The Downfall

It is April 1945 after Hitler's failed assault on Russia in operation Barbarossa in 1941 and his ever dwindling forces in the following years' actions, Hitler must have come to realise that he was going to lose the war. He would have been angered at his losses and then even further aggravated over the Russians and allies who were swiftly encroaching upon Berlin. He was forced to make a decision: escape now or die when the Russians found him. The thought of what might happen to him if he was captured must have made him realise he couldn't be captured. Probably he knew what the Russians were doing to Berlin citizens as they advanced. So he definitely had a reason to commit suicide. The question is, did he? Or did he somehow escape and avoid suicide? That is a conspiracy theory about his death.

There is plenty of evidence that Hitler committed suicide. Firstly, Hitler's mental and physical problems seem likely to have made suicide rather than escape more likely. Hitler coming towards the end of his life it is believed he suffered from many different health problems including an irregular heart beat, tremors on the left side of his body and also addiction to methamphetamines. He also had mental health problems. Some people believing he may have been schizophrenic also because of his extensive use of methamphetamines and sleep deprivation. He became very easy to anger. This may have been the cause for his overreactions and his weird demeanour in his final days.

The second piece of evidence of suicide comes from a secretary who was present in Hitler's Berlin bunker when the Russians were advancing, Traudi Jung, survived the war and has said that she helped Hitler to write a will. Then cyanide that Hitler was going to use was tried on his dog to make sure it would work. This seems clear evidence that he did in fact commit suicide. If he expected to escape would he have organised such a careful cover-up about his death?

Another piece of evidence came from Rochus Misch, the bodyguard of Hitler who served him loyally for over eight years and was one of the last people to have seen the man and his wife alive. He also was there when they discovered the dead bodies of Eva Braun and Adolf Hitler. He witnessed Hitler slumped by the table but didn’t see any blood on his head. He was also present at the poisoning of the Goebbels children. Misch tried to escape, but was captured by Soviet soldiers and taken to Ukraine. He was tortured for information about what happened to Hitler. So according to Misch there is no conspiracy theory.

But there are other beliefs, too, about what might have happened to Hitler. In July 1945 two German U-boats landed in Mar del Plata, Argentina. These U-boats surrendered to the Argentineans in July and August 1945, adding weight to the conspiracy theory that Hitler escaped to Argentina on one of these U-boats. Some senior Nazi officials did escape to Argentina on the U-boats and sometimes were not found for years. Maybe Hitler escaped too and was never found. Adolf Eichmann escaped to South America and was found there in 1960. People have always thought that Josef Mengele and Martin Bormann also escaped but that has never been proved. They just disappeared. But if Eichmann did, it is possible that Hitler did too. However an officer on one of the U boats denied that that they were part of any 'ghost convoy'.

Analysing the evidence over Hitler's death shows that it is far more likely that the Fuhrer committed suicide in the bunker than escaped to some foreign land like South America. This is because there are eye witness accounts of people being present at his death and seeing the
aftermath of his suicide and also the Russians who claimed to have identified Hitler’s dead
body. Heinz Linge, Hitler’s valet testified that along with Martin Bormann, they carried the
bodies of Hitler and Eva Braun to the garden where they were set on fire. This is supported by
the Russian evidence that they found on 11th May 1945 a jaw bone and two dental ridges that
were later identified by a dental technician who worked for Hitler’s dentist as those of Hitler and
Eva Braun. To celebrate the 55th anniversary of the Red Army’s capture of Berlin and victory
over Nazi Germany, the Russian State Archives in Moscow held an exhibition. The centrepiece
of this display was a skull fragment which has a bullet on one side that the Russians claim they
are 99.9% sure belonged to Hitler. Yet more evidence to support the commonly held belief that
Hitler took his own life. There is no evidence he was on a submarine that arrived in South
America. There are also some stories about him escaping to Antarctica but there is even less
reason to believe that. Another equally ridiculous belief is that Hitler fled to a Nazi base on the
moon; this is as unbelievable as those who claim that Hitler is still alive, aged 121 and living in
San Diego! So I believe that Adolf Hitler, the last dictator of Germany, committed suicide in the
bunker.

Hitler’s death was very significant to New Zealanders. New Zealanders at the end of the war
would have been joyous at the defeat of the Nazis and the reported death of their Fuhrer Adolf
Hitler as this meant an end to the fear of being attacked and also the death of a tyrant. It also
meant that sons and husbands could come home. About 140,000 New Zealand men served
overseas and about 10,000 women. About 12,000 died. This was important for many homes in
New Zealand. Children had no father, wives had no husbands. More New Zealanders died in
proportion to the population than any other commonwealth country. About 0.73% of New
Zealand population was killed. Back home thousands of New Zealanders worked in the Home
Guard. Women began to do men’s work for the first time. Every home was affected by
rationing of food and other items that couldn’t be imported while a war was going on. So when
Hitler finally died and the war ended all New Zealanders were pleased. ANZAC Day became
very important as the day when those who died in the war are remembered. So whether Hitler
dies or escaped was significant to New Zealand, especially back then because so many tried to
stop what he was doing.