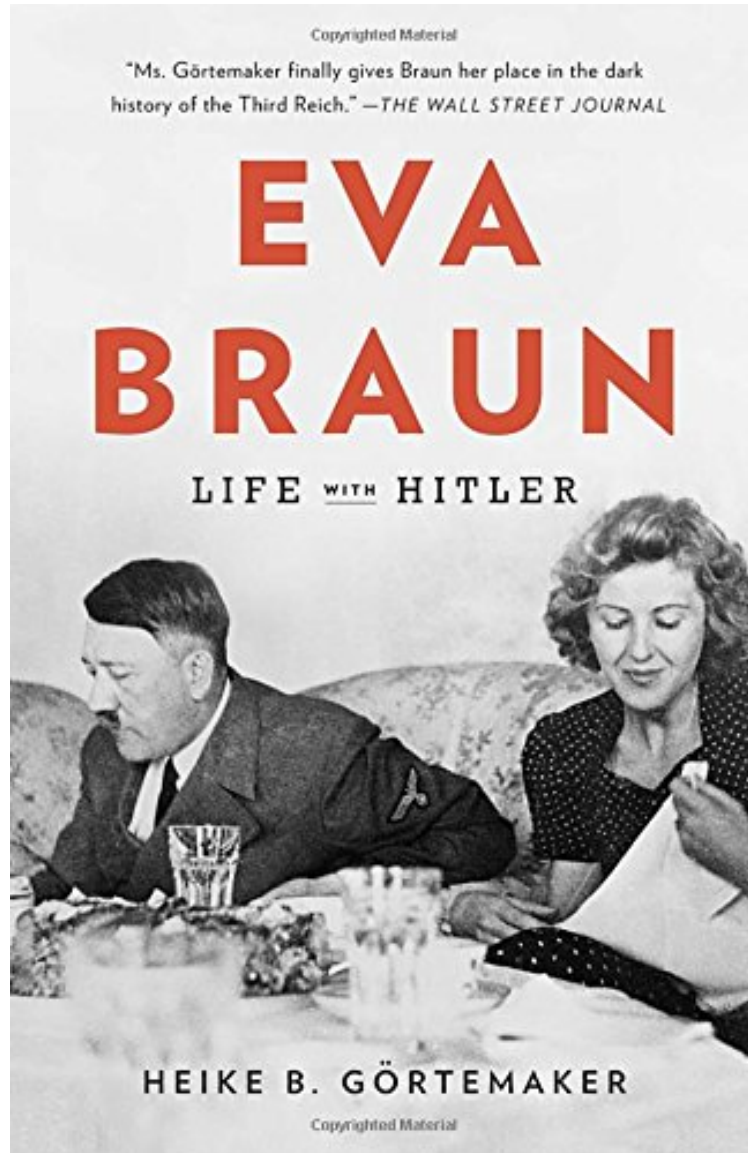


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Eva Braun: Life with Hitler

Heike B. Gortemaker

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Heike B. Gortemaker : Eva Braun: Life with Hitler before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Eva Braun: Life with Hitler:

6 of 6 people found the following review helpful. The Final Word on Eva BraunBy Luis EscobarIf you are looking for a wonderful narrative of Eva Braun's life similar in quality to Manchester's biography of Winston Churchill, don't hold your breath. As Gortemaker documents in this wonderful *historical study*, Braun and other top Nazis from the bunker crowd ordered almost all of her (and Hitler's) personal correspondence burned during the final days of the

Reich. Although some documents survived the war, it is probably now impossible to craft a pleasing narrative of her life in the style of other great, READABLE, biographies. Gortemaker's work is a "biography" in name only. More accurately, it is a historical analysis of the documentation available about Eva Braun. The reason why it is a critical must-read is because Gortemaker systematically analyses the giant constellation of theses ("myths") that have emerged in the aftermath of the fall of the Third Reich, and she blows them away. Her work obliterates these theses not only for Eva Braun, but also for Hitler, Speer, and many others. Although it is sad that one does not walk away from this book with the satisfied feeling of having experienced the narrative of Braun's life, you will be delighted to obtain a completely new perspective on the atmosphere of Hitler's intimate court. Gortemaker certainly projects a much more interesting, nuanced, complex, and *infinitely* multifaceted characterization of Braun, and in doing so, she also reveals dudes like Speer to be even much more devious than Dan Van Der Vat's final exposé already accomplished. Gortemaker forcefully made me realize that just because some Nazi said it after the war, doesn't mean there is an ounce of truth in the statement. One aspect that was really very welcome was that her treatise humanizes Hitler. Of course, he was the perpetrator of the Holocaust. However, it is so casually demonized and caricatured, that it is sometimes hard to remember that he was just a regular old human being. If you are interested in getting an authentic understanding of the life of Hitler's court, and a sophisticated perspective on the personalities of the members of that court, this is a must read. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Interesting look at the social inner circle surrounding Hitler. By Bruce Miller I had read a review of this book in the NYT Sunday Book review several months ago and purchased it based on that recommendation. It was interesting, informative, but a bit too academic for my interests. The author liberally used references to other author's research and published books and then drew her own conclusions. Whether or not Eva Braun took a train on a particular day was not something that I was interested in, rather, I would have enjoyed more on the personal relationships. The book did not disappoint in portraying an interesting picture of Hitler and his lifestyle of being withdrawn into a very close circle of associates who were all "yes men and woman". I also found it interesting how he manipulated finances and created government entities to support his personal lifestyle with Eva Braun and others around him. I did not know how reclusive he was until I read this book. It provided a very intimate glimpse into the day to day lifestyle of the psychopath, Hitler as well as his enablers, in particular Eva Braun. It was a book worth reading, but perhaps a little too pedantic for my tastes. I wasn't disappointed by the information presented, I just thought that it was a little over validated by too many references to the research of others. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. As much about the war as about Eva Braun, ... By cora may As much about the war as about Eva Braun, but seeing how she was almost a fly on the wall, it stands to reason.

From one of Germany's leading young historians, the first comprehensive biography of Eva Braun, Hitler's devoted mistress, finally wife, and the hidden First Lady of the Third Reich. In this groundbreaking biography of Eva Braun, German historian Heike Grtemaker reveals Hitler's mistress as more than just a vapid blonde whose concerns never extended beyond her vanity table. Twenty-three years his junior, Braun first met Hitler when she took a position as an assistant to his personal photographer. Capricious, but uncompromising and fiercely loyal, she married Hitler two days before committing suicide with him in Berlin in 1945. Her identity was kept secret by the Third Reich until the final days of the war. Through exhaustive research, newly discovered documentation, and anecdotal accounts, Grtemaker turns preconceptions about Eva Braun and Hitler on their head, and builds a portrait of the little-known Hitler far from the public eye.

Easily the best biography of Eva Braun so far written. The Daily Beast Hitler could not have wished for a better girlfriend. . . . A highly readable and consistent portrait of an ordinary woman who was, without a doubt, utterly devoted to the man history has seen as evil incarnate. The New York Times Heike B. Grtemaker seeks answers from a close reading of memoirs and postwar interrogations of Germans who knew them, ranging from senior Nazi figures to Hitler's military adjutants and secretaries. The result, *Eva Braun: Life With Hitler*, is less gossip than a serious study of personal relationships and power at Nazi Germany's pinnacle. . . . The book deserves a broad readership, taking us as it does behind the scenes of history's most criminal regime. San Francisco Chronicle Ms. Grtemaker finally gives Braun her place in the dark history of the Third Reich. Wall Street Journal [A] careful reading of Grtemaker's riveting account of the characters surrounding Hitler reveals that he spent more time with Eva Braun, especially after 1935, than he did with even the highest ranking Nazis, such as Hermann Goering, Joseph Goebbels, and Heinrich Himmler. Braun may not have influenced Nazi policies, but thanks to Grtemaker's groundbreaking work, it is now clear how Braun catered to Hitler, fostering his reliance on cronies and lackeys and reinforcing his tendency to shut himself off from the awful reality of what was happening to Germany and to the world. Minneapolis Star-Tribune Employing a detective's skill and a journalist's flair . . . Grtemaker reconstructs the life of Eva Braun from the petty bourgeois household of her schoolteacher father to the inner circle of the Nazi overlord. Chicago Sun-Times Solidly researched, sophisticated, and well-written biography. Library Journal Although it is difficult, if not impossible, to whip up any sympathy for or to empathize with one of history's most notorious mistresses, Grtemaker does provide a more nuanced view of this

marginalized woman by examining the pivotal role she played in Hitler's life and within his inner circle . . . This breakout biography is a solid contribution to the ever-increasing body of Third Reich literature and scholarship.

Booklist A perceptive account of a woman loyal and complaisant to the end. Richmond Times-Dispatch An utterly compelling portrayal of the weird hidden life of the dictator . . . An instructively intimate peek at a man who, like some black star, destroyed all those he touched. Eva was only one of millions of his victims but a willing one. The Telegraph (UK) A comprehensive biography . . . Grtemaker turns on their heads the preconceptions about Hitler and Eva. Daily Mail (UK) The first scientifically researched biography to correct the image of the dumb blonde at the side of the mass murderer. Der Spiegel (Germany) This meticulously-researched and documented biography is far more than the story of Eva Braun . . . Grtemaker has sifted through photographs, diaries, letters, interviews, and previous research to provide a wider perspective on not only Eva, but also many others in Hitler's circle . . . Fascinating reading.

Historical Novels Braun emerges as bright but vapid, energetic but soulless. As thorough and clear a look of a monster's lover as we are likely to get. Kirkus's (starred review) Having painstakingly reviewed the archives for references to Eva Braun's relationship with Hitler, Grtemaker presents a portrait of an engaged and engaging young woman, fervently supportive of National Socialism and one of the few members of Hitler's inner circle to never lose his trust or fall out of affection. . . . This telling sheds more light on the central question of the narrative of Eva Braun: Did she share the political positions and basic worldview of her lover or was she merely a tragic slave who nonetheless profited from Hitler's power?

Publishers Weekly About the Author Heike B. Gortemaker studied History, Economics, and Literature. She now works as a historian in Berlin. Excerpt. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved.

1 Heinrich Hoffmann's Studio Almost sixteen years earlier, in October 1929, Hitler and Eva Braun met for the first time in the studio of photographer Heinrich Hoffmann. Hoffmann was a press photographer and portrait photographer well known in Munich after World War I, as well as a publisher and a National Socialist from the beginning. He ran a studio, called Photohaus Hoffmann, at 25 Amalienstrasse, near Odeon Square in central Munich. From there he supplied the Munich *Illustrierte Presse* (Illustrated Press) and domestic and foreign agencies with his pictures. Hoffmann's father was a photographer as well, and he had apparently forced his son to follow in his footsteps; Hoffmann had owned a business of his own in Munich since 1909. Even before 1914, Heinrich Hoffmann had made a name for himself with the public and in artistic circles with his photography service—the "Hoffmann Photoreport"—as well as by taking portrait photographs. Still, he owed his flourishing business to the NSDAP. After World War I, which he spent on the French front as a reservist in a replacement detachment of the air force, he put his talents at the service of the far-right nationalist movement that was rising to power.

The Nazi Party's House Photographer It is no longer possible to reconstruct exactly when and in what circumstances Hoffmann met Hitler for the first time. Hoffmann's daughter, Henriette von Schirach, later claimed that the Populist poet and writer Dietrich Eckart had put her father in contact with Hitler; Hoffmann himself said in his memoir that their first encounter was for purely business reasons, after an American photo agency offered him one hundred dollars for a photograph of Hitler, on October 30, 1922. As early as 1947, in an unpublished written statement in his own defense, Hoffmann claimed that the "American press" had offered him "a large sum for the first picture of Hitler" at the time. In order to get this money, "under any circumstances," he contrived a seemingly chance encounter by suggesting that Hermann Esser, a good friend of Hitler's, hold the reception for his upcoming wedding in Hoffmann's house, on July 5, 1923. In this way, he planned to meet Hitler, who was to be one of the witnesses at the ceremony. In fact, Hoffmann had been a member of the German Workers' Party (Deutsche Arbeiterpartei, or DAP) since April 6, 1920—six months after Hitler had joined. Anton Drexler had founded the party in January of the previous year, in Munich, and it had recently changed its name to the National Socialist German Workers' Party (Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei, or NSDAP). Hoffmann began to publish the weekly newspaper *Auf gut deutsch* (In Good German), edited by the radical nationalistic and anti-Semitic Dietrich Eckart, Hitler's friend, mentor, and father-figure. This failed poet used the paper to rail against the Weimar Republic, Bolshevism, and Judaism, under the motto "Germany, Awake!" There is much evidence to suggest that Hoffmann became friends with this circle of like-minded men, including Eckart, Hitler, and the journalist Hermann Esser, before he began to make himself useful to the NSDAP and especially to the man who became its leader starting on July 29, 1921: the aggressive "beer hall agitator" Adolf Hitler. Despite numerous requests, Hoffmann at first respected Hitler's wish not to be photographed. Hoffmann's first portrait of Hitler, in fact, appeared only after the failed Beer Hall Putsch of November 8–9, 1923, which made Hitler famous throughout Germany but also landed him in jail. (Hoffmann photographed him as a prisoner.) The following year, Hoffmann published a photo brochure titled (in German) "Germany's Awakening, in Words and Pictures." In 1926, the tireless Hoffmann, together with Hitler and Hermann Esser (their mutual friend and the first head of propaganda for the Party), founded a richly illustrated weekly Party newspaper, the *Illustrierter Beobachter*. That same year, at Hoffmann's suggestion, the *Volkischer Beobachter* (The People's Observer, the Nazi newspaper) included photographs for the first time—from Hoffmann's own studio, needless to say. The NSDAP was thus on the cutting edge, technologically speaking. Only a few years earlier it had been common practice to illustrate newspaper stories with drawings or engravings. Even *The New York Times* started to print photographs regularly only in 1922. Photojournalism's true breakthrough, made possible by the development of the 35 mm camera in 1925, had only just begun. Unlike in America—and also England

and France, where the British Daily Mirror and French Illustration had set up a daily photographic exchange service between London and Paris as early as 1907—in Germany the practice of printing photographs in newspapers only slowly gained popularity. Among the pictures Hoffmann published in the *Völkischer Beobachter* was a series showing, for the first time, Hitler giving the Nazi salute with outstretched arm before a march of thousands of Party faithful on July 4, 1926, at the first NSDAP convention after it was reestablished in Weimar. Already, in the earliest phase of the Nazi Party's rise to power, Hoffmann was putting his initiative and photographic skill behind the power of images—and the power of the Party's not uncontroversial leader, who was controversial even within the Party at first. For Hitler and the propaganda campaign he was waging against both external opponents and opponents within the Party, Hoffmann soon made himself indispensable. He became Hitler's "personal photographer." From then on the leader of the Nazi Party almost never appeared without Hoffmann, whether on trips, on the campaign trail, or at lunch at Hitler's local Munich pub. Hoffmann's decision to devote his career entirely to Hitler and the NSDAP paid off only in later years, however. In 1929, the Landtag (state parliament) campaigns and mass rallies provided Hoffmann's business with more and more assignments. These included the four-day NSDAP convention in Nuremberg on August 1-4, with the spectacular parade of sixty thousand SA and SS members, and Hitler's appearance on October 26 in the Zirkus Krone in Munich with Alfred Hugenberg, the press tycoon and head of the German National People's Party (Deutschnationale Volkspartei, or DNVP), in connection with the proposed German referendum against the Young Plan. That same year gave the Nazi Party its first electoral victories. In the Reichstag (national parliament) election the previous year, on May 20, 1928, it looked as though the National Socialists were sinking back into insignificance—they received only 2.6 percent of the vote—but in the Landtag and municipal elections of 1929 the trend was uniformly upward. With the world economic crisis unfolding in the background, and the rise in unemployment to 3.32 million people in Germany, the NSDAP achieved gains in Saxony, Baden, and Bavaria; in Thuringia, in fact, its vote tally rose from 4.6 to 11.3 percent. In light of these results, it is no accident that Hoffmann, then forty-four years old, was able to expand his business even in fall 1929, at the onset of the worldwide economic crash. He profited both from the increasing number of assignments from the Party and from the greater use Hitler himself made of him. Photo agencies were booming in any case, since by that time more and more newspapers were illustrating their reports with photographs. The demand throughout the world for news photographs was constantly on the rise, and a flourishing business grew from Hoffmann's small workshop in a courtyard behind 50 Schellingstrasse. It moved to 25 Amalienstrasse in September 1929, and was renamed the NSDAP-Photohaus Hoffmann. Shortly before the reopening, Hoffmann hired new employees, and one of them was the seventeen-year-old Eva Braun. "Herr Wolf" Eva Braun's job at Photohaus Hoffmann seems to have been primarily behind the counter. In any case, the various statements about her actual duties are contradictory. For example, Henriette von Schirach-Hoffmann's daughter and a friend of Eva Braun's the same age as she, who was thus in a position to know—says at one point in her memoir that Braun was an "apprentice in [Hoffmann's] photo lab," but mentions elsewhere that Braun sold "roll films" in her father's "photo store." In fact, both were true. Eva Braun, Heinrich Hoffmann later wrote, had been a "novice and shop assistant" and worked for him "in the office, as a salesgirl, and also in the laboratory." From 1933 on, after Braun was "more established" in the business, she worked exclusively "in photography." To be a photographer was a very respected and enviable career for a woman at the time. The field was new and modern and the idea of becoming a fashion or portrait photographer attracted many women. Eva Braun was especially interested in fashion. Her first task at Hoffmann's, though, was to learn how to use a camera and develop pictures. From the beginning, her duties included running small errands for Hoffmann and his clients and working behind the counter. Along with press photography, the rise in amateur photography offered a steadily growing market, so Photohaus Hoffmann not only took photographs but also sold photographic equipment, which was now readily available to the public. In addition, it sold pictures and postcards of its own, and Eva Braun was also responsible for those sales, according to Baldur von Schirach, Hoffmann's son-in-law and the future Youth Leader of the Nazi Party. Hoffmann's preferred motifs and images included his fellow Party members and, especially, portraits of its leader, Adolf Hitler. Eva Braun probably met Hitler for the first time in October 1929, a few weeks after starting her job. She was apparently working late, organizing papers, when Hoffmann introduced her to one "Herr Wolf" and asked her to fetch some beer and sausages for him and his friend, and for herself as well, from a nearby restaurant. During the meal together that followed, the stranger was "devouring" her "with his eyes the whole time," and he later offered her "a lift in his Mercedes." She refused. Finally, before she left the studio, Eva Braun's boss, Hoffmann, asked her: "Haven't you guessed who that gentleman is; don't you ever look at our photos?" After she said no, Hoffmann said: "It's Hitler! Adolf Hitler." This account appears in the first published biography of Eva Braun, from 1968, by the Turkish-American journalist whose birth name was Nerin Emrullah Gn. According to Gn, Eva Braun told one of her sisters—presumably Ilse, the oldest of the three sisters—about this first meeting with Hitler, which occurred "on one of the first Fridays in October," either October 4 or October 11, 1929. But how reliable is Gn? His work is quoted extensively even today, and it tends to give the impression that Eva Braun dictated her story directly to him. From whom did he get his information, and how? And what are we to make of his own thoroughly enigmatic history? Gn worked in the press department of the Turkish embassy in Budapest during World War II. Shortly before the end of the war, on April 12, 1945, the secret police ordered his arrest for allegedly

being an enemy of the German state; he was sent to the Dachau concentration camp. Two weeks later, on April 29, 1945, he was liberated along with the other prisoners by the American Seventh Army. Gn moved to the United States, simplified his name to Gun, and later wrote a book about the assassination of John F. Kennedy. That was presumably why the CIA suspected him, as a member of the Communist Party, of being involved himself in the assassination of President Kennedy and charged him with having committed espionage and falsified documents in Europe. In the mid-1960s, on the occasion of the anniversary celebration of the liberation of Dachau, Gun visited West Germany. That was apparently when he arranged to meet Eva Braun's family and other former members of Hitler's inner circle. He tracked down Franziska Braun, Eva's mother, in her house in Ruhpolding, Bavaria, and also questioned Eva's sisters, Ilse and Margarete (who was called Gretl), as well as Eva's best friend, Herta Schneider (ne Ostermayr). Gun obtained access to Eva Braun's private photographs and letters, and these were published for the first time in his book. However, Gun does not give precise details about the sources of his information, and he switches freely back and forth between invented anecdotes and factual testimony from actual witnesses in a way that makes it impossible for the reader to determine which is which. Ilse Hess, Rudolf Hess's wife, wrote in a letter to Albert Speer on June 25, 1968, that Gun, "the author of the book about Everl [her nickname for Eva Braun]," had stayed with her, Ilse Hess, "for weeks" in Hindelang, since he was now planning to write a biography of her husband; she wrote that she now called him only by the name "Mr. I pay all" (in English), since that was his "favorite expression." This remark shows the lack of respect she had for him; Gun apparently had little background knowledge and Ilse Hess did not take him seriously. Presumably, Gun likewise stayed with the Braun family the year before while he was researching his book on Eva Braun, although there is no concrete evidence either way. Thus we cannot say that the sequence of events at the first meeting between Eva Braun and Hitler has been established with certainty, even if matters may well have played out the way Gun describes. It is certainly unclear why Hoffmann would have introduced his prominent friend and Party colleague under the fake name "Wolf." (Hitler did often use that name for himself, especially when traveling.) Possibly Hoffmann was trying to forestall a nervous, or even hysterical, reaction from the young woman. In any case, nothing could stop the attraction that apparently sprang up spontaneously on both sides. From then on, Hitler, already forty years old, remembered himself to the seventeen-year-old Eva Braun with compliments and little gifts every time he visited the studio. Such visits were not at all difficult for Hitler to arrange. Photohaus Hoffmann, on the corner of Amalienstrasse and Theresienstrasse, was directly across the street from Caf Stephanie, a favorite spot for the leading Nazi politicians. Before World War I, it had been a meeting point for the bohemians of the Schwabing district, including such figures as Heinrich Mann, Erich Mhsam, Eduard Graf von Keyserling, and Paul Klee. The Party's headquarters were just a side street away, at 50 Schellingstrasse, the same street where the editorial and printing offices of the *Volkischer Beobachter* were located a few houses farther on. At 50 Schellingstrasse itself was the building where Heinrich Hoffmann and his family used to live, and Hoffmann's "workshop" was located next door. That was where he photographed Hitler, Gring, and other Party leaders. Also on Schellingstrasse was the Osteria Bavaria, the oldest Italian restaurant in Munich, where Hitler and his fellow Party members often used to go; it is still there today, under the name Osteria Italiana. Henriette von Schirach described the restaurant as a "cool, small winery with a little courtyard painted in Pompeian red and a 'temple,' that is, an alcove with two columns in front of it," which was kept reserved for Hitler. However, Hitler's later secretary, Traudl Junge, said that the Nazi leader's regular table was the "least comfortable table all the way in the back, in the corner." From the Hardcover edition.