

*The secret MI5 investigation of the  
Rudolf Hess imposter.*

## **PLAYING RUDOLF HESS**

by Nicholas Kinsey

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# **PLAYING RUDOLF HESS**

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AN IMPOSTER STORY

Nicholas Kinsey

**PLAYING  
RUDOLF HESS**

BY

NICHOLAS KINSEY

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In memory of my mother  
Winifred Mary Pryce



## FOREWORD

I am a Canadian and British writer and director of film and television drama and this novel started as a feature film screenplay in 2014 and then became a television mini-series project in six episodes. Hopefully it will one day become a successful television drama and will be seen around the world, but in the meantime readers can enjoy this great imposter story in book form.

Solid historical research went into writing this novel which drew on the 18 journals of the warders who cared for Hess during his incarceration in Britain, W. Hugh Thomas' *The Murder of Rudolf Hess* and numerous books on the German double agent network run by MI5. This novel is based on a lot of well known facts since Hess was in detention for some 46 years before his death in 1987. Of course, when the facts are not available, the writer's job is to invent. This book therefore remains a work of historical fiction.



“Hess looks crazy now. The sickest man one ever saw. Born to burn at any stake for any cause that happens to come along. He has a round, bald patch like a monk’s on the top of his head. I gazed into those enormous black pupils, the eyes of a fanatic, cavernous in that emaciated, grey-white face.”

Dame Laura Knight, journalist  
Nuremberg, 1946



# One

**Berlin, September 1973**

The roofs of old Berlin flashed by in bursts of light. An old man with a gaunt face and bushy eyebrows in a threadbare grey suit sat on a metal bench breathing in the blue sky and enjoying the warmth of the sun on his face, oblivious to his Soviet guards. It had been some 30 years since he felt that joyous and indefinable feeling of liberty, of life beating in his breast during long walks in the Welsh highlands with the wind blowing off the mountains. His hand shook as he struggled with his handcuffs to pull a pair of spectacles from his pocket hoping to get a glimpse of his whereabouts in the city.

He was locked in the back of a green ambulance as it rushed through the back streets of the British Sector. The ambulance followed two motorcycle outriders with a Mercedes sedan carrying a Russian flag bringing up the rear.

Moments later, the ambulance swept into the courtyard of the British Military Hospital. A Soviet army major named Voitov jumped out of the Mercedes and went to the back of the ambulance where he was joined by two soldiers. Voitov barked an order in Russian.

“Hurry up. Bring him out.”

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The soldiers pulled the old man out of the truck and followed Voitov into the building by the back door.

Inside the old baroque hall they were met by a noisy crowd of hospital and diplomatic staff from the four Allied powers who quickly focussed their attention on the arrival of Rudolf Hess, the solitary prisoner of Spandau, coming up the stairs from the courtyard. Hess stumbled forward, dazzled by the bright lights and the welcoming faces. This was not his first time here. He had spent a good deal of time in this same hospital four years earlier for a perforated ulcer.

Colonel Philips, the director of the hospital, stepped forward and shook Voitov's hand.

"Good morning, Major Voitov. I hope the press aren't giving you a hard time."

Voitov looked at the crowd with distaste.

"Morning, Colonel. No, we come in back door."

"I believe you know your colleagues."

A French general advanced to shake Voitov's hand.

"*Cher Major, il nous fait plaisir de vous revoir* (It's nice to see you again)."

"*Merci, Général.*"

A US military attaché stepped forward.

"Hi, Major. I see you have the prisoner. What's his problem this time?"

Voitov frowned at this remark.

"We see what the doctors say, yes?"

Colonel Philips stepped closer.

"Major Voitov, we'd better move along. Please come with me, gentlemen."

Philips and Voitov led the old man into the reception hall where he was placed on a hard chair in handcuffs facing a long table with the senior medical staff of the four Allied nations.

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Military and diplomatic staff sat further back in the room.

The flags of France, Britain, the U.S. and the Soviet Union were on display. Off to the side there were tables laden with hors d'oeuvres and bottles of wine, whisky and vodka for the upcoming reception.

Dr Hugh Terry, the British physician responsible for the prisoner's medical examination, entered the room and went to the podium. He loudly clapped his hands together asking for silence.

"Thank you for coming. I am Dr Hugh Terry and as you all know, the reason for the visit today is to check up on Mr Hess' general health and provide a full report to the Allied powers. Major Voitov, can we get rid of those handcuffs, please?"

Major Voitov rose from his chair and scowled at Terry and his colleagues.

"No comfort, sir."

Dr Fabre, the French physician, stood up as did the American, Dr Leno.

*"S'il vous plait, Major. Pas de menottes, c'est un vieil homme* (Please, Major. No handcuffs, he's an old man)."

"Yes, let's have those handcuffs off," Leno said.

Voitov finally relented and barked an order in Russian to a guard standing nearby.

"Off with the handcuffs."

The guard approached the old man and unlocked the cuffs. Hess rubbed his wrists to get the circulation going and looked around gratefully.

*"Vielen Dank."*

Leno could see the angry red lines marking Hess' wrists and felt disgusted. He glared at Voitov, but the Russian ignored him.

Terry turned to talk to the patient.

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"How are you feeling today, Mr Hess?"

*"Gut, sehr gut."*

"Do you have any complaints?"

Hess shifted his weight uncomfortably and shot a timorous glance at Voitov.

"My books, my papers. They are all gone."

Major Voitov stared straight ahead showing no sign of having heard the prisoner.

"I mean your health, sir," Terry said. "Faintness of breath, stomach ailments, headaches, anything?"

"No, I am fine."

Terry watched Hess squirm in his seat looking uncomfortable just as a British nurse clutching a thin cushion stood up and walked briskly towards the prisoner.

"Stop!" Voitov ordered.

The two Russian guards stepped forward brandishing their submachine guns and barred the way. The nurse stopped in her tracks, frightened.

"I think he needs a cushion," the nurse murmured.

"No comforts!" Voitov said turning to Terry. "Please. This man is a prisoner. It is against the Nuremberg agreement."

The nurse returned silently to her seat as Leno stood up.

"Oh, come on, Major," Leno said. "Let's not make a scene."

*"Pitié, Major,"* Fabre said siding with Leno.

Voitov scowled at Fabre and Leno.

"It is against the spirit of the convention. Please try to remember that."

"Any other questions?" Terry asked the fractious crowd, trying to move things along.

Leno stood up.

"You had a perforated ulcer four years ago. Have you any complaints since, Mr Hess?"

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"No, sir. I am well, but I have no exercise now. No more walking in the garden."

Terry turned to Fabre.

"Any questions, Dr Fabre?"

"*Vous n'avez plus d'appétit, Monsieur Hess?* You look very thin. Have you lost weight?"

"*Vielleicht* (perhaps)."

There was an unruly murmuring in the room among the Allied medical staff, many disapproving of Hess' conditions of detention.

"Well, thank you everyone," Thomas said. "I think we can now proceed with our tests. First the eye test with Dr Dowson and then the barium meal and X-rays. Mr Hess, have you anything else to add?"

"*Nein, danke.*"

As the crowd moved towards the drinks table, Hess was led out of the hall by the two Russian guards.

Dr Dowson, a kindly older man in a white lab coat, completed the eye tests with Hess in the ophthalmology department. He then walked Hess down to the X-ray room where Dr Terry, the radiologist Major Bill Leach and his assistant Sergeant MacLean were waiting for the patient.

"I will have the glasses sent to you, Mr Hess," Dr Dowson said. "Don't use the old ones, they are worse than useless. Good day, sir."

Hess nodded gratefully at Dowson as young Major Leach stepped forward to greet him.

"Over here, Mr Hess. Please put on the white shift, then you will have the barium. Sergeant MacLean will assist you."

As MacLean and Hess left the room to prepare for the X-ray

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tests, Terry went over to talk with Dowson.

“So Dr Dowson, anything else to report?”

“You know at his age, it is quite normal to have retinal disorders. He suffers from dry eyes, itching and redness but his sight is still quite good.”

In the reception room Major Voitov stood in a group of employees from the Soviet diplomatic mission under surveillance by a handful of KGB operatives. The party was going well with the French and the Soviets sticking to their own while the Americans and British mingled. Voitov had a smile on his face as he looked around the room knocking back several vodkas from passing trays of drinks.

For the major his posting as the Russian governor of Spandau was a dream come true. For three months of the year he was in charge of one prisoner held in an empty prison with all the delights of West Berlin accessible nearby. The four powers took turns guarding the prisoner all paid for by the German government from the occupation budget. Major Voitov had 37 soldiers under his command manning six towers around the prison. If ever there was a plum assignment in the Soviet military, this was it.

Voitov knew that there was a movement to free Hess among the Western Allies, but the Soviet authorities loved their foothold in West Berlin and weren't ready to give it up for any humanitarian argument in favour of Hess.

In the X-ray room Dr Leach laid several large transparencies on the viewing screen for Terry, Fabre, Leno and two Soviet medical professionals.

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"The duodenum shows some scarring here, but I don't see any tumours."

Leno looked closely at the X-ray.

"Yes, it looks good. What about the small intestine?"

"I'll get to that. Any further comments, gentlemen?"

Fabre and Leno pulled back to allow the Soviet medical people to get a better look. The Soviets grunted their approval and Leach pulled down the X-ray, clipping a new one of the small intestine to the viewing screen.

Dr Terry stepped into the noisy reception room and went over to talk to Colonel Philips.

"The X-rays are normal, sir. We are doing a final check."

"Good, good. Voitov is not giving you any trouble?"

"Prima-facie arsehole, sir."

Philips laughed and downed his whisky.

"Poor Connie had quite a scare there. She was very upset, all because of those damned Russkies."

"Yes, sir."

"The major was enjoying himself. He is old NKVD, a strong believer in pain and suffering and putting a bullet in the back of your head."

"I agree the Russians are making life as uncomfortable as they can for Hess. I've got to go back, sir."

Philips nodded as Terry left.

In the X-ray room, Dr Leach stuck his head around the corner and called to Hess.

"Pictures are good, Mr Hess. You can get dressed now. Thank you for your patience."

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Dr Terry watched as Hess returned to the changing cubicle in the corner of the room and started to get dressed. He quickly removed the white shift, sliding it away from his body and down his arms. For a few moments the man was naked as he reached backwards feeling for the sleeve of his shirt.

Terry approached to get a look at the old man's bony chest. He noticed two small linear scars and a scar on his wrist, but no evidence of major scarring on his chest. As Terry helped Hess into his shirt, he wondered what had happened to Hess' war wounds. The man had been wounded three times during the war: once by shrapnel in the left hand and upper arm in France in 1916 and twice in Romania in 1917 with an injury to his left arm in July and a very severe chest wound in August that left him hospitalized for four months.

*"Es tut mir Leid, Herr Hess (I am sorry),"* Terry said to the old man. "But what happened to your war wounds? I can't see any trace of them."

Hess' cheerful demeanour changed instantly. His face became a chalk-white mask while his body began to shake uncontrollably. He hurried to button up his shirt as he looked at Thomas in shock.

"I saw your military file. You were wounded in the left lung in Romania in 1917. Severely wounded, sir. Where are your scars?"

Hess looked down avoiding Terry's gaze and then muttered: *"Zu spät, zu spät (Too late, too late)."*

"A large calibre bullet punched a hole in your left lung and would have exited through your back. I see no trace of such a wound, Herr Hess. Can you please explain, sir?"

Terry was suddenly concerned that the man might be having a heart attack and stood back to let him pass as Hess shuffled across the room towards the bathroom. At the last

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moment he turned to look at Terry and was about to say something when a flood of barium and diarrhoea discharged onto the floor.

MacLean appeared in the doorway.

"Mr Hess, sir, are you alright?"

Looking severely distressed, Hess disappeared into the bathroom without a word.

MacLean turned to Terry.

"What happened, sir?"

"I wouldn't know, Sergeant."

# Two

England 1973

Paul Cummings wore an old cardigan and checked shirt as he watered the flowers in the garden of a semi-detached house in Surrey when his buxom German-born wife Claudia popped her head out the kitchen door.

“Telephone, Paul. I think it is the office.”

Nearing retirement with a closely-clipped moustache and thinning hair, Paul frowned turning away from his beloved flower beds.

“Bloody hell. What do they want on a Sunday?”

“Do you want to ring them back?”

Paul dropped the hose and headed back towards the house to turn off the tap.

“No, I’ll take it.”

Paul entered the kitchen where Claudia was cleaning vegetables in the sink. Paul picked up the wall phone.

“Hello.”

Paul listened for a time looking at his wife. Now in her fifties, Claudia was still quite attractive with her green eyes and greying hair.

“Yes, sir.”

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Paul put the phone down.

"What is it?"

"There's been a crisis with Max. They want me on the 4 o'clock flight to Berlin."

"Max. Can't he leave you in peace?"

"Something's happened. This seems to be a bit more serious. I should be back in a few days."

Claudia put down the kitchen knife and stepped towards her husband embracing him.

"You better be back. They are giving you a going-away party on Friday. You earned it. Next month they can send someone else. You'll be out of it."

There was a wistful look in Paul's eyes as he reflected on his retirement.

"I have put in quite a few years, haven't I?"

"No one has given as much as you, *Liebling*."

"I will miss you, darling."

"No, you bloody won't," Claudia said laughing. "Berlin is nice at this time of year. You will be visiting with old friends, catching up on gossip and getting free drinks at all your favourite bars."

"You know I have always loved Berlin," Paul replied grinning at his wife.

### **Berlin 1973**

Dr Terry in a white lab coat was in conversation with a colleague as he arrived at his office in the British Military hospital. He took leave of the man near the door and then stepped inside noticing a stranger in a dark suit and raincoat who sat quietly in a chair opposite his desk.

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"Can I help you, sir? My secretary is on her lunch hour."

Paul Cummings stood up.

"Dr Terry, I presume?"

"Yes. Why don't you come back later and my secretary will fix you up with an appointment?"

Terry turned to remove his lab coat as Cummings dropped a brown envelope on the desk and went to close the door. Terry suddenly looked alarmed.

"What is this? Who are you?"

From the cut of the suit and the raincoat he wore, Terry thought that his unannounced visitor must be military or embassy staff. Cummings gave the doctor a knowing smile.

"I think you should sit down and take a look at the photographs. They are rather well done, you know. Long lens on a sunny day."

Terry picked up the envelope from the desk and removed six 8x10 black and white glossies.

"That looks a bit like you, doesn't it sport? You were chatting with a British serviceman at Spandau. A good friend perhaps?"

The top photograph showed the doctor talking to a British guard at the Spandau prison gate.

"I don't know what this has got to do with anything."

"Oh, come on, Dr Terry. This is not the first time you were seen talking to this young man. We reckon the Soviets and the Americans have their own set by now and are starting to wonder about you."

"Who are you?"

"Serving her Majesty, just like you."

"You're some kind of spook, aren't you? I've seen your type in Northern Ireland."

"I am afraid my identity must remain a secret. So are we

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going to have a nice chat over lunch or do I have to arrest you and haul your arse in handcuffs down to the embassy in full view of your colleagues?"

Terry looked gobsmacked. He slowly put on his suit coat as Cummings collected the photographs.

## Three

The sun was shining as Dr Terry and Paul Cummings walked through the Berlin Großer Tiergarten park as lunch hour strollers were heading back to work.

“Lovely day, Doctor. I do love this park. You know it had a hard time during the war. It lost all its trees during the Allied bombardment and after the war it was turned into temporary farmland for growing potatoes and vegetables. But we are not here to talk about the Tiergarten, are we? So why don’t you tell me what you were doing stalking one of our prison warders at Spandau?”

“This is quite ridiculous. I have known Henry for years. We went to the same prep school. He works several months a year at Spandau and recently has been in direct contact with Rudolf Hess.”

“And what prompted your interest in our famous Nazi war criminal?”

“Look, I was in charge of Hess’ medical examination about a month ago. He was having a series of X-rays done to determine whether his intestinal tract was functioning properly. He had a perforated duodenal ulcer several years ago.”

“Yes, I remember that time, there was a flurry of diplomatic

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messages back and forth with the Soviets and the Americans.”

“He is lucky to be alive today. I was simply asking Henry to keep me posted as to his medical condition, that’s all.”

“So Henry was giving you an unofficial progress report on the old man.”

“Well, that’s not quite true.”

Dr Terry and Cummings arrived at a biergarten near the water. They sat at a table away from the lunchtime crowd. The waiter brought Cummings a stein of Berliner Weisse beer and a coffee for his companion. Cummings took his glass and drank deeply, leaving froth on his upper lip.

“Look, I had a chance to examine Hess and I have serious doubts as to his identity.”

“And what put you on this track, Doctor?”

“The man should have a whopping great hole in his chest both in the front and back. I have seen his army medical records at the Berlin document centre.”

Cummings drank his beer in silence.

“The medical record shows that he was wounded in France in 1916 in the left hand and upper arm and then twice in Romania in 1917. The wound in France was superficial, but the wound in Romania was an almost fatal lung shot.”

“Are you sure you don’t want a beer, Doctor?”

“No thanks. I have seen this kind of damage to bone and tissue in Northern Ireland. A gunshot like that leaves awful scars. We are talking about a large caliber bullet, probably 7.62 mm. Whoever this man is in Spandau, he is not Rudolf Hess.”

“I wouldn’t know, Doctor, but I do think you may be overstepping your authority investigating the prisoner and expressing your opinion on this matter.”

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"This is not an opinion, sir. It is a fact."

"I agree. It does sound troubling. Maybe the wound was only superficial and the scar healed over. That could explain it."

"Not possible. We are talking major trauma, a lung perforation and the serious infection that followed. The scars are just not there."

"So you have made this a personal crusade: Henry, the document centre?"

"Well, I was curious. Who wouldn't be?"

"What are your intentions? Are you going to the press with this scoop?"

"Heavens, no. I hadn't thought of that."

"You know that her Majesty's government has the nasty habit of gagging the press when it is a question of national security. I am not sure it would be wise to continue your research into the matter."

"National security! You can't be serious. What is your name?"

"You can call me Paul."

"OK, Paul. Call me Hugh. Hess is an imposter costing the German government £500,000 a year and making a laughing stock of the four Allied powers. Isn't it about time we heard the truth?"

"The Official Secrets Act has a long arm, Hugh."

"Are you warning me off this, Paul?"

"Lord, no. I would never do such a thing. My job is to explain your curious behaviour to the British government and our American friends. I need to convince them that you aren't trading secrets with the Soviets."

Cummings took a long drink of beer and glanced around for anyone who might have them under surveillance - an old

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reflex during the Cold War.

"This is ridiculous. We are talking about a German national held in a German prison. The man should be released immediately. This has nothing to do with the Queen's dirty laundry or a bloody Philby-Maclean spook in her Majesty's services."

"I hear you, Hugh. Of course, I agree with a lot of what you say, but make no mistake about it, Rudolf Hess is very much part of our national security and has been for 32 years."

Terry looked at Cummings with genuine surprise.

"During the war Churchill made him an official secret."

"You must be joking."

"Hugh. Do I sound like I'm joking? If you continue your research on Hess, you'll bring down the long arm of the Official Secrets Act. That's all I'm saying. They will use any method at their disposal to stop you and they will, I guarantee it, ruin your life. Now with your name on a case file, you have given them the means to get at you."

"Are you threatening me?"

"Of course not. I'm retiring from the service in a few weeks, so I won't be involved in bringing you down. The job will go to a lot of faceless people at London Central."

"You can't be serious."

"I am dead serious, Hugh. They can lock you up on any charge they like and say it is a national emergency."

Terry remained silent.

"You do understand? They will search your house, your past and arrest you on trumped up charges."

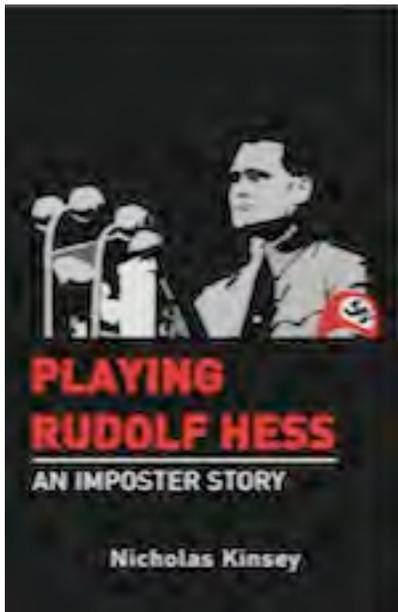
"Why Hess? Isn't he an open book?"

"Hess is a curious historical anomaly, Hugh. Why he became a national secret, I really don't know. You remember the Nuremberg trials."

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*“Of course, I do.”*

*“Well, then you will remember that Hess was sent to that bombed-out shell of a city in October, 1946. I remember his interrogation. Colonel John Amen was chief interrogator for US forces and he went at him tooth and nail.”*



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by Nicholas Kinsey

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