

Himmler's Crusade – The true story of the 1938 Nazi Expedition into Tibet
by Christopher Hale.
Bantam Press 2003.

Of all the books written about the Second World War and related issues, Himmler's Crusade tells one of the strangest stories of them all.

This is the story of the development of the bizarre theories that governed the life of Heinrich Himmler, head of the SS, and their synthesis with the racial and anthropological theses current in Germany from the late 19th century. It is a tale of German explorers and adventurers who went to Tibet and its environs in the late 1930s, just before the war began, meeting with natives and their rulers, to search for proofs for their racial theories with callipers and other devices for measuring human physiognomy. It is a story of the way these theories were put to brutal and horrific use in Nazi experiments on Jews and others in concentration camps.

Christopher Hale has produced a highly interesting book, one that sheds fresh light on a key dimension of the aberration that was Nazism. He writes engagingly and with humour, and the book contains some fascinating old photographs, not least that of a Nazi wearing a pith helmet with SS stripes down the side.

Anyone interested in gaining a fuller understanding of the twisted views that underpinned Nazism will find Himmler's Crusade a most rewarding read.

Rabbi Dr Charles H Middleburgh