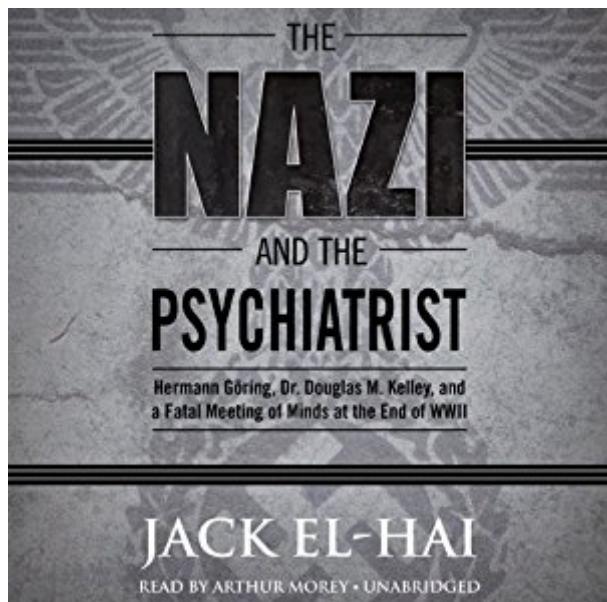


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The Nazi And The Psychiatrist: Hermann Göring, Dr. Douglas M. Kelley, And A Fatal Meeting Of Minds At The End Of WWII



Synopsis

In 1945, after his capture at the end of the Second World War, Hermann Göring arrived at an American-run detention center in war-torn Luxembourg, accompanied by 16 suitcases and a red hatbox. The suitcases contained all manner of paraphernalia: medals, gems, two cigar cutters, silk underwear, a hot water bottle, and the equivalent of \$100,000,000 in cash. Hidden in a coffee can, a set of brass vials housed glass capsules containing a clear liquid and a white precipitate: potassium cyanide. Joining Göring in the detention center were the elite of the captured Nazi regime - Grand Admiral Dönitz, armed forces commander Wilhelm Keitel and his deputy Alfred Jodl, the mentally unstable Robert Ley, the suicidal Hans Frank, the pornographic propagandist Julius Streicher - 52 senior Nazis in all, of whom the dominant figure was Göring. To ensure that the villainous captives were fit for trial at Nuremberg, the US Army sent an ambitious army psychiatrist, Captain Douglas M. Kelley, to supervise their mental well-being during their detention. Kelley realized he was being offered the professional opportunity of a lifetime: to discover a distinguishing trait among these arch-criminals that would mark them as psychologically different from the rest of humanity. So began a remarkable relationship between Kelley and his captors, told here for the first time with unique access to Kelley's long-hidden papers and medical records. Kelley's was a hazardous quest, dangerous because against all his expectations he began to appreciate and understand some of the Nazi captives, none more so than the former Reichsmarshall, Hermann Göring. Evil had its charms.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

For more than seven decades, we've been trying to understand the nature of the Nazi mind. Was there something uniquely psychopathic about them, or could their horrors be wreaked by any country's leaders and citizens? One of the first people to get an opportunity to try to answer this question was Captain Douglas M. Kelley, a 32-year-old psychiatrist in the U.S. Army medical service, who was assigned to attend to the 22 top Nazi defendants being held in Nuremberg, Germany, in the months before their trial began for crimes against humanity. Kelley spent long hours talking to the defendants and administering what were then relatively new psychiatric tests, like Rorschach ink blot testing and Thematic Apperception Tests. Among the Nazi bigwigs Kelley was responsible for, the top patient was Hermann Göring, former head of the Luftwaffe and Hitler's one-time designated successor. Göring's huge personality and appetites were like a tractor beam for Kelley. He was charming, intelligent and quick-witted, but it soon became clear that he had no regard for anyone outside his small circle of family and close friends. As the book description tells us, Göring managed to kill himself with a cyanide capsule in his cell the night before he was scheduled to be hanged. Twelve years later, Kelley also killed himself with cyanide, after a long slide into emotional illness and alcoholism. The book description concludes that Kelley's suicide shows "the insidious impact of the Göring-Kelley relationship, providing a cautionary tale about the dangers of coming too close to evil." I think the book description is misleading.

Dr. Douglas M. Kelley, who served as a psychiatrist for the U.S. Army in World War II, received an order to be the lead psychiatrist and work with the high level Nazis being detained for trial at Nuremberg after the war. He saw it as an opportunity to try to discern if there was a common flaw among the Nazi leaders? "We must learn why of the Nazi success so we can take steps to prevent the recurrence of such evil." "What made these men criminals?" "Were they born with evil tendencies?" "Did they share psychiatric disorders?" "The trial and its run-up served as fascinating laboratories for the study of group dynamics of aggression, criminal motivation, defense mechanisms of the guilty, depression, and the response of deviant personalities to the judicial process." His conclusions are as relevant in the United States today, in 2013, as they were in 1947. Hermann Göring, President of the Reichstag, Hitler's deputy, Prime Minister of Prussia, Reich Minister of Aviation and Commander in Chief of the Luftwaffe, Minister of Economics, member of the Secret Cabinet Council, director of the Hermann Göring Works manufacturing combine, field marshal, chairman of the Reich Council for National Defense, Reich Forestry and Hunting Master, and Reichsmarshall, was the highest ranking Nazi in detention. After seeing the films taken when the concentration camps were liberated, he stated he didn't know the extent of the atrocities.

committed against the victims and thought it was enemy propaganda. Until that point, he wanted all co-defendants to "defend themselves, be proud of their actions, and accept the punishment of the victors as a unified group.

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