

Himmler: Rob Simes

His slender fingers beat a rhythm on the warm, gleaming mahogany of his desk.

Their dance, like carefully taken footsteps, the only sound in his very large office.

He turned his head, to catch only a glimpse of what he knew was hanging between the two long windows, the vibrant red and angular thrusts of the swastika, that almost always brought such calm and clarity.

He knew who would arrive soon. He knew they would already be waiting nervously outside. He looked at the distance from the door to the carefully positioned chairs. He knew it would provide him valuable seconds to observe their fear. And, he knew he would enjoy it.

He looked at the files, neatly displayed on the desk, the salient details ready to be used, as required, ordered and obedient in his mind.

As his fingers drummed, he stroked his small moustache, and rubbed the bridge of his nose beneath the thin metal of his spectacles, a momentary scowl as he thought of the constant irritant of his failing eyesight.

As the drumming continued, and his left hand checked his collar, the small knot of his black tie, and gently stroked them flat, he looked at his list. And at its very bottom, "Forbidden Books", the focus of this particular meeting. And some neat annotations, "Prague Museum?", "Expand the List", and others.

There was a loud knock on his door. It could only be his secretary.

She entered, tall and slim and blonde. He smiled, and added quietly, "Please, Fräulein."

He appraised them as they approached. They walked too quickly. Fear. Their heads down. Fear. Files under their arms, hands clasped together, as if to offer comfort, one to the other. Fear. Pale, and a delicate sheen of sweat. Fear. He could almost feel the panicked beat of their hearts.

He nodded, they sat. He looked down, and continued the drumming of his fingers.

In time, he relented, and looked up, and he knew they were ready.

He knew they likely saw a rat. He knew what people said, and what they whispered. And he was not oblivious to the similarities. What no one understood, however, was that he was far from offended. They were cunning, rats, and they had a keen sense of the power of others, of health and sickness, and opportunity.

He cleared his throat, "We must revisit the list of Forbidden Books. Some more burnings are in order. In fact, some we will conduct in the Work Camps. All things forbidden hold a certain dread fascination, and the fear they instill is a powerful tool."

And the gentle, deliberate drumming continued.