top Nazis. As will be demonstrated, this was the policy in all future investigations of survival rumours.

The longest and arguably most important War Office investigation into any survival rumour began in December 1947 and was investigated until June 1948. This rumour originated with the testimony of Luftwaffe Captain Baumgart at his trial in Poland in December 1947 for war crimes. In a statement reported in the Polish newspaper *Express Wieczorny*, Baumgart claimed to have flown Hitler and Eva Braun to Denmark in April 1945.<sup>30</sup> Due to Allied bombing, he claimed to have landed and stayed overnight in Magdeburg on April 28 before continuing to Denmark the following day. Upon landing, Baumgart asserted, Hitler shook his hand and gave him a cheque for 20,000 RM. This statement was reported in newspapers throughout the world. Further weight was added to this story when the War Office received information from an ex-Nazi informant working for British intelligence, stating that a plane landed unexpectedly at Hadersleben airfield in Denmark between 26-28 April 1945. The informant stated that ‘Only the higher ranking officers were allowed to approach the plane and the purpose of the flight did not become generally known’.<sup>31</sup> Rumours spread that the plane carried important personnel from Berlin. The War Office had also collected cuttings from a German newspaper suggesting that Hitler could have escaped to Argentina in a U-boat, a rumour which was also stated in a German civilian communications intercept.<sup>32</sup> Accordingly the War Office began investigations, tracking down Luftwaffe pilots to verify Baumgart’s claims. However, Captain Hodges emphasised in several letters to intelligence officers that ‘from the evidence available at this HQ’ it is considered ‘practically certain’ that Hitler and Braun committed suicide on 30 April 1945 but it is ‘still the policy to investigate leads which hold any promise of yielding useful historical

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<sup>28</sup> TNA, WO 208/3791, Moe to DDMI (11/03/1948).

<sup>29</sup> TNA, WO 208/3791, Hodges to Potter (10/12/1947).

<sup>30</sup> TNA, WO 208/3791, *Hamburger Allgemeine* (07/10/1947), *Westdeutsche Rundschau* (04/12/1947), *The Times* (13/12/1947), *Lüneburger Landezeitung* (16/01/1948), *Express Wieczorny* (18/12/1947).

<sup>31</sup> TNA, WO 208/3791, ‘Rumours concerning whereabouts of Adolf Hitler’ (02/03/1948).

<sup>32</sup> TNA, WO 208/3791, *Lübecker Frei Presse* (31/12/1947) and Censorship Civil Communications (22/10/1947).

information' and in instances where it is 'thought possible that other high ranking personalities might have escaped from Germany by the method indicated'.<sup>33</sup> Conspiracy theorists such as Cooper pose the question to the reader 'If Adolf Hitler killed himself in Berlin...why were the world's spy services still looking for him into the middle of the 1950s?'.<sup>34</sup> Far from doubting the evidence of Hitler's death, British intelligence officers investigated survival rumours to gain information on other Nazis who may have escaped and to provide evidence for future historians to disprove rumours of Hitler's escape. After interviewing various Luftwaffe pilots who were stationed in Berlin and Magdeburg at the end of April who all refuted Baumgart's story, and confirming that Magdeburg was overrun by US forces on 18 April 1945, the War Office concluded that 'Baumgart is telling lies'.<sup>35</sup> These conclusions undermine the argument in the most popular conspiracy theory book to date, *Grey Wolf*.

### III

#### Debunking the Conspiracy Theories

In *Grey Wolf*, pages of documents concerning 'Hitler's Escape' are published verbatim.<sup>36</sup> Such documents bear the official stamps of American intelligence agencies and are often reproduced with statements of prominent officials such as Eisenhower and Stalin that Hitler had escaped. Such documents and statements, when selectively removed and analysed isolated from their context may give the impression that Hitler escaped. Indeed, if one published numerous British documents analysed in this chapter concerning 'Hitler Survival Rumours', without including the opinions and conclusions of officials, the same impression could be created. However, the opinions of British intelligence officers make it clear that all such stories amounted to nothing. This selective methodology is employed by various publications, including *Hitler in Argentina* which claims that similar documents published verbatim constitute 'documented proof of Hitler's escape'.<sup>37</sup> Such an approach is dishonest and an affront to the very purpose of the historian, to discover the truth about the past. Therefore, such theories should be challenged in order to promote the interests of truth,

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<sup>33</sup> TNA, WO 208/3791, Hodges, 'Rumours concerning whereabouts of Adolf Hitler' (02/03/1948) and Hodges, 'Hitler Survival Rumours' (03/12/1947).

<sup>34</sup> Cooper, *Argentina*, p. 26.

<sup>35</sup> TNA, WO 208/3791, 'Rumours concerning the whereabouts of Adolf Hitler' (16/04/1948) and 'Hitler Survival Rumour' (16/01/1948) and 'Hitler Survival Rumour' (16/06/1948) and 'Baumgart is telling Lies', p. 25 and 'Hitler Survival Rumour' (17/06/1948).

<sup>36</sup> Dunstan and Williams, *Wolf*, pp. 163,222,225,266-267,282.

<sup>37</sup> Cooper, *Argentina*, pp. 117-229.



increase public knowledge of genuine historical facts and prevent any further conspiracies bringing disrepute to serious historical enquiry.

It is clear that when the documents employed by conspiracy theorists are analysed to include the entire context, no conspiracy theory stands up to close scrutiny. Williams claimed in a television interview that ‘we have the testimony from a Warsaw court of the pilot who flew them out’.<sup>38</sup> That pilot is Baumgart, the same Baumgart whom British intelligence established in 1948 was telling lies. *Grey Wolf* repeats his disproved story about landing at Magdeburg.<sup>39</sup> Williams concludes that Hitler escaped to Argentina, a rumour which was dismissed by the Foreign Office as early as 1945 as ‘sheer poppycock’. Williams even claimed that Trevor-Roper was unsuitable to lead the Hitler investigations.<sup>40</sup> However, Trevor-Roper had much experience during the Second World War deciphering German signals and interrogating Nazis as a member of MI6.<sup>41</sup> Yet, *Grey Wolf* still received considerable media coverage and similar rumours of Hitler’s survival are still published in newspapers today.<sup>42</sup> McKale’s argument that the press take advantage of the general reader who would not have read the factual evidence concerning Hitler’s death to make money selling survival rumours is arguably confirmed by the extensive coverage received by conspiracy theories as recently as 2011.<sup>43</sup> This makes studies such as this even more necessary, in the interests of genuine historical enquiry and the enhancement of knowledge.

Another crucial argument for Williams and similar conspiracy theorists is that a double was killed and burnt in Hitler’s place, allowing Hitler to escape.<sup>44</sup> The 2009 DNA results seemingly added further weight to this argument and have been exploited in *Grey Wolf* to this end. However, as will be demonstrated in Chapter Three, the DNA results are in no way suitable evidence to support such conclusions. McKale’s argument that the western press are partly to blame for the widespread perpetuation of survival rumours is further confirmed by Trevor-Roper’s interrogation of Baroness

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<sup>38</sup> Sky News interview with Gerrard Williams (16/10/2011).

<sup>39</sup> Dunstan and Williams, *Wolf*, pp. 160-161.

<sup>40</sup> Sky News interview with Gerrard Williams (16/10/2011).

<sup>41</sup> Adam Sisman, *Hugh Trevor-Roper, The Biography* (London: Phoenix, 2011), pp. 81,88,94,117-118,125.

<sup>42</sup> Owen Bennet, ‘Are these classified FBI files proof Adolf Hitler escaped by SUBMARINE to Argentina?’, *Daily Express* (15/04/2014), <http://www.express.co.uk/news/weird/470586/Are-these-classified-FBI-files-proof-ADOLF-HITLER-escaped-by-SUBMARINE-to-Argentina> [accessed: 24/01/2015].

<sup>43</sup> McKale, *Survival*, pp. 198-199.

<sup>44</sup> Dunstan and Williams, *Wolf*, pp. xx,156-157. See also Cooper, *Argentina*, p. 62; Hansig, *Escape*, pp. 25,32,38-39.

von Varo, filed in the recently declassified MI5 documents. She was among the women summoned by Hitler to say his final goodbyes and claims that a newspaper reporter tried to force the opinion on her that Hitler was a drugged double, an idea she described as ‘absurd; it was Hitler’.<sup>45</sup> The same reporter, Leslie Randall, was later denied access to the British files on Hitler’s death in 1948 as intelligence officers were suspicious about him trying to ‘rehash this very old history’.<sup>46</sup> The idea of Hitler being replaced by a drugged double who said the final goodbye to his staff with dreary eyes while the real Hitler escaped is repeated in various conspiracy theories. Hitler’s dreary eyes are in no way an indication of a drugged double. An analysis of Hitler’s medical records reveals that ‘the Führer complained’ of seeing everything as through a ‘thin veil over his right eye’ in March 1944, a problem which could have returned under the stressful circumstances of the bunker in 1945.<sup>47</sup> British intelligence gave a powerful argument against a similar rumour reported by Randall in 1945. Indeed, the rumour was described as ‘ludicrously garbled’, ‘pure speculation’ based on ‘theory’ not fact.

Further:

‘Hitler was not in a state of Coma when he said goodbye to the women; he was not supported by anyone’ and ‘it is important that such uncritical versions of the Hitler Story should not receive circulation as fact. We are satisfied that the first hand evidence at our disposal is now so full and consistent that, apart from direct eye-witness accounts of events in the bunker after midday on April 30th, no further material is likely to add anything significant to the story; and mere theories, unsupported by any eye-witness testimony, are worthless’.<sup>48</sup>

Indeed, the War Office remained confident that the evidence it collected ‘does more than offset the numerous and vague reports of Hitler’s survival which have been circulated’.<sup>49</sup>

The evidence analysed in this chapter demonstrates that all British intelligence branches involved in investigating Hitler’s death considered rumours of Hitler’s survival to be ‘sheer poppycock’. This does not mean that all survival rumours were dismissed off hand; to the contrary, those rumours which appeared to be more plausible were given quite detailed investigation. Since many of the survival rumours investigated have been recycled and used in recent conspiracy theories, the British investigations provide a powerful argument against them. They also provide some

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<sup>45</sup> TNA, KV 4/354, Interrogation of Baroness von Varo (01/10/1945).

<sup>46</sup> TNA, WO 208/3791, Memorandum, ‘Release of information re Hitler to the press’ (19/03/1948).

<sup>47</sup> TNA, WO 208/3789, ‘Record of Eye Examination made 2 Mar 44’, p. 163.

<sup>48</sup> TNA, WO 208/3787, ‘Hitler’s Death’ (07/11/1945) and Trevor-Roper to Ramsbotham, Memorandum, p. 55.

<sup>49</sup> TNA, WO 208/3791, ‘Adolf Hitler’ (19/11/1947).

credence to McKale's argument that the western press bears some responsibility for the seemingly never ending perpetuation of survival rumours, although as will be seen in the following chapters, the brunt of this responsibility lies with the Soviets. Some conspiracy theorists claim that political motivations overshadowed the need to establish the truth about Hitler's death.<sup>50</sup> This is a more serious argument which requires further analysis. It is indeed legitimate to question the role of MI6 and individuals such as Dick White, the quality and seemingly late timing of the British investigations, why Trevor-Roper was chosen to lead them, and the basis of Soviet accusations of Hitler's escape, without resorting to unfounded assertions. Such questions will be addressed in the following chapter.

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<sup>50</sup> Levenda, *Ratline*, pp. 22,25,31,34. See also Thomas, *Doppelgangers*, pp. 94-95.

## Chapter Two: Political Motivations? British, American and Soviet Conduct

### I

#### Investigating the Investigations

The way in which the British investigations into Hitler's death were conducted has been criticised by various authors. Conspiracy theorists such as Levenda have argued that political motivations overshadowed the need to discover the truth about Hitler's death and that the investigations were rushed to counter Soviet claims of Hitler's survival in the British Zone of Germany.<sup>1</sup> Williams argues that the Allies allowed Hitler to escape in return for Nazi intelligence to use against the Soviets in the coming Cold War.<sup>2</sup> O'Donnell criticised Allied interrogators for lacking objectivity and asking the wrong questions.<sup>3</sup> In this chapter, the aims and conduct of British intelligence and their co-operation with the Americans and the Soviets during the Hitler investigations will be analysed in order to determine whether there is any truth to such accusations of poor British conduct and political motivations.

Although large scale British investigations into Hitler's death did not begin until Trevor-Roper was appointed by Dick White to undertake them in September 1945, British intelligence was gathering evidence concerning Hitler's death prior to Trevor-Roper's involvement. Nevertheless, it was the Soviet accusation that Hitler was hiding in the British Zone that inspired White, then head of Counter-Intelligence in the British Zone of Germany, to ask Trevor-Roper to initiate his thorough investigation into Hitler's death.<sup>4</sup> In a letter to Thomas 'Tar' Robertson, asking whether Trevor-Roper could be made available to lead the Hitler investigations, White refers to a 'considerable amount of comment in the press' speculating 'whether or not Hitler is still living'.<sup>5</sup> He describes Trevor-Roper as a 'first-rate chap' who has 'kept the closest tabs on the matter' and is already familiar with reports on various Nazis relevant to the Hitler case. This demonstrates that the claims of conspiracy theorists that Trevor-Roper was unsuitable to lead the investigations are incorrect. Indeed, White was

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<sup>1</sup> Levenda, *Ratline*, pp. 22,25,31,34.

<sup>2</sup> Dunstan and Williams, *Wolf*, p. XXX.

<sup>3</sup> O'Donnell, *Bunker*, p. 14.

<sup>4</sup> Sisman, *Trevor-Roper*, p. 133.

<sup>5</sup> TNA, WO 208/3787, White to Robertson (10/09/1945).

impressed by an intelligence report written by Trevor-Roper concerning Nazi secret intelligence during the war.<sup>6</sup> White further stated that it would be useful for ‘quadripartite’ discussion with the Soviets who had expressed the desire to ‘review the evidence on the subject with the other occupational powers’ to undertake a detailed investigation. White’s desire to review evidence with the Soviets is instructive for section III of this chapter, as will be demonstrated, the desire to maintain co-operation with the Soviets on wider political issues was hindered by Soviet accusations of Hitler’s survival in the British Zone. Indeed, as Sean Greenwood points out, at this time, many British officials sought to maintain co-operation with the Soviets.<sup>7</sup> Secondly, the desire to prevent a ‘Hitler Myth’ is mentioned in Trevor-Roper’s book and throughout his investigations.<sup>8</sup> Indeed, the idea of Hitler still living, or dying a ‘heroic’ death, was a hindrance to the Anglo-American denazification programme in occupied Germany that was underway at the time. Thirdly, White claims that the investigations would be of ‘historical interest’, a motive which is referred to throughout the investigations. Although political considerations did provide the impetus for the initiation of Trevor-Roper’s investigations, this does not mean that political motivations affected the objectivity of the evidence or the conclusions he produced. In order to determine this, detailed analysis of the investigations must be conducted.

In 1946, Trevor-Roper’s book was referred to the Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC) (a powerful intelligence co-ordinating body attended by the heads of all British intelligence sections and the Foreign Office), in order to determine the desirability of its publication and ensure that any material contained within would not jeopardize the secrecy of the intelligence services.<sup>9</sup> White suggested to the JIC that its publication was desirable as it may prevent the creation of a ‘Hitler Myth’ which was ‘the object’ of ‘the original Press release’ (this refers to Trevor-Roper’s initial intelligence report on the Führer’s death given to the Quadripartite Intelligence Committee (QIC) and the press in modified form on 1 November 1945).<sup>10</sup> The desire to prevent a ‘Hitler Myth’ was re-iterated at the

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<sup>6</sup> Sisman, *Trevor-Roper*, p. 126.

<sup>7</sup> Sean Greenwood, *Britain and the Cold War* (London: Macmillan, 2000), p. 6.

<sup>8</sup> Trevor-Roper, *Hitler*, pp. lviii, 205.

<sup>9</sup> Dorril, *MI6*, p. 67.

<sup>10</sup> TNA, KV 4/354, Minute from MI5 to JIC (03/06/1946).

JIC meeting on 14 June 1946.<sup>11</sup> It was also suggested that the book had ‘propaganda value’ and may be translated into German ‘for dissemination as propaganda’. This view was strongly supported by the Foreign Office. At face value, this would appear to confirm Levenda’s argument that the British investigations were obstructed by political motivations. However, Trevor-Roper told the JIC that ‘the book is intended as history rather than propaganda; I think the facts are true as given; and I have been more concerned to understand the events and their causes and relations, than to push a point of view’.<sup>12</sup> This shows that Trevor-Roper was not influenced by political considerations but intended to establish historical truth, which he believed he achieved through his conclusions about Hitler’s death. Trevor-Roper further stated that ‘the truth is the best...form of propaganda’.<sup>13</sup> By this, he was implying that the truth of how Hitler died, by committing suicide whilst old men and young boys continued to fight for him, would be enough to dissuade the German people from reviving Nazism or revering Hitler, without embellishing the story. Therefore, Levenda’s claim that British intelligence invented the story of Hitler’s death for political purposes is incorrect. This view is supported by further analysis of Trevor-Roper’s investigations.

Although Trevor-Roper clearly did not consider his investigations or conclusions to be influenced by political considerations, the Foreign Office did not share this view. As Greenwood points out, in 1945 most Foreign Office officials believed the main threat to Britain’s security was the revival of an aggressive Germany and therefore desired good relations with the Soviets.<sup>14</sup> On the other hand, Greenwood argues that British military intelligence perceived the Soviets to be the main threat to Britain’s future security.<sup>15</sup> Such disagreements were evident in some aspects of the Hitler investigations, particularly regarding the publication of Hitler’s wills. Indeed, when three copies of Hitler’s wills were discovered following a well-documented Anglo-American joint intelligence operation conducted by Trevor-Roper, a lengthy dispute ensued between the Foreign Office and British military intelligence regarding whether they should be published. In a brief submitted to the JIC, the Foreign Office argued for ‘complete suppression [of the wills] if feasible, in order to deny

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<sup>11</sup> TNA, KV 4/354, JIC Minutes (14/06/1946).

<sup>12</sup> TNA, KV 4/354, JIC Minutes (24/06/1946) and Trevor-Roper to White (19/06/1946).

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Greenwood, *Britain*, pp. 6,8,11.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid, p. 10.

Hitler this posthumous weapon which might assist the renaissance of a nationalist Germany in twenty years time'.<sup>16</sup> Major-General 'Tubby' Lethbridge, head of Intelligence Division (ID) in Germany, on the other hand, argued for 'publication now' as the story could be leaked at a future date when 'the German people might be more receptive to a Hitler mystique than they are today'.<sup>17</sup> However, whilst the Foreign Office was arguing for suppression, the wills were released to the press by General Truscott (Commanding General of American 3<sup>rd</sup> Army, Munich). Adam Sisman argues that this was part of a deliberate tactic by Trevor-Roper who wanted the documents to be published and knowing that the Foreign Office favoured suppression, captured the wills in the American Zone, knowing that they would be published as an American scoop.<sup>18</sup> However, this interpretation, as will be shown, is incorrect. Despite the publication of the wills, the Foreign Office continued to argue that 'the less public notice the documents receive in Germany, inside or outside, so much the better'.<sup>19</sup> Indeed, the Foreign Office attempted to co-ordinate policy with Washington, who agreed that although the wills had already been published, tight restriction of facsimiles and suppression of the original copies should now be implemented.<sup>20</sup> The Foreign Office was concerned that the wills could become 'objects of great sentimental and political value' to many Germans and even contemplated destroying the originals.<sup>21</sup> The War Office on the other hand, took the complete opposite approach.

Major-General Templer believed the wills were 'not such bad documents' and 'apart from the ravings against international Jewry, fairly dignified'.<sup>22</sup> Templer believed they should be published. Lethbridge agreed, adding 'I feel no real harm will come of it' as two other copies were yet to be found and could be published at a less advantageous moment when the Germans were not 'down and out'.<sup>23</sup> The danger of this occurring was highlighted by a threatening anonymous letter received by Heinrich Kopf (Oberpräsident of Hanover) in December 1945. The letter stated that 'Bormann brought us the testament of our beloved Führer' and argued that 'the Anglo-American thieves stole from us the Atom-Bomb', threatened to hang Kopf and other 'traitors' from lampposts and claimed

<sup>16</sup> TNA, CAB 146/438, 'Hitler's Will: Points From Foreign Office Papers' (31/12/1945).

<sup>17</sup> Ibid. See also Aldrich, *Hidden*, p. 181; Dorril, *MI6*, p. 99.

<sup>18</sup> Sisman, *Trevor-Roper*, pp. 140-141.

<sup>19</sup> TNA, CAB 146/438, FO to Washington (08/01/1946).

<sup>20</sup> TNA, CAB 146/438, MI4, Top Secret Cipher Telegram (16/02/1946).

<sup>21</sup> TNA, CAB 146/438, FO to Washington (08/01/1946).

<sup>22</sup> TNA, WO 208/3788, Templer to Lethbridge (08/12/1945). Further information on Templer in Dorril, *MI6*, p. 98.

<sup>23</sup> TNA, WO 208/3788, Lethbridge to Templer (04/12/1945).

that Hitler's will dictates the future action to establish 'the National Socialist Great German Reich'.<sup>24</sup> Trevor-Roper concluded that the author had not read the will and 'invented its contents' and the story of its delivery 'in order to give apparent authority to a threatening letter'.<sup>25</sup> This, Trevor-Roper argued, showed 'the advantage of publishing the real document!'. Major Ramsbotham confirmed that British intelligence was indeed hoping to publish the will.<sup>26</sup> Consequently, a draft press hand out was prepared, giving a detailed analysis of their contents.<sup>27</sup>

When the wills were leaked by Truscott, the War Office atmosphere appeared to be one of confusion. Indeed, British intelligence had agreed with USFET that the wills would be kept Top Secret pending further instructions. However, the 'story broke when [the] British Rep' (presumably Trevor-Roper) 'had returned to USFET who were unable to explain why their instructions to Third U.S. Army had been disregarded'.<sup>28</sup> Nevertheless, British intelligence in Germany also gave a hand out along with copies of the wills to the press when the American story broke.<sup>29</sup> This was perhaps due to the intense rivalry between Anglo-American intelligence services, with British intelligence not wanting America to take all the credit. One *Daily Telegraph* article somewhat confirms this interpretation in stating that 'following the announcement' that 'Hitler's wills' had been 'seized by United States Intelligence Officers, it was revealed tonight that British Intelligence were *already* in possession of a copy of the two testaments' [emphasis added].<sup>30</sup> Clearly, British intelligence wanted it to be known that they had discovered the wills before the Americans. The Foreign Office was evidentially not consulted to ask if British information on the wills could be published and contacted the War Office in an attempt to suppress the documents.<sup>31</sup> British intelligence however, was irritated by the Foreign Office being so 'touchy' and reluctantly ordered that all outstanding copies due to be distributed should be frozen.<sup>32</sup> This, fortunately for some intelligence officers, did not prevent many

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<sup>24</sup> TNA, WO 208/3789, Anonymous letter to Kopf (22/12/1945).

<sup>25</sup> TNA, WO 208/3789, Trevor-Roper to Intelligence Bureau (IB) (23/01/1946).

<sup>26</sup> TNA, WO 208/3789, Ramsbotham to Wethered (18/12/1945).

<sup>27</sup> TNA, WO 208/3788, 'The Hitler Case' (02/12/1945) and TNA, WO 208/3789, 'Draft for Press Hand Out', p. 123.

<sup>28</sup> TNA, WO 208/3789, Secret Signal, Central Intelligence Bureau (CIB) (08/01/1946).

<sup>29</sup> TNA, WO 208/3789, Concomb to WO (22/01/1926) and TNA, WO 208/3781, 'Hitler's Will', p. 50.

<sup>30</sup> TNA, CAB 146/438, *Daily Telegraph* (31/12/1945).

<sup>31</sup> TNA, WO 208/3781, FO to WO 'This Document Must Not Be Reproduced' (03/02/1946).

<sup>32</sup> TNA, WO 208/3781, Lethbridge to Foord (22/01/1946).



copies being distributed as souvenirs.<sup>33</sup> One intelligence officer asked the Foreign Office if an original copy of the will could be exhibited at the Carlton Hotel.<sup>34</sup> The Foreign Office, probably incensed by this late consultation, rejected the proposal in line with its policy of suppression.<sup>35</sup> Despite initial opposition from the Foreign Office at meetings of the JIC, the position of the War Office eventually triumphed as the wills were published in Trevor-Roper's book.<sup>36</sup>

Major internal disagreements between British intelligence regarding Hitler's death however were rare. Throughout the investigations, evidence (discussed further in Chapter Three) was shared between MI5, MI6, Government Communications Headquarters (GCHQ), the War Office and the Foreign Office. Disputes between the Foreign Office regarding the use of propaganda and the political suppression of evidence, as made clear by Trevor-Roper's statements to the JIC, did not affect the overall objectivity and conclusions of the investigations. Trevor-Roper's objectivity even triumphed over the staunch Foreign Office position regarding Hitler's wills. However, it is now essential to analyse the nature of Anglo-American co-operation which may shed further light on why historians such as O'Donnell believe that Allied interrogators asked the wrong questions and the extent to which Anglo-American intelligence rivalry may have hindered the investigations.

## **II**

### **Anglo-American Solidarity**

America shared the same motives as Britain in aiding Trevor-Roper's investigations into Hitler's death. Indeed, American motivations are clearly stated on numerous detailed reports obtained from American interrogations of Hitler's doctors and dentists sent to the War Office as follows:

- a) Data useful for the identification of Hitler or his remains;
- b) Further material for the debunking of numerous Hitler Myths;
- c) The knowledge needed to expose those frauds who in later years may claim to be Hitler, or who may claim to have seen him or talked to him;

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<sup>33</sup> TNA, WO 208/3788, WO to CIB (23/11/1945) and TNA, WO 208/3789, 'Hitler's Wills' (07/01/1946).

<sup>34</sup> TNA, WO 208/3789, Concomb to WO (22/01/1946).

<sup>35</sup> TNA, CAB 146/438, 'Hitler's Will: Points From Foreign Office Papers', pp. 3-4.

<sup>36</sup> TNA, KV 4/354, JIC Minutes (14/06/1946) and JIC Minutes (24/06/1946).

- d) Research material for the historian, the doctor and the scientist interested in Hitler.<sup>37</sup>

Clearly, American and British intelligence, as stated in Chapter One, intended historians to use the evidence they collected in their investigations to debunk future rumours of Hitler's survival. The use of the word 'frauds' demonstrates that American intelligence genuinely believed that rumours of Hitler's survival were false and no conspiratorial motives encompassed their investigations, as some authors have argued. Such reports and American assistance were considered to be of great importance to Trevor-Roper's investigations as congratulatory letters following the successful locating of Hitler's wills demonstrate. For example, Brigadier Haylor thanked Colonel Sands of USFET for 'the splendid co-operation and assistance' he gave to British intelligence officers during the Hitler investigations.<sup>38</sup> Haylor claimed that Trevor-Roper 'never failed to receive the fullest degree of co-operation and assistance' from the Counter Intelligence Corps (CIC) and that thanks to American assistance the investigations were 'concluded within a surprisingly short space of time'. American assistance was indeed valuable as it enabled British intelligence to operate over a much larger area, maintain surveillance on individuals for longer periods of time and increased the chances of capturing key eyewitnesses by the extension of manpower into the American Zone of Germany.<sup>39</sup> Trevor-Roper repeats this positive interpretation of Anglo-American co-operation in *The Last Days of Hitler*.<sup>40</sup> However, evidence in recently declassified documents suggests that Anglo-American co-operation was not without some major difficulties.

In a letter to Brian Melland, head of the Historical Section of the Cabinet Office, Trevor-Roper expressed views which contradict the dominant narrative in the historiography regarding Anglo-American co-operation during the investigations into Hitler's death. The views he expressed may shed further light as to why O'Donnell believes the Allies asked the wrong questions. After commenting on textual discrepancies between the American and British held copies of Hitler's will (discussed further in Chapter Three), Trevor-Roper explained '...I never saw the original which is

<sup>37</sup> TNA, WO 208/3789, USFET, 'Hitler As Seen By His Doctors' (29/11/1945) and TNA, WO 208/3790, USFET, 'Hitler's Teeth' and TNA, WO 208/3787, USFET, 'Hitler As Seen By His Doctors' (15/10/1945).

<sup>38</sup> TNA, WO 208/3789, Haylor to Sands (08/01/1946).

<sup>39</sup> TNA, WO 208/3787, 'Present position of enquiry and recommendations for further action in British and U.S. Zone', p. 30 and 'Frau Christian', p. 147.

<sup>40</sup> Trevor-Roper, *Hitler*, p. xx.

now in American hands. There is a long history behind this, which, for reasons of Anglo-American solidarity, I have never published'.<sup>41</sup> Trevor-Roper claimed that:

General Truscott...was clearly displeased by the fact that a British officer had discovered these documents in his area and determined to claim the entire credit for his own forces. He therefore behaved in a very curious way. First, he had the documents...shut away in a safe and I was not allowed to see them. Then, in direct contradiction to the assurances given to me that nothing would be published till the British and American texts had been compared, immediately after I had left, sent for the American press and published the whole discovery as a brilliant coup by the U.S. 6<sup>th</sup> Army. This naturally led to some indignation in the British zone, and somebody in a high place (presumably Truscott), in order to defend his action, evidentially made unspecific charges against me which resulted in my never visiting the American zone again.<sup>42</sup>

This challenges the dominant narrative of the Anglo-American intelligence operation to locate Hitler's wills which is frequently presented as a triumph of intelligence co-operation, and also the narrative given in Trevor-Roper's biography, which implies Trevor-Roper intended to have the wills published by capturing them in the American Zone.<sup>43</sup> It also demonstrates the rivalry between Anglo-American intelligence services, outlined by historians such as Stephen Dorril who argues that both were in competition to become the top intelligence service in Germany.<sup>44</sup> Such competitiveness had serious implications for the Hitler investigations, as Trevor-Roper explained in further correspondence with Melland. When asked by Melland if he could contact Gerda Christian (Hitler's secretary) to obtain information on the discrepancies in Hitler's wills, Trevor-Roper explained that Christian was:

located later when it was no longer possible for me to go into the U.S. zone...she was therefore interrogated by the U.S. authorities on a brief supplied by me. This, of course, was not very satisfactory, as the interrogators did not have the necessary background to pursue such topics as might emerge during interrogation, or to detect possible errors or lies at the time. Indeed, this fact was a handicap in respect of all prisoners captured after the end of 1945. The most serious case was that of Axmann...the one man who claimed to have seen Bormann dead, was interrogated on my brief only, by a U.S. interrogator without any background knowledge.<sup>45</sup>

The inability to interrogate certain witnesses caused some embarrassment for Trevor-Roper. For example, Hannah Reitsch (the famous Luftwaffe pilot who visited Hitler in the bunker) wrote a letter to *Die Welt* in October 1947, denying that she had ever spoken to Trevor-Roper and completely

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<sup>41</sup> TNA, CAB 146/438, Trevor-Roper to Melland (28/03/1966).

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Ian Sayer and Douglas Botting, *America's Secret Army: The Untold Story of the Counter Intelligence Corps* (London: Fontana, 1990), p. 308.

<sup>44</sup> Dorril, *MI6*, p. 104.

<sup>45</sup> TNA, CAB 146/438, Trevor-Roper to Melland (08/04/1966).

disowned the account attributed to her in Trevor-Roper's book.<sup>46</sup> This has been used by conspiracy theorists to outline the supposed unreliability of Trevor-Roper's investigations.<sup>47</sup> At the time, it caused some German readers of Trevor-Roper's book to doubt his conclusions.<sup>48</sup> However, Trevor-Roper published a reply to Reitsch explaining that she was interrogated by an American interrogator on a brief supplied by him.<sup>49</sup> Moreover, she sought to distance herself from the interrogation as it emphasised her closeness to Hitler, which was hindering her attempts to obtain employment. Furthermore, Reitsch claimed that her account was crucially important to Trevor-Roper's book; a statement which Trevor-Roper correctly argued was not true, as will be shown in Chapter Three. Another issue caused by the American refusal to allow Trevor-Roper to interrogate witnesses was slow information sharing. Indeed, throughout the investigations, British intelligence officers complained about USFET taking too long to deliver answers to interrogation briefs. On one occasion, Trevor-Roper asked MI5 to 'ginger up' USFET because 'they gradually get callous to prods, so one has to prod harder each time I find!'<sup>50</sup>

Trevor-Roper's unpublished account of 'Anglo-American solidarity' appears to be reliable, as it is written in confidence to Melland, who was Trevor-Roper's cousin.<sup>51</sup> It is further confirmed by the initial War Office confusion when the wills were published and provides the only explanation available to historians as to why Trevor-Roper did not interrogate some eyewitnesses directly. This new evidence is of significant historical value, as it demonstrates, from Trevor-Roper's perspective, the reason why some authors may feel the Allies asked the wrong questions, which appears, in Melland's words, to be American 'childishness'. However, although inconvenient and a 'handicap', American interrogation reports still provided useful evidence in determining Hitler's death as will be shown in Chapter Three. Despite some tensions, the joint Anglo-American investigations into Hitler's death managed to uncover a remarkable amount of evidence in a small space of time. By far a larger hindrance to the Hitler investigations than Anglo-American intelligence rivalry (which was more

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<sup>46</sup> TNA, KV 4/354, Hodges to MI5 (04/11/1947). Also in TNA, WO 208/3791.

<sup>47</sup> Dunstan and Williams, *Wolf*, p. XXI.

<sup>48</sup> TNA, FO 938/196, 299/MG/8482/PRISC (03/03/1948).

<sup>49</sup> TNA, KV 4/354, Trevor-Roper reply to Reitsch, published in *Die Welt* on (14/10/1947).

<sup>50</sup> TNA, KV 4/354, Trevor-Roper, Christ Church, Oxford (01/08/1946).

<sup>51</sup> Sisman, *Trevor-Roper*, p. 222.

about who collected and supplied the evidence than the evidence itself), was Soviet conduct, to which the focus of this chapter now turns.

### III

#### **Appeasing the Soviets? British Intelligence and Soviet Conduct**

On 23 May 1945, the JIC presented a report on 'relations with the Russians' to the War Cabinet. It argued that Britain should be 'more tough' with the Soviets and 'nothing should be given to the Russians gratuitously'.<sup>52</sup> Further, 'no Russian request should normally be granted unless some request of ours to which we attach importance is granted in connection with it'. It rightly predicted that 'with the end of the war in Germany' political events would have an 'even greater effect upon the attitude of the Russian military authorities'. Overall, it argued that Britain should 'drive a hard bargain' and imply a 'strict principle of reciprocity' when negotiating with the Soviets. This evidence supports Aldrich's argument that the post-war planning of the military and intelligence services was conditioned by prejudices inherited during inter-war espionage activities against the Bolsheviks.<sup>53</sup> It is therefore surprising to see the attitudes towards the Soviets from British intelligence during the Hitler investigations.

Documentary evidence suggests that in depth British investigations into Hitler's death did not begin until September 1945 because British officials were waiting for evidence to be provided by the Soviets. Indeed, on 30 May 1945, MI6 received a report from 'our American friends' detailing Hitler's dental information (obtained from the American interrogation of Dr. Hugo Blaschke, Hitler's dentist).<sup>54</sup> This information was forwarded to the War Office and MI14 (thus illustrating the co-operation between British intelligence services). MI14, knowing that 'the Russians have apparently been trying to identify Hitler's body from his dental records', suggested that the information should be given to the Soviets as 'it may be of assistance to them in settling an issue of equal interest to all

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<sup>52</sup> TNA, CAB 79/33, JIC Report (23/05/1945).

<sup>53</sup> Aldrich, *Hidden*, pp. 21-22, 24, 37, 49, 69.

<sup>54</sup> TNA, WO 208/4475, MI6 Political Report (07/06/1945).

the Allies'.<sup>55</sup> It is unclear if this information was given to the Soviets as objections were raised due to it originating from an American 'secret source'.<sup>56</sup> However, the willingness to provide evidence to the Soviets despite earlier JIC recommendations demonstrates a more open-minded attitude towards them during the Hitler investigations, and a belief that they would provide evidence to the Allies once their investigations were complete. This belief may have inspired British enthusiasm over an 'ingenious' suggestion given to Aneurin Bevan by Graham Hodgson (head of the X-ray department of the British Red Cross) that X-rays of Hitler's skull could be used to compare the 'skull in Berlin' supposedly found by the Soviets and thus certify the identity of Hitler.<sup>57</sup> This message was passed from the Foreign Office to the War Office (further demonstrating inter-service co-operation) with great enthusiasm, thus arguably showing that British intelligence expected the Soviets to allow them access to forensic evidence at some point.

British and American officials waited for Soviet confirmation of Hitler's death as contradictory reports were collected by MI14 and the Foreign Office regarding whether Hitler was alive or if the Soviets had discovered his corpse and confirmed his method of death. On 6 June 1945 Soviet officers, including one of Zhukov's staff officers, informed British newspapers that Hitler's body had been found and doctors confirmed he had died from poison.<sup>58</sup> On the same day, Stalin told Harry Hopkins that Hitler was still alive.<sup>59</sup> Then, Zhukov announced on 9 June that Hitler's body had not been found and he could have flown away at the last moment.<sup>60</sup> At the Potsdam Conference in July, Stalin re-iterated that Hitler could have escaped to Spain or Argentina.<sup>61</sup> The damage done by such statements was clear to British officials. Newspapers collected by the Foreign Office said many people in Berlin believed Hitler was still alive.<sup>62</sup> One Civil Communications intercept showed that some Germans doubted Hitler was dead because 'the Russians swear by all that is holy that he is still alive'.<sup>63</sup> Soviet behaviour even made one Foreign Office official doubt Hitler's death as he stated 'the

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<sup>55</sup> TNA, WO 208/4475, MI14 (13/07/1945).

<sup>56</sup> TNA, WO 208/4475, DDMI Minutes (14/07/1945).

<sup>57</sup> TNA, FO 371/46749, Hodgson to Bevan. See also TNA, WO 208/3781 and TNA, WO 208/3787, pp. 88-89.

<sup>58</sup> TNA, FO 371/46748, *The Times* (07/06/1945) also in TNA, WO 208/4475. See also McKale, *Survival*, p. 46.

<sup>59</sup> McKale, *Survival*, p. 49.

<sup>60</sup> Petrova and Watson, *Death*, p. 44.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>62</sup> TNA, FO 371/46748, *The Times* (09/07/1945).

<sup>63</sup> TNA, WO 208/3790, Censorship Civil Communications (10/01/1946).

Russians are, up to now, very dubious as to the exact cause of Hitler's death, if he is dead'.<sup>64</sup> A SHAEF report on Hitler's death noted 'it is impossible to give any authoritative account of Hitler's last days as evidence is still accumulating...much of the evidence, too, is in Russian hands'.<sup>65</sup> Yet, British intelligence still believed Hitler was dead, despite Soviet scepticism, as was shown in Chapter One. Nevertheless, one Foreign Office official worried 'can we say we believe Hitler to be dead without annoying the Russians, whose press seem to be always suggesting the contrary?'.<sup>66</sup> This concern for the possible deterioration of Anglo-Soviet relations provides credence to Greenwood's argument that maintaining good relations with the Soviets was a key objective of the Foreign Office. However, the Soviet accusation that Hitler was living in the British Zone must have convinced British officials that the Soviets could not be trusted to provide an objective account of Hitler's death and put too much strain on Anglo-Soviet relations for British intelligence to wait for a conclusive Soviet statement any longer.<sup>67</sup> Therefore, Trevor-Roper's investigations were launched, but they were not tainted by anti-Soviet prejudice.

From the outset of Trevor-Roper's investigations, the Soviets informed Dick White that they had 'no satisfactory evidence' that Hitler was dead and expressed the desire to share information on Hitler's death with the other occupational powers, White agreed to share British evidence.<sup>68</sup> Therefore, throughout Trevor-Roper's investigations, the Soviets were consulted about British evidence at the QIC, an intelligence sharing organisation containing representatives from all the occupying powers in Berlin. Despite Soviet accusations that Britain was hiding Hitler and the JIC recommendation of strict reciprocity, British intelligence continued to pass evidence to the Soviets.<sup>69</sup> They also continued to show interest in searching for X-rays of Hitler's skull.<sup>70</sup> This shows that prior to the tabling of Trevor-Roper's conclusions at the QIC on 1 November 1945, British intelligence still, despite earlier Soviet accusations, expected to gain eventual access to forensic evidence. However, when Trevor-Roper's report (which formed the basis of his book) was tabled, the Soviets

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<sup>64</sup> TNA, FO 371/46748, FO Minutes (16/05/1945).

<sup>65</sup> TNA, FO 371/46749, 'Hitler's Last Days', SHAEF Memorandum (30/07/1945).

<sup>66</sup> TNA, FO 371/46749, Draft Reply to Parliamentary Question (15/10/1945).

<sup>67</sup> Sisman, *Trevor-Roper*, p. 133.

<sup>68</sup> TNA, WO 208/3787, White to Robertson (10/09/1945).

<sup>69</sup> TNA, WO 208/3787, GSI HQ (24/10/1945).

<sup>70</sup> TNA, WO 208/3787, 'Hitler's Death' (22/10/1945).

simply stated 'very interesting'.<sup>71</sup> Another QIC meeting was held on 10 November in which British intelligence asked the Soviets if they hold and could make available for interrogation key eyewitnesses such as Heinz Linge (Hitler's valet) and declare any other evidence they possess on Hitler's death.<sup>72</sup> By 30 November 'no reaction' had been received from the Soviets.<sup>73</sup>

Surprisingly in December 1945, American intelligence officers convinced Soviet General Sidnev to allow British, American and French representatives to dig in the Reichschancellery garden.<sup>74</sup> However, only one day's digging was carried out 'because on the next day the Russians, for a reason which has never been explained prevented the entrance of the party'. On 2 January 1946, numerous newspapers in Berlin, including 'Russian controlled' papers, reported that Hitler's body had been identified 'without the possibility of doubt' by his dentist.<sup>75</sup> War Office staff complained that 'clearly the Russians can have told us nothing' and demanded a statement from them. Attempts were made to telephone numerous Russian officers but British intelligence received evasive responses such as 'we have no official information'.<sup>76</sup> The Soviets eventually stopped answering the phone. British intelligence was particularly angry as 'each Ally undertook to supply any forthcoming information' on Hitler's death 'at once to other representatives' and 'the Russians have promised that they would let us know if any further information' about Hitler's death 'came to their notice'.<sup>77</sup> At the next QIC meeting, the Soviets were asked about the story but simply stated that 'they had no information of this story and that the report must be the imagination of a newspaper reporter'.<sup>78</sup> The Soviets 'guaranteed' to inform the QIC of any further information they obtained relating to Hitler's death and ironically argued that 'rumours should be the subject of official denial in the Press'.

Despite the rumours of Hitler's survival, the accusation of Hitler living in the British Zone and the Soviets clearly withholding information from British intelligence, the War Office continued to supply evidence to the Soviets. For example, in June 1946, the Soviets asked British intelligence to

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<sup>71</sup> Sisman, *Trevor-Roper*, p. 137.

<sup>72</sup> TNA, WO 208/3788, Cameron to Ramsbotham (26/11/1945) and TNA, WO 208/3787, 'The Death of Hitler', p. 35.

<sup>73</sup> TNA, WO 208/3788, Searle to Trevor-Roper (30/11/1945).

<sup>74</sup> TNA, WO 208/3789, Wethered to Ramsbotham (27/12/1945).

<sup>75</sup> TNA, WO 208/3781, *Daily Telegraph* and *Der Kurier* (02/01/1946) and 'Alleged Discovery of Hitler's Body' (03/01/1946).

<sup>76</sup> TNA, WO 208/3781, Memorandum (07/01/1946).

<sup>77</sup> TNA, WO 208/3781, 'Alleged Discovery of Hitler's Body' (03/01/1946) and telegram to Halor (07/01/1946).

<sup>78</sup> TNA, WO 208/3789, QIC Minutes (10/01/1946).



give them copies of an interrogation report ‘rendered from Hitler’s former adjutant, von Below’.<sup>79</sup> The British representative asked the War Office to ‘kindly’ consider this request from our ‘Russian Allies’ and the War Office showed a desire to reply to the request ‘reasonably quickly’ and did so.<sup>80</sup> The JIC report of May 1945 was therefore disregarded. This arguably demonstrates a remarkable objectivity on the part of British intelligence during the Hitler investigations. Despite wider Cold War tensions, British intelligence was willing to co-operate with the Soviets, even when evidence was not forthcoming from Moscow and they were being consistently ignored.

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.<sup>81</sup> The Foreign Office could not explain why ‘Russia has been...putting out reports that Hitler is alive, for some obscure reason of their own’ and were ‘unclear what motive’ the Soviets had in ‘spreading lies’.<sup>82</sup> Historical speculation has therefore been widespread. Most historians argue that Stalin’s political aims provided the motive for such rumours. Indeed, by claiming Hitler was alive, Stalin could strengthen his claims to territory in Germany during disagreements with Britain by suggesting it would be safer for the Soviets to remain, undermine perceived political opponents such as Zhukov who had earlier claimed that Hitler was dead, attack political enemies by claiming Hitler was in Spain or Argentina and provide an external threat advantageous to totalitarian governmental systems.<sup>83</sup> Other historians have argued that Stalin wished to maintain the wartime alliance by preserving the common enemy of Hitler or that he genuinely believed Hitler had escaped.<sup>84</sup> However, as will be discussed in Chapter Three, the 2009 DNA results provide weight to one particular interpretation of Soviet conduct, that they were unhappy with the quality of their investigations and did not want their evidence to be scrutinised by the West.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> TNA, WO 208/3781, Dubrovski to Jennings (12/06/1946).

<sup>80</sup> TNA, WO 208/3781, ‘Von Below’ (14/06/1946) and ‘Von Below’ (03/06/1945). See also Vinogradov, Pogonyi and Teptzov (eds), *KGB*, pp. 22,117-118.

<sup>81</sup> Vinogradov, Pogonyi and Teptzov (eds), *KGB*, p. 26.

<sup>82</sup> TNA, FO 371/46749, FO Minutes (09/10/1945) and (12/09/1945).

<sup>83</sup> Moore and Barret (eds), *Killed*, pp. 136,138. See also McKale, *Survival*, pp. 40-41,53-55,63; Joachimsthaler, *Hitler*, pp. 248-250; O’Donnell, *Bunker*, p. 302; Antony Beevor, *Berlin: The Downfall 1945* (London, Penguin, 2003), pp. 425-426; Trevor-Roper, *Hitler*, pp. 1-11.

<sup>84</sup> McKale, *Survival*, p. 73. See also Eberle and Uhl (eds), *Book*, p. xxiv.

<sup>85</sup> Professor Norman Stone on ‘Timewatch, Hitler’s Death: The Final Report’, UK television broadcast 30/04/1995. See also Petrova and Watson, *Death*, pp. 86-87.

The British investigations into Hitler's death were of great political significance due to the context of Soviet accusations in which they were conducted.<sup>86</sup> However, they were not conducted with political bias, but rather with remarkable objectivity, even towards the Soviets. Any attempts to turn Trevor-Roper's findings into propaganda by the Foreign Office were refuted by intelligence officers, including Trevor-Roper himself, as recently declassified MI5 documents revealed. Survival rumours, and as will be seen in the following chapter, alternative versions of Hitler's death, were not ignored in order to convey a rushed, preconceived conclusion to counter Soviet claims of Hitler's survival. They were investigated thoroughly by British intelligence and all found to be false. Despite some issues of Anglo-American intelligence rivalry which hindered the collection of evidence, there is no evidence to suggest that the evidence obtained during the British investigations was tainted by political motivations. The objectivity with which British intelligence conducted their investigations into Hitler's death suggests that if the evidence pointed to Hitler's escape or murder, then Trevor-Roper would have concluded accordingly – but it did not.

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<sup>86</sup> Hugh Trevor-Roper, *The Secret World, Behind the Curtain of British Intelligence in World War II and the Cold War* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2014), p. viiii.

## Chapter Three: The Evidence Still Stands

### I

#### Positive and Consistent Evidence

The narrative of Hitler's last days has been disseminated in many publications. It is therefore unnecessary in the scope of this dissertation to reproduce that narrative in detail. However, the historiography lacks a detailed analysis of how British intelligence selected their evidence and determined the reliable from fictitious before concluding that Hitler shot himself and Eva Braun had taken poison on 30 April 1945. Conspiracy theorists argue that Trevor-Roper used unreliable eyewitness testimonies and have criticised Trevor-Roper's report (delivered to the QIC on 1 November 1945) and his book as rushed and suggested Hitler was murdered or escaped the bunker.<sup>1</sup> In order to fully assess these claims, it is essential to analyse the evidence collected by all sources of British intelligence and determine the reliability of the evidence historians have to claim that Hitler died on 30 April 1945, how he died, and assess the significance of the 2009 DNA results.

Throughout May 1945 British officials began collecting intelligence on Hitler's end. This included signals intelligence from the Japanese Ambassador at Bad Gastein who informed Tokyo on 30 April 1945 that 'the Fuehrer was determined to link his fate with Berlin, and if Berlin fell, he would not survive' and Hitler's last request for battle information, intercepted from the Führerbunker on 29 April 1945.<sup>2</sup> Additionally, the Foreign Office noted that Admiral Dönitz (Hitler's nominated successor) had broadcast from Hamburg Radio on 1 May 1945 stating Hitler died 'at his command post... fighting to the last breath against Bolshevism' (discussed further in section II).<sup>3</sup> Towards the end of the month the War Office began to receive interrogation reports from captured Nazis such as Johanna Wolf (Hitler's Secretary) who was 'convinced' Hitler had 'committed suicide'.<sup>4</sup> The most important interrogation was that of Hermann Karnau who was a guard on duty outside the bunker at the time of Hitler's cremation. He claimed to have been ordered by an SS officer to leave the vicinity

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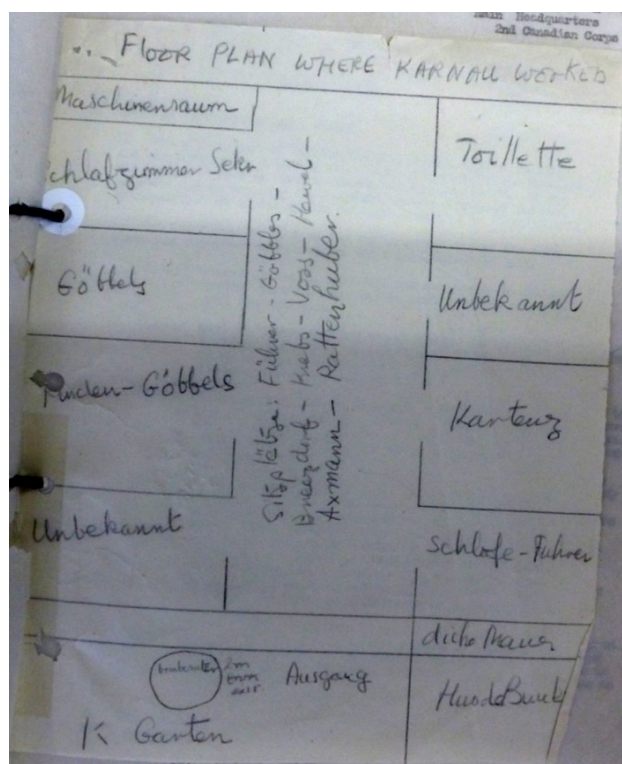
<sup>1</sup> Moore and Barret (eds), *Killed*, p. 114. See also Levenda, *Ratline*, pp. 21-22.

<sup>2</sup> TNA, HW 1/3760, Japanese Ambassador to Tokyo (30/04/1945) and TNA, HW 5/767, CX/MSS/SC.2. See also Aldrich, *Hidden*, p. 27 for further information on Signals Intelligence (SIGINT) from the Japanese Ambassador.

<sup>3</sup> TNA, FO 371/4764, *The Times* (02/05/1945).

<sup>4</sup> TNA, WO 208/4475, Interrogation of Johanna Wolf (31/05/1945).

of the Reichschancellery 'for a time' and did so. When he returned to the garden he saw the bodies of Hitler and Eva on fire 'two metres from the emergency exit'.<sup>5</sup> He was interrogated several times and 'cross-examined carefully' until his interrogators were satisfied that he was 'speaking the truth'.<sup>6</sup>



**Figure 1:** Drawing by Hermann Karnau shows the location of Hitler and Eva's burial next to the word 'Ausgang', TNA, KV 4/354.

Karnau drew an image of the location where he claims Hitler and Eva were buried which has never been published (see Figure 1 above). This location closely matches similar diagrams in Soviet documents.<sup>7</sup> On 20 July British intelligence obtained a statement from Kurt Samuel whose friend informed him that a member of 'Hitler's personal guard' named Mansfeld claimed 'Hitler had committed suicide on 30 April' and he witnessed Hitler and Eva's bodies being carried into the garden and burnt.<sup>8</sup> In July 1945, a SHAEF report on 'Hitler's Last Days' compiled the testimonies of Albert Speer (Reichsminister of Armaments), Karnau, SIGINT and Soviet statements to conclude 'it

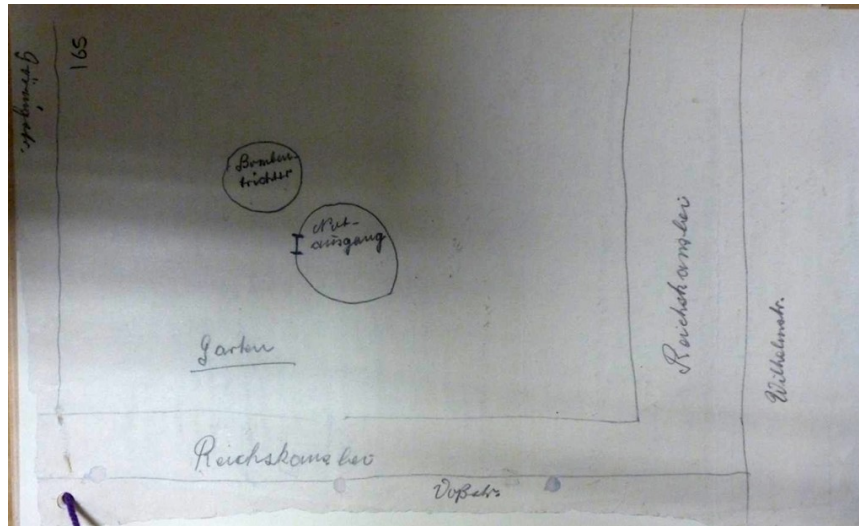
<sup>5</sup> TNA, KV 4/354, Report on Interrogation of Hermann Karnau (19/06/1945).

<sup>6</sup> TNA, KV 4/354, Interrogation of Hermann Karnau (28/05/1945), Report on Interrogation of Hermann Karnau (19/06/1945).

<sup>7</sup> Vinogradov, Pogonyi and Teptzov (eds), *KGB*, pp. 67,80.

<sup>8</sup> TNA, KV 4/354, 'Verbal statement' by 'Kurt Samuel' (20/07/1945).

seems probable that, from all we know of Hitler's last days, he chose to die in Berlin'.<sup>9</sup> However, the report could not determine Hitler's manner of death due to the amount of various alternatives that had been suggested. Indeed, evidence at this point was 'sometimes contradictory and incomplete and depends often on hearsay and conjecture'.<sup>10</sup> It was left mainly to Trevor-Roper to determine the reliable from the fictitious.



**Figure 2:** Rough sketch by Hilco Poppen showing the location of Hitler and Eva's burial, TNA, WO 208/3787.

Trevor-Roper built on evidence collected by investigators before him, including a survival rumour reported by MI6 in July 1945 to MI14 (again showing inter-service co-operation).<sup>11</sup> It is impossible to assess the full role of MI6 in the Hitler investigations. However, the fragments that remain demonstrate that numerous sections of British intelligence were investigating Hitler's death before Trevor-Roper's involvement and thus partially explain the prompt completion of his report. Trevor-Roper's report drew mainly on evidence obtained from interrogations conducted over the winter of 1945. Karnau was re-interrogated in September and retold his story almost identically.<sup>12</sup> His testimony was supported by the interrogation of another Reichschancellery guard, Hilco Poppen. He stated that Karnau told him on 1 May 1945 "'Hitler ist tot'", "'Sie liegen (Hitler and Eva Braun) im Garten, und brennen'".<sup>13</sup> He also claimed that Hitler was buried in a bomb crater in the garden which

<sup>9</sup> TNA, FO 371/46749, 'Hitler's Last Days', SHAEF Memorandum (30/07/1945).

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> TNA, WO 208/3787, CX CF/IV/73 (July 1945).

<sup>12</sup> TNA, KV 4/354, Interrogation of Karnau (26/09/2945).

<sup>13</sup> TNA, WO 208/3787, Interrogation Report of Hilco Poppen (30/09/1945).

he drew on a diagram closely matching that earlier drawn by Karnau (see Figure 2 above). Poppen was re-interrogated in October 1945 and repeated his story almost identically. His interrogator, Captain Ingham, considered ‘he has given the information to the best of his ability’ and ‘as far as he is informed, the statements are true’<sup>14</sup>

The interrogation of Kempka (Hitler’s chauffeur) confirmed Karnau and Poppen’s testimonies.<sup>15</sup> Kempka claimed that Otto Günsche (Hitler’s adjutant/bodyguard) telephoned him on 30 April and requested that 200 litres of petrol be sent to the Führerbunker. Kempka did so and later made his way over to the Führerbunker where Günsche told him Hitler was dead and had shot himself in the mouth. Kempka then saw Hitler and Eva’s bodies being carried out of Hitler’s room and helped carry them into the garden (Kempka took Eva’s body from Bormann) with Günsche and Linge. They then poured petrol over the bodies and quickly retreated to the bunker exit due to heavy Russian artillery fire. Günsche lit a ‘rag’ and threw it on the bodies ‘and they burst into flames’. They each gave a final Hitler salute and returned to the bunker. ‘Despite some discrepancies’, the interrogator noted that Kempka’s account ‘generally agrees’ with that of Mansfeld who also stated that Hitler’s body was brought up first into the garden in a blanket with his legs protruding, followed by Eva who was uncovered. Trevor-Roper combined this evidence with recollections of Hitler’s statements and behaviour from numerous eyewitnesses who were present in the bunker throughout April 1945 and information on his physical health from records and interrogations of his doctors to produce a detailed psychological analysis of Hitler’s decision to commit suicide. For example, the testimony of Hanna Reitsch was considered ‘reliable’ by her interrogator and she believed ‘the tactical situation and Hitler’s own physical condition made any thoughts of his escape inconceivable’.<sup>16</sup> Indeed, Hanna and other witnesses noted how Hitler frequently proclaimed his wish to shoot himself in Berlin and have his body burnt rather than be captured ‘alive or dead’ by the Russians and how Goebbels spoke about “setting an example that would long blaze as a holy thing from the pages of history” by dying in Berlin.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> TNA, WO 208/3787, Interrogation Report of Hilco Poppen (06/10/1945).

<sup>15</sup> TNA, KV 4/354, Interrogation of Erich Kempka (07/10/1945).

<sup>16</sup> TNA, WO 208/3787, USFET, Interrogation of Hanna Reitsch (08/10/1945).

<sup>17</sup> Ibid and TNA, KV 4/354, Interrogation of Albert Speer (11/09/1945) and TNA, WO 208/3791, USFET, Interrogation of Gerda Christian (25/04/1946).

Trevor-Roper never claimed his intelligence report was definitive as it explicitly states the ‘evidence is not complete; but it is positive, circumstantial, consistent and independent’ as opposed to rumours of Hitler’s survival which had all been investigated and found to be ‘baseless’.<sup>18</sup> He admitted that ‘the only conclusive evidence’ would be ‘the discovery, and certain identification, of the body...in absence of this the only positive evidence’ is eyewitness accounts. Another reason the report was submitted promptly was because (as explained in Chapter Two) British intelligence arranged to pool evidence with the Soviets at the QIC, this was their first unsuccessful attempt to do so. Trevor-Roper concluded that it was ‘quite impossible’ that eyewitnesses had invented a ‘cover story’ or that Eva Braun was ‘fobbed off with the corpse of a double’ as they were each under ‘detailed and persistent cross-examination’. Trevor-Roper was responding here to speculation in the press that ‘circumstantial evidence’ from ‘lesser fry could well be an attempt to cover Hitler’s trail’.<sup>19</sup> It was in fact Trevor-Roper’s reliance on ‘lesser fry’ that made his conclusions more believable by the fact that they were independent of each other and circumstantial. Indeed, Karnau stumbled upon Hitler’s cremation by accident; he was not supposed to witness it. Karnau saw the petrol ordered by Günsche delivered to the bunker and a later witness confirmed he overheard the telephone conversation between Günsche and Kempka regarding petrol.<sup>20</sup>

Shortly after the publication of Trevor-Roper’s report, Hitler’s wills and marriage certificate were discovered. The wills explicitly stated that Hitler and Braun had chosen to die in Berlin and thus confirmed Trevor-Roper’s conclusions. Hitler’s marriage was verified by numerous eyewitnesses such as von Varo who claimed the marriage ‘was openly discussed by everyone’, the secretaries who attended the wedding reception and Hitler’s wills which mention the marriage directly.<sup>21</sup> Trevor-Roper had the signatures on the wills authenticated by a MI5 handwriting expert who judging from years of experience was in ‘no doubt’ that the ‘signatures’ are ‘genuine’ and Von Below, who signed

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<sup>18</sup> TNA, WO 208/3781, ‘The Death of Hitler’ also in TNA, WO 208/3787.

<sup>19</sup> TNA, FO 371/46748, *The Times* (09/07/1945).

<sup>20</sup> TNA, WO 208/3791, Kurt Hewe ‘My Service in the Shelter of the Reich Chancellery’ (18/12/1946).

<sup>21</sup> TNA, KV 4/354, Interrogation of Baroness von Varo (01/10/1945) and ‘Points Emerging from special interrogation of Else Krueger’ (29/09/1945) and USFET, ‘Interrogation of Junge, Gertrud’ (30/12/1946) and TNA, WO 208/3791, USFET, Interrogation of Gerda Christian (25/04/1946).

the will.<sup>22</sup> Melland had them authenticated again by forensic scientists in 1966.<sup>23</sup> Indeed, Melland had planned to transfer the wills from the Foreign Office to display at the Imperial War Museum and in the process noticed textual discrepancies between the British and American held copies.<sup>24</sup> These discrepancies were minor grammatical errors which did not affect ‘the sense of the contents’ and were eventually attributed to the ‘frenzied atmosphere’ in the bunker.<sup>25</sup> More importantly, Melland discovered that the Soviets held a fourth copy of the wills, a fact that was unknown to Trevor-Roper.<sup>26</sup> Its existence was confirmed in Marshal Chuikov’s memoirs and by the historian John Erickson who was shown the wills by Chuikov.<sup>27</sup> Trevor-Roper, Erickson and Melland concluded that the fourth copy was taken by General Krebs to Chuikov during truce negotiations on 30 April 1945 after Hitler’s suicide.<sup>28</sup> However, they were unable to discover who typed it and it is not mentioned in any publications about Hitler’s death. Melland attempted to contact the Soviets to compare the copies but was ignored.<sup>29</sup> The Russians are therefore withholding more evidence than has previously been assumed. This documentary evidence was bolstered by further interrogation reports.

One criticism voiced by German readers of Trevor-Roper’s book in 1948 was ‘we are unable to test the sources’.<sup>30</sup> Fortunately, the recently released MI5 files contain a detailed summary of the main sources used by Trevor-Roper submitted to the JIC.<sup>31</sup> In addition, a timetable of events produced by Captain Searle and modified by Trevor-Roper shows that he used the testimonies of several eyewitnesses for each key date to substantiate his conclusions, thus refuting Reitsch’s claim that her testimony was crucial to his thesis.<sup>32</sup> Since Trevor-Roper was prohibited from the American Zone after the Truscott incident, later interrogations were conducted by American interrogators on briefs prepared by him. Such briefs asked precise, detailed and extensive questions which were usually

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<sup>22</sup> TNA, WO 208/3788, Statement by William James Skardon (01/12/1945) and TNA, WO 208/3781, undated ‘Second Interrogation of Von Below’.

<sup>23</sup> TNA, CAB 146/438, Forensic Science Laboratory Report by Ronald M. Mitchell (16/06/1966).

<sup>24</sup> TNA, CAB 146/438, ‘Note on Hitler’s 1945 Wills’ (1971).

<sup>25</sup> TNA, CAB 146/438, Melland to Trevor-Roper (23/03/1966) and Melland to Dr. L. Kahn (09/12/1966).

<sup>26</sup> TNA, CAB 146/438, ‘Note on Hitler’s 1945 Wills’ (1971).

<sup>27</sup> TNA, CAB 146/438, Translation of Marshal Chuikov’s memoirs (1964) and John Erickson to Melland (28/09/1965).

<sup>28</sup> TNA, CAB 146/438, ‘Note on Hitler’s 1945 Wills’ (1971) and Erickson to Melland (31/03/1965).

<sup>29</sup> TNA, CAB 146/438, ‘Note on Hitler’s 1945 Wills’ (1971).

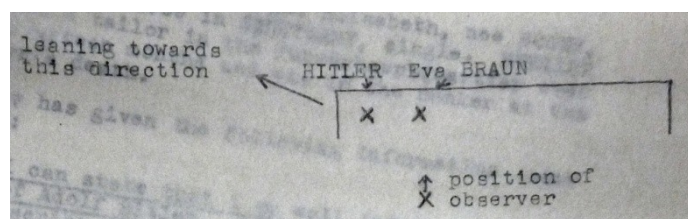
<sup>30</sup> TNA, FO 938/196, ‘Report on “The Last Days of Hitler” By Trevor-Roper For North Rhine Westphalia’ (1948).

<sup>31</sup> TNA, KV 4/354, JIC ‘Bibliographical Note’ (03/06/1946).

<sup>32</sup> TNA, WO 208/3790, Trevor-Roper to Searle (07/03/1946) and ‘Time Table of Events in Hitler’s Bunker’.



answered in full on the resulting interrogation reports.<sup>33</sup> Trevor-Roper is therefore arguably too critical of American interrogators. Indeed, USFET produced several detailed reports on Artur Axmann (head of the Hitler Youth) who claimed to have entered Hitler's room after his suicide and saw both Hitler and Eva dead on their sofa.<sup>34</sup> Hitler shot himself in the right temple 'as Axmann saw most of the blood on Hitler's right temple and on the right side of the face' and Eva had taken poison.<sup>35</sup> His interrogator, Leo Barton, drew a diagram of the position of the bodies from the viewpoint of Axmann (see Figure 3 below).



**Figure 3:** Diagram showing the position of Hitler and Eva's corpses on the sofa as viewed by Axmann, TNA, WO 208/3790.

Barton concluded that Axmann was 'able to distinguish actual observations from conjecture' and 'was not shaken by objections or doubts raised by the interrogator' and remarked that 'the Russians must have been able to verify the truth and accuracy of his story'. It was mainly Kempka and Axmann who convinced Trevor-Roper that Hitler had shot himself and Eva had taken poison. This was also supported by the testimonies of Hitler's secretary Junge and Bormann's secretary Krueger who were both told by Günsche (then a Russian prisoner of war (PW)) that Hitler had shot himself whereas Eva had taken poison and Christian who heard the same from Linge (also a Russian PW).<sup>36</sup> However, in order to reach these conclusions the challenge of eyewitness discrepancies had to be overcome.

Eyewitness discrepancies in Trevor-Roper's investigations have been used by conspiracy theorists to present his account as an 'intrinsically flawed...forgery' and bolster claims of Hitler's

<sup>33</sup> For example, see questions for Gerda Christian from Trevor-Roper in TNA, WO 208/3790 and resulting USFET interrogation in TNA, WO 208/3791.

<sup>34</sup> TNA, WO 208/3789, USFET, Interrogation of Axmann (14/01/1946).

<sup>35</sup> TNA, WO 208/3790, USFET, 'Supplement to interrogation of Kempka etc.' (25/01/1946).

<sup>36</sup> Trevor Roper, *Hitler*, p. 178. See also TNA, KV 4/354, 'Points Emerging from special interrogation of Else Krueger' (29/09/1945) and USFET, 'Interrogation of Junge, Gertrud' (30/12/1946) and TNA, WO 208/3791, USFET, Interrogation of Gerda Christian (25/04/1946) and TNA, WO 208/3790, 'Time Table of Events in Hitler's Bunker'.

escape.<sup>37</sup> Cooper has outlined in detail many discrepancies given over time between the statements of Günsche, Kempka and Linge regarding the position of the bodies, which body was carried out first, who entered the suicide room first and at what time to argue that this was an ‘SS charade’ which provides proof that Hitler did not die in the bunker.<sup>38</sup> However, Trevor-Roper took many discrepancies into account. For example, Karnau believed Hitler was cremated on 1 May, whereas Axmann claimed 29 April and Kempka 30 April. Kempka was re-interrogated in January 1946 due to these discrepancies and repeated his story identically; his interrogator concluded that he had told a ‘straight story’.<sup>39</sup> Consequently, Trevor-Roper used captured documents (such as a telegram sent from Goebbels to Dönitz on 1 May 1945 informing him that Hitler had died the previous day) combined with the testimonies of those last to see Hitler to confirm that Hitler died on 30 April 1945.<sup>40</sup> Time discrepancies were attributed to ‘the turmoil of the last days’.

Joachimsthaler provides a detailed and convincing explanation for discrepancies in the accounts of numerous eyewitnesses including Linge and Günsche (who were released from Soviet captivity in the 1950s). Indeed, he argues that due to the urgency of the situation, the witnesses may not have made ‘precise observations’ and only noted the positions of the bodies subconsciously and therefore experienced ‘flash-back’ recall in which it took months of interrogations for a coherent observation constructed from flash-backs to surface.<sup>41</sup> Historians may never be able to definitively explain all of the discrepancies. Nevertheless, as Petrova and Watson point out, eyewitness discrepancies are common in court cases, with some witnesses being certain of what they saw even when proved wrong.<sup>42</sup> Importantly, as Joachimsthaler points out, all the witnesses who saw Hitler’s body in situ agree that he shot himself due to the blood on and around his corpse, whereas Eva’s corpse was not bloody but smelt of bitter almonds, indicating cyanide poisoning.<sup>43</sup> However, one major discrepancy expressed by various eyewitnesses was that Hitler had poisoned himself, this requires further analysis.

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<sup>37</sup> Dunstan and Williams, *Wolf*, p. XXI.

<sup>38</sup> Cooper, *Argentina*, pp. 8-16.

<sup>39</sup> TNA, WO 208/3788, USFET, Interrogation of Kempka (12/01/1946).

<sup>40</sup> TNA, WO 208/3789, Searle to USFET (26/01/1946) and TNA, WO 208/3790, Trevor-Roper to USFET (11/02/1946).

<sup>41</sup> Joachimsthaler, *Hitler*, p. 159.

<sup>42</sup> Petrova and Watson, *Death*, pp. 114-115.

<sup>43</sup> Joachimsthaler, *Hitler*, pp. 155-156, 161, 163-164, 166, 173, 176-177, 182.

## II

### Alternative Versions of Hitler's Death

The announcement on 1 May 1945 that Hitler had died 'fighting to his last breath' sparked a flurry of comments from the Foreign Office. The general worry was that 'German propaganda will play up the manner of Hitler's death with a view to establishing the Hitler legend' therefore 'we must do all in our power to play it down'.<sup>44</sup> On 24 April, Himmler had stated during secret peace negotiations with Count Bernadotte that Hitler was so ill that he would likely be dead within two days.<sup>45</sup> The Foreign Office considered this a good 'weapon' to counteract Dönitz's story of Hitler's heroic death which they correctly believed was formulated 'in an effort to secure maximum resistance by the German'.<sup>46</sup> Consequently, Eisenhower authorised a press statement describing Himmler's comments in order to 'destroy the Hitler martyr myth'.<sup>47</sup> However, this statement gave rise to claims that Hitler was murdered by his doctors on the orders of Himmler, a conclusion supported by some American intelligence officers.<sup>48</sup> However, far from ignoring conflicting eyewitness testimony as conspiracy theorists claim, British intelligence investigated alternative versions of Hitler's death.

On 7 May 1945, Churchill received SIGINT from numerous Ambassadors which stated Hitler had died in a variety of ways. For example, the Brazilian Ambassador claimed 'Hitler, Goering and Goebbels were assassinated' during a struggle between Himmler and the military.<sup>49</sup> At the end of the month the Foreign Office collected newspaper cuttings asserting 'that according to evidence discovered by the Russians, Hitler was probably killed by an injection given by his physician Dr. Morrell'.<sup>50</sup> From May to September 1945 British intelligence investigated rumours that Hitler was assassinated on the orders of Himmler in 1944 and buried in a crypt at Obersalzberg.<sup>51</sup> In October 1945 Bernadotte asserted 'it is my absolute conviction that Hitler is dead and that Himmler killed

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<sup>44</sup> TNA, FO 371/46748, 'Some thoughts on Hitler's death' (02/05/1945).

<sup>45</sup> TNA, FO 371/46748, 'Top Secret Cypher Telegram' (02/05/1945).

<sup>46</sup> TNA, FO 371/46748, 'Some thoughts on Hitler's death' (02/05/1945) and 'Top Secret Cypher Telegram' (02/05/1945).

<sup>47</sup> TNA, FO 371/46748, 'Top Secret Cypher Telegram' (02/05/1945) and C1958/31/18 (04/05/1945).

<sup>48</sup> Moore and Barret (eds), *Killed*, pp. 121-123.

<sup>49</sup> TNA, HW1/3760, 'Brazilian Ambassador, London, Reports on Death of Hitler' (03/05/1945).

<sup>50</sup> TNA, FO 371/46748, *The Times* (24/05/1945).

<sup>51</sup> TNA, WO 204/2349, (entire folder) and TNA, FO 371/46748, FO Minutes (07/06/1945) and TNA, WO 208/3787, 'Nazi Underground Installation' (21/09/1945).

him'.<sup>52</sup> Conspiracy theorists accuse Trevor-Roper of overlooking this statement.<sup>53</sup> Furthermore, several of the eyewitnesses interrogated by British intelligence, including Karnau, claimed that Hitler had poisoned himself.<sup>54</sup> Similarly, Willi Otto Mueller believed Dr. Stumpfegger had poisoned Hitler with an injection.<sup>55</sup>

During Trevor-Roper's investigations, eyewitnesses were questioned on the possibility of Himmler murdering Hitler. Werne Grothmann (Himmler's aide-de-camp) 'did not believe that Himmler ever contemplated murdering Hitler; he regarded such a suggestion as fantastic; Himmler always professed complete loyalty to Hitler'.<sup>56</sup> This statement was confirmed by other close associates of Himmler. Consequently, Trevor-Roper established that Bernadotte was mistaken.<sup>57</sup> Trevor-Roper found the statements of those who claimed Hitler had poisoned himself, or was poisoned by his doctors to be based on hearsay. Indeed, Karnau when re-interrogated admitted that 'the poison story...is mere hearsay based on old stories that the Fuehrer would take poison before being captured by the Russians'.<sup>58</sup> Many witnesses, including Karnau, had simply assumed Hitler poisoned himself as they believed Dr. Stumpfegger poisoned Hitler's dog Blondi.<sup>59</sup> Crucially for Trevor-Roper, the eyewitnesses who saw Hitler dead on his sofa claimed he had shot himself and informed his immediate entourage of the fact. Clearly, as Ian Kershaw argues, the conclusions of conspiracy theorists such as Thomas that Hitler was murdered 'belong in fairyland'.<sup>60</sup> Nevertheless, the Soviets claimed Hitler was poisoned. However, the Soviet autopsy, like the skull claimed to be Hitler's, is questionable.

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<sup>52</sup> TNA, WO 208/4475, BBC Monitoring (17/10/1945).

<sup>53</sup> Moore and Barret (eds), *Killed*, pp. 117,123.

<sup>54</sup> TNA, KV 4/354, Interrogation of Hermann Karnau (28/05/1945).

<sup>55</sup> TNA, WO 208/3790, Memorandum on 'Mueller, Willi Otto' (04/02/1946).

<sup>56</sup> TNA, KV 4/354, Interrogation of Werne Grothmann (26/09/1945).

<sup>57</sup> Trevor-Roper, *Hitler*, p. xxiii.

<sup>58</sup> TNA, KV 4/354, Report on Interrogation of Hermann Karnau (19/06/1945).

<sup>59</sup> TNA, KV 4/354, 'Top Secret: Ref:- Hermann Karnau' (21/06/1945) and TNA, WO 208/3790, Memorandum on 'Mueller, Willi Otto' (04/02/1946).

<sup>60</sup> Ian Kershaw, *Hitler 1936-1945: Nemesis* (London: Penguin, 2000), p. 1038.

### III

#### The Skull Changes Everything?

As Chapter One demonstrated, Hitler has been said to have fled to Ireland, Egypt and Hamburg. Therefore, one must question why most conspiracy theories claim Hitler escaped to Argentina. One reason is quite simple, because other Nazis fled there. However, if this logic was applied to other survival rumours the outcome would be ridiculous. For instance, one Nazi was apprehended in May 1945 disguised as a monk, this does not mean that survival rumours of Hitler dressed as a monk should be taken more seriously.<sup>61</sup> Yet, this is the level of speculation that conspiracy theorists expect to convince readers to draw history changing conclusions. A similar lack of relationship between evidence and conclusions is disseminated by conspiracy theorists who use the 2009 DNA results as evidence of Hitler's escape.<sup>62</sup> Stalin said Hitler escaped to Argentina, other Nazis escaped there, the skull in Moscow thought to be Hitler's belongs to a woman, the Soviets did not find Hitler's body, therefore, Hitler must have escaped is their basic line of argument. Yet, if one analyses the Soviet investigations in more detail, interesting questions are raised and matters become more complex, but nothing suggests that Hitler escaped the bunker.

Petrova and Watson's analysis of Soviet documents came close to a plausible explanation of the 2009 DNA results. As the documents revealed, the first corpse claimed to be Hitler's found by the Soviets at the bunker was a very poor look-alike. Historians disagree whether this was Gustav Weler (Hitler's double) or a corpse deliberately dressed up by SMERSH to look like Hitler.<sup>63</sup> Nevertheless, as a result of thinking this corpse was Hitler, two bodies found in a bomb crater near the bunker exit were reburied.<sup>64</sup> This was an embarrassing start to the investigations by the SMERSH unit who had been ordered to find Hitler's body. Even more embarrassing was the way in which evidence was disregarded in the bunker. Indeed, the first Soviets to enter the Führerbunker were a group of women

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<sup>61</sup> TNA, CAB 79/33, JIC SHAEF 'Political Intelligence Report' (14/05/1945).

<sup>62</sup> Dunstan and Williams, *Wolf*, p. xix. See also Levenda, *Ratline*, p. 18.

<sup>63</sup> Petrova and Watson, *Death*, p. 90. See also Joachimsthaler, *Hitler*, pp. 21,180; Vinogradov, Pogonyi and Teptzov (eds), *KGB*, p. 24.

<sup>64</sup> Petrova and Watson, *Death*, p. 53. See also Bezymenski, *Death*, p. 33.

from the medical corps who stole Eva Braun's lingerie.<sup>65</sup> Byford-Jones was later shown a room full of Hitler's personal belongings looted from the bunker by Soviet guards.<sup>66</sup> Clearly, the bunker vicinity was not properly secured as on 10 September 1945, British Lieutenant-Colonel McCowen broke into the Führerbunker and found Hitler's engagement diary kept by Linge, which was used by Trevor-Roper to validate certain times and dates.<sup>67</sup> That vital evidence such as this could be left discarded five months after Hitler's death demonstrates how poor Soviet evidence gathering was.

When it was discovered that the look-alike corpse was not Hitler, the two bodies (which Soviet documents claim are Hitler and Eva) near the bunker exit were re-exhumed and sent for autopsy which stated they died from poisoning.<sup>68</sup> However, as Petrova and Watson point out; there are significant issues with the SMERSH investigation.<sup>69</sup> For instance, the autopsy did not dissect the organs of the alleged Hitler and Eva corpses to determine for certain whether they died from poisoning, yet they did so with the corpses of the Goebbels family.<sup>70</sup> Stalin must have been unsatisfied by the initial SMERSH conclusions as he authorised a second commission into Hitler's death by the NKVD (Soviet Secret Service) in 1946.<sup>71</sup> Petrova and Watson argue that Stalin could have ordered this second investigation due to embarrassment and jealousy that the West may have collected more evidence than him which could also explain why the Soviets refused to share evidence with Trevor-Roper.<sup>72</sup> The Soviets had displayed similar behaviour before. As the JIC concluded in April 1945, 'the Russians' were unlikely to allow western 'intelligence teams' to visit areas under their control as they were conscious 'of their administrative inferiority compared with the Americans and ourselves' due to their 'rapid advance'.<sup>73</sup> The second NKVD investigation suggested that Hitler had died by shooting after confirming that bloodstains on Hitler's sofa and walls in the bunker were of his blood type and finding a piece of skull damaged by a bullet hole in the bomb crater where the two corpses found by

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<sup>65</sup> Fest, *Bunker*, p. 158.

<sup>66</sup> Byford-Jones, *Twilight*, p. 122.

<sup>67</sup> TNA, KV 4/354, statement of John L. McCowen (30/05/1947) and Trevor-Roper to White (20/06/1947).

<sup>68</sup> Petrova and Watson, *Death*, pp. 53-56.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 81.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 82.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>73</sup> TNA, CAB 79/33, JIC Report (29/04/1945).

SMERSH were buried.<sup>74</sup> That such evidence could be found a year later shows the poor quality of the initial investigation. Suspiciously, SMERSH did not allow the alleged Hitler and Eva bodies to be re-examined by the NKVD, despite an order from Moscow.<sup>75</sup> This, Petrova and Watson argue, is because SMERSH was embarrassed that they had ‘botched’ the autopsy and reached the incorrect conclusion that Hitler had poisoned himself.<sup>76</sup> The Soviets therefore maintained an official silence as they did not want to admit their mistakes.<sup>77</sup>

The 2009 DNA results demonstrate that the Soviet investigations were in fact more ‘botched’ than was previously thought. Indeed, Anatoli Prokopenko (director of the State Special Trophy Archive in Moscow) claimed the skull fragment was genuinely Hitler’s.<sup>78</sup> Bold claims made by historians that the skull proved once and for all Hitler’s method of death were refuted in 2009 by DNA testing. However, rather than indicating Hitler’s escape, it is likely that the NKVD simply recovered a fragment from one of many corpses which were strewn around the Reichschancellery garden by Soviet artillery fire and thrown into numerous bomb craters.<sup>79</sup> What then, happened to Hitler’s body? Due to the amount of eyewitness discrepancies, Trevor-Roper could only conclude that ‘like Alaric...the modern destroyer of mankind is now immune from discovery’.<sup>80</sup> Most historians agree that the Soviets recovered Hitler’s teeth; these have been identified by his dentists and confirmed by X-ray comparison.<sup>81</sup> But as Fest argues, it is likely that the teeth are all that remained of Hitler.<sup>82</sup> As some eyewitnesses claim, the rest of his body was probably destroyed by artillery fire.<sup>83</sup>

Due to the unprofessional behaviour of Soviet intelligence officers and resulting poor quality of their investigations, the dubious autopsy report with scientific inconsistencies tainted by ideological motivations and the 2009 DNA revelations, the author is inclined to agree with historians such as Joachimsthaler, Fest and Kershaw that the Soviets did not find Hitler’s body.<sup>84</sup> However, this does not mean that Hitler escaped. Thorough cross-examinations of eyewitnesses, documentary evidence

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<sup>74</sup> Petrova and Watson, *Death*, pp. 85, 87. See also Vinogradov, Pogonyi and Teptzov (eds), *KGB*, p. 24.

<sup>75</sup> Petrova and Watson, *Death*, p. 86.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid, p. 87. See also Stone on ‘Timewatch’.

<sup>78</sup> Petrova and Watson, *Death*, pp. 2,3,76.

<sup>79</sup> TNA, WO 208/4475, Interrogation of Axmann (16/10/1947). See also Joachimsthaler, *Hitler*, pp. 217,252.

<sup>80</sup> Trevor-Roper, *Hitler*, pp. 182-183. See also TNA, KV 4/354, White to Shoosmith (04/10/1946).

<sup>81</sup> Joachimsthaler, *Hitler*, pp. 225,231,236,253. See also Vinogradov, Pogonyi and Teptzov (eds), *KGB*, pp. 95-107.

<sup>82</sup> Fest, *Bunker*, p. 164.

<sup>83</sup> Joachimsthaler, *Hitler*, pp. 214,218,221,252.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid, pp. 180-181,252-253. See also Fest, *Bunker*, p. 163; Kershaw, *Hitler*, p. 1039.

(captured telegrams, Hitler's wills), bloodstains on Hitler's sofa and the identification of Hitler's teeth provide ample evidence to refute such claims. Indeed, Trevor-Roper was able to conclude convincingly that Hitler committed suicide without knowing the final location of his corpse. Ultimately, the 2009 DNA results reveal more about the quality of the Soviet investigations than Hitler's suicide.



## **Conclusion: ‘The Onus is on Hitler’**

Having analysed the opinions of British officials on various Hitler survival rumours and determined that political motivations did not obstruct their conclusions, it has been established that according to British intelligence, based on their evidence and investigations, there is no basis in fact whatsoever to any conspiracy theories. Through analysis of recently declassified intelligence files, this dissertation has shed further light on the mystery surrounding Hitler’s death. Indeed, previously unpublished interrogation reports preserved by MI5 revealed just how meticulous British intelligence was in cross-examining witnesses and demonstrated the objectivity of their conclusions through Trevor-Ropers statements to the JIC.

It is rarely possible when studying intelligence files to recreate personal relationships between intelligence officers.<sup>1</sup> However, the files on Hitler’s death contain personal correspondence, jokes and compliments. Consequently, recently declassified files enabled this dissertation to outline the dynamics between Anglo-American intelligence agencies which resulted in both friendships and vendettas. More importantly, the analysis of the contributions of numerous intelligence officers has distanced this dissertation from the ‘one man show’ of Trevor-Roper and acknowledged the efforts of other officers who often go unsung.<sup>2</sup> However, the role of Trevor-Roper must not be understated. His failure in later life to identify the fake ‘Hitler Diaries’ (which Sisman convincingly argues was a betrayal of Trevor-Roper’s trust) has enabled conspiracy theorists to be overly critical of his early intelligence work.<sup>3</sup> But as this dissertation has shown, Trevor-Roper was a highly regarded intelligence officer in 1945 who showed a great deal of objectivity in his scrupulous hunt for the truth of how Hitler died. The ‘Hitler Diaries’ fiasco should not reflect badly on his earlier intelligence work. The evidence analysed in this dissertation suggests that any doubts regarding political motivations or the reliability of Trevor-Roper’s conclusions can be removed.

Nevertheless, no conclusions on Hitler’s death can be definitive as many Russian archives remain closed. Consequently, although this dissertation has debunked numerous conspiracy theories,

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<sup>1</sup> Jeffery, *MI6*, p. xv.

<sup>2</sup> Evans in Andrew, *MI5*, p. xvii.

<sup>3</sup> Dunstan and Williams, *Wolf*, p. XXI. See also Sisman, *Trevor-Roper*, p. 504.

it has also raised more questions, such as who typed the fourth copy of Hitler's will. The files of Stalin's secretariat if they are ever released may reveal why Stalin decided to repress evidence and could contradict the conclusions made in this dissertation about Soviet conduct. Although the evidence outlined in Chapter Three suggests Hitler shot himself, it would be foolish (as the 2009 DNA results showed) to claim this is the definitive answer. What is needed in future studies is co-operative scholarship between forensic scientists and historians using archives throughout the world. A future study using American archival material could provide an American perspective of Truscott's actions and assess the opinions of American officials on rumours of Hitler's survival. Perhaps, as Fest argues, due to numerous eyewitness discrepancies, historians may never know Hitler's method of suicide. There is however no longer any ideological baggage in concluding that Hitler shot himself. Indeed, despite Dr. Goebbels' attempt to create a myth that would revive Nazism from the ashes of a heroic Wagnerian ending, the lies of conspiracy theorists and the deliberate confusion evoked by the Soviets, Hitler's actions have shown historians that he died a hypocrite and a coward.

By challenging the criticisms of Trevor-Roper's investigations, assessing the opinions of intelligence officers on rumours of Hitler's survival and providing a plausible explanation for the 2009 DNA results, this dissertation hopes to have undermined conspiracy theories which have dominated the historiography since 2009. That they were able to do this demonstrates that some topics which may appear to be the narrow field of amateur historians are too important for academic historians to ignore. Indeed, despite the 2009 DNA results, there is still an overwhelming amount of evidence to suggest Hitler died in Berlin. Trevor-Roper concluded without analysing any corpse that Hitler had committed suicide, and his conclusions are still convincing today. One Foreign Office official wrote in October 1945 'I think the onus is now not on His Majesty's Government to prove that Hitler is dead but on Hitler to prove that he is alive'.<sup>4</sup> The onus has been on Hitler for seventy years. It is certain beyond all reasonable speculation that he committed suicide on 30 April 1945.

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<sup>4</sup> TNA, FO 371/46749, C7164 (15/10/1945).

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