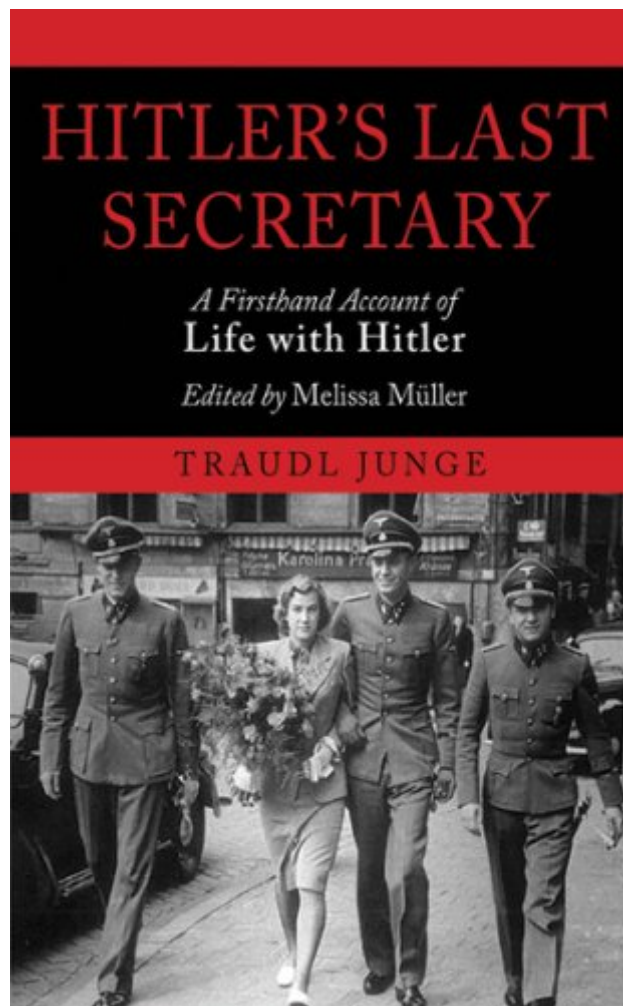




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Hitler's Last Secretary: A Firsthand Account Of Life With Hitler



Synopsis

A firsthand account of Adolf Hitler from the woman who worked at his side, stayed with him in the bunker, and was featured in the film Downfall. In 1942 Germany, Gertraud "Traudl" Junge was a young woman with dreams of becoming a ballerina when she was offered the chance of a lifetime. At the age of twenty-two, she became private secretary to Adolf Hitler and served him for two and a half years, right up to the very end. Junge observed the intimate workings of Hitler's administration: She typed his correspondence and speeches "including Hitler's public and private last will and testament" and ate her meals and spent evenings with him. She was close enough to hear the bomb intended to assassinate Hitler in the Wolf's Lair and to smell the bitter almond odor of Eva Braun's cyanide pill in Hitler's bunker and ultimate tomb. In this intimate, detailed, and chilling memoir, Junge explains what it was like to spend everyday life with a human monster.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

While the life of Adolph Hitler has been well-documented in text and film, our understanding of his ultimate demise is heavily based on words and memory of Traudl Junge (nee Humps).

HITLER'S LAST SECRETARY provides a fly-on-the-wall perspective that reveals one of history's most notorious figures as being rather dull. I first saw Traudl Junge on several episodes of the *World at War* (the fabulous and comprehensive British documentary of the Second World War) and found her eyewitness account of Hitler's last days quite memorable. As Hitler's youngest secretary, she became a trusted member of his inner circle (he even dictated his last will and testament to her). From the peak of his power in 1942 to his cowardly demise underneath the ruins of Berlin, Junge saw Hitler in a variety of lights: relaxing atop the Eagle's Nest, bantering with Nazi lapdogs, surviving an assassination attempt and his somewhat odd relationship with Eva Braun. She saw it all. While much of the book centers on her casual observances, Junge provides enough extraordinary details to make it all worth reading and I found it hard to put the book down once I started reading. Even though Junge wrote the book a few years after the war, I never sensed that absolution was her purpose in writing the book. She simply had a story worth telling. There are points in the book where hindsight comes into play, but most of her story is pretty straightforward. She makes no bones that Hitler's charisma and power were hard to ignore and admits that working for him was a pleasant experience overall. Of course, one wonders to what extent she was aware of the atrocities being committed under her boss's order. There are instances in the book where the Nazi's pervasive attitude toward Jews is known/accepted (including one moment where a respected woman with Jewish lineage appears to have been spared by Hitler), but this is an issue that Junge opts not to indulge in. The war is what takes front and center. The reader is left to judge whether Junge's account was intentionally void of such particulars or that she simply wasn't privy to certain matters. The individuals she is exposed to on a regular basis represent a who's who of Nazi war criminals (Himmler, Bormann, Goebbels, etc.), so it is plausible to assume she was aware (to some degree) of Nazi atrocities. While the movie *Downfall* (which draws heavily from Junge's experiences), portrays Hitler as a raging madman reaching the end of his rope, the book doesn't deliver any of the movie's intensity. In fact, much of the book details a different side of Hitler. Less of a madman and more of a simple, boring and somewhat strange man. Junge's interactions with Hitler are always described as being pleasant. She notes many of the man's idiosyncrasies, including his hypochondria (requiring daily injections), his penchant for napping in front of guests, the affection he has for his dog (Blondi) and his oddly platonic relationship with Eva Braun. In fact, Junge speaks more negatively about Hitler's bootlicking followers and confidants. Simply put, the book does not paint Hitler as the detestable

person we know he proved to be. But, it is not difficult to believe that Junge's experience with the man never led her to draw such a conclusion at the time as he was always kind and respectful toward her. While some may view her book as "humanizing" such a despicable figure, I have always felt the stereotypical depiction of ruthless dictators as a monstrous "supervillains" tends to inadvertently aggrandize these people and make them larger than life. Junge's observations of Hitler do not portray him as anything special. **HITLER'S LAST SECRETARY** offers a smooth read, even though it mainly consists of one long chapter (one reason it was hard to put down). I found the details provided about Hitler and his inner circle quite fascinating: the interior of the Berghof retreat, Eva Braun's clothes and demeanor, Hitler's eating habits, his opinions on mundane topics (like his disdain for smoking) and frank commentary on those close to Hitler. Junge provides a much clearer image of the chaos that erupted deep within the bunker in the war's final days, including Goebbels' decision to poison his six children, Hitler/Eva Braun's wedding ceremony, as well as their suicides and the subsequent disposal of her bodies (which she doesn't witness first hand). Even though Junge's own account ends with her emerging from the bunker, Melissa Muller provides an informative and interesting final chapter that picks up where Junge's writing stopped. This final chapter serves as a biography of Traudl Junge from the war's end through the 1990s. **HITLER'S LAST SECRETARY** is a worthy read as it offers a fascinating peek inside the machine responsible for mankind's greatest tragedy. While some readers may question the author's intent or be turned off by her unapologetic/straightforward approach to the subject matter, it is hard to ignore the historical significance of Traudl Junge's observations.

I'm giving this book five stars because I have discovered quite a lot from reading it. The way it was written caused me to feel as though I was right there, in which I experienced a sense of suspense during my reading of the moments right up to the very end of the Third Reich. I especially appreciated the special attention to details. I have read many books about Holocaust survivors and the inhumane conditions that Jews had to endure, as well as the horrific ways millions of them were murdered. This would be the very first account of the Nazi Party members, but especially Hitler's close entourage, that I've read which gave an inside look of their day to day lives, conditions as it were for them up to the very last moments before the Russian invasion. I absolutely despise the National Socialist Party for their role in bringing about Hitler's sickening 'Final Solution'. I just find it interesting the way the Party members continued to follow such an obvious criminal regime, without

thinking for themselves. Then to witness their beloved leader to go out like a coward. What a slap in the face that must have been. Anyone interested in history and especially WWII will find this book to be very enlightening and informative.

The fact that she was in close contact and felt that he was a kindly almost father figure shed a new light on the way we can be misled by emotions. A more personal account than the usual history where we get the dates and events but not the everyday interactions

As I never did understand how and why "normal" people could be so drawn into a world of human degradation, murder, hatred and cruelty, this book was a recounting and reconciliation by an exceptionally honest woman. Her actual youthful trust and honest belief in the system and its promises of a gracious rewarding life, and then the explosive, final discovery of the truth brought a young, naive girl to a cynical, guilt-ridden but redemptive close of life. She was able to find compassionate friends and mentors who gave support and guidance, most of whom were from unlikely sources such as survivors of the tragedy both war and deprivation brought. This is an exceptionally accurate memoir. Have a great time immersing yourself in an enthralling recollection.

A gripping account of Traudl Junge's days as a young secretary to Hitler during the final years of WWII, partly through her own postwar documentation and partly from detail about Traudl's early and later life supplied by editor Melissa Muller. Traudl, by her own admission unforgivably naive about the Nazi regime, presents Hitler as a kindly, avuncular old gent - and who is to say this side of him did not exist? Fascinating detail about the apparently loving and loyal Eva Braun, who chose to die with Hitler. Well put together by Melissa Muller, if you can forgive her use of the appalling historic present.

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