

1

00:00:00,000 --> 00:00:07,000

Tonight, an enduring World War II mystery.

2

00:00:07,000 --> 00:00:12,000

Somewhere the Nazis are sitting on a stockpile of confiscated wealth.

3

00:00:12,000 --> 00:00:21,000

Vast amounts of art, gold, silver and currency are looted by the Nazis and stashed all over Europe.

4

00:00:21,000 --> 00:00:25,000

Anything of value that can be stolen, they steal.

5

00:00:25,000 --> 00:00:31,000

Though some is recovered, in astonishing finds, much more is still missing.

6

00:00:31,000 --> 00:00:36,000

Now the mystery begins. Where else did the Nazis hide their wealth?

7

00:00:36,000 --> 00:00:40,000

We'll explore the top theories surrounding this lost treasure.

8

00:00:40,000 --> 00:00:46,000

The CIA documents show this gold is linked to these high-ranking Croatian priests.

9

00:00:46,000 --> 00:00:50,000

The Nazi gold train was found in the Owl Mountains.

10

00:00:50,000 --> 00:00:56,000

The diary says that something around \$7 million worth of Nazi gold was stolen by this officer.

11

00:00:56,000 --> 00:01:02,000

Where did the Nazis take their stolen loot and can it ever be found?

12

00:01:02,000 --> 00:01:27,000

April 1945. As Allied forces advance into Nazi territory, they occupy the small town of Merckers, Germany.

13

00:01:27,000 --> 00:01:32,000

Merckers is right outside of Frankfurt. From a strategic perspective, it's fairly unimportant.

14

00:01:32,000 --> 00:01:35,000

The only thing notable is assault and potassium mine.

15

00:01:35,000 --> 00:01:47,000

On the morning of April 6, 1945, American military policemen are patrolling an area outside of Merckers when they stop two refugee women from violating a curfew.

16

00:01:47,000 --> 00:01:55,000

As they're driving them back to the American command post, a German-speaking American MP, Richard Moots, starts interrogating the women.

17

00:01:55,000 --> 00:01:58,000

He wants to know why they're out walking in spite of the curfew.

18

00:01:58,000 --> 00:02:08,000

As they drive by the Kaiserota mine, the women say, forget the curfew. How would you like to know about a significant amount of stolen treasure?

19

00:02:08,000 --> 00:02:12,000

That question immediately sparks intense interest.

20

00:02:12,000 --> 00:02:17,000

Rumors of a vast Nazi treasure hoard stored throughout Europe are rampant.

21

00:02:17,000 --> 00:02:25,000

Almost from the moment that Hitler becomes Chancellor of Germany in 1933, he instructs his military to start stealing gold.

22

00:02:25,000 --> 00:02:35,000

This begins domestically, confiscating money from local banks and from Jewish citizens that are being displaced from their homes and sent to concentration camps.

23

00:02:35,000 --> 00:02:42,000

Once Hitler's armies start impeding other countries, they do more of the same, and it goes beyond just stealing gold.

24

00:02:42,000 --> 00:02:49,000

Artwork, jewelry, silver, platinum, anything of value that can be stolen, they steal.

25

00:02:49,000 --> 00:02:56,000

So when the soldiers hear the rumor from these women about stolen treasure, they definitely take notice.

26

00:02:56,000 --> 00:03:03,000

The news quickly reaches US General George S. Patton, commander of the Third Army in Germany.

27

00:03:03,000 --> 00:03:11,000

By the time General Patton hears this particular story from Merckers, the Allies estimate that Nazi Germany has taken nearly \$600 million worth of gold.

28

00:03:11,000 --> 00:03:21,000

This includes \$223 million from Belgium, \$193 million from the Netherlands, additional gold from Austria and Czechoslovakia, and that's just what Patton knows about.

29

00:03:21,000 --> 00:03:27,000

It doesn't include millions more in stolen gold from private citizens and businesses.

30

00:03:27,000 --> 00:03:31,000

Despite these estimates, Patton is wary.

31

00:03:31,000 --> 00:03:37,000

Lots of people have tried to get leniency with promises of hidden Nazi treasures, and almost none of it has panned out.

32

00:03:37,000 --> 00:03:45,000

But Patton decides it's still worth looking into, because he knows that somewhere the Nazis are sitting on a stockpile of confiscated wealth.

33

00:03:45,000 --> 00:03:54,000

We always have to remember that even as late as April 1945, the end of the Second World War was not a foregone conclusion, and lots of things could have gone wrong.

34

00:03:54,000 --> 00:04:01,000

Depriving the enemy of a significant quantity of gold is the equivalent of driving a nail into his coffin.

35

00:04:01,000 --> 00:04:08,000

Finding any part of this treasure will help the Allied war effort. The only question is, where is it?

36

00:04:08,000 --> 00:04:17,000

According to the two women detained in Merckers, it's there, deep underground, in the local salt mine.

37

00:04:18,000 --> 00:04:27,000

These women claim to have eyewitnessed these valuables being transported on trucks and crates, and when valuables are moving in the wrong direction,

38

00:04:27,000 --> 00:04:36,000

meaning moving to the mine and going down into it rather than the other way around, that's where their suspicion about things of great value came from.

39

00:04:36,000 --> 00:04:42,000

Within hours of the women telling their story, General Patton sends a bunch of resources to Merckers.

40

00:04:42,000 --> 00:04:50,000

He has to use fighting forces that would otherwise be committed to battle and designate them to come back to Merckers to provide a security cordon around the area,

41

00:04:50,000 --> 00:04:55,000

because after all, he has to exercise great caution that this might be a trap.

42

00:04:55,000 --> 00:05:01,000

The next day, April 7th, American soldiers start interviewing other eyewitnesses.

43

00:05:01,000 --> 00:05:10,000

They talk to several men in and around Merckers who were forced to work in the mine, either clearing out rooms or bringing gold down into it.

44

00:05:10,000 --> 00:05:20,000

One British POW who had also been forced to work in the mine tries to make a sort of crude map for the Americans to show them the location of the treasure room.

45

00:05:20,000 --> 00:05:25,000

Army engineers survey the area and start making plans to descend into the mine.

46

00:05:25,000 --> 00:05:32,000

Patton tells everyone to keep this potential treasure top secret. Don't report it to anyone until they have it in hand.

47

00:05:33,000 --> 00:05:37,000

On April 8th, American forces enter the mine.

48

00:05:37,000 --> 00:05:42,000

I can't imagine what must have been going through the mine of these troops as they go down into this deep mine.

49

00:05:42,000 --> 00:05:47,000

They don't know what they're going to encounter down there. They don't know who they're going to encounter down there.

50

00:05:47,000 --> 00:05:52,000

There could be armed Nazi guards. There could be booby traps. There could be nothing.

51

00:05:52,000 --> 00:05:59,000

Exploring this mine was no small task. It's a network of tunnels below the surface, 18 square miles in overall size.

52

00:05:59,000 --> 00:06:04,000

There's no convenient signage. There's nothing that says Nazi gold this way.

53

00:06:04,000 --> 00:06:10,000

But based on the interviews with people that work there, they know to go to a room called Room 8.

54

00:06:10,000 --> 00:06:15,000

And as they approach, it's pretty clear there's something very important inside it.

55

00:06:16,000 --> 00:06:20,000

The room is sealed by a huge steel door.

56

00:06:20,000 --> 00:06:25,000

The door is impenetrable, but the engineers figure the adjacent brick wall is not.

57

00:06:25,000 --> 00:06:30,000

So they load up one side with dynamite. That's how they open the vault.

58

00:06:31,000 --> 00:06:38,000

The first thing the American soldiers see is gold. Literally tons of gold. This is the mother load.

59

00:06:38,000 --> 00:06:42,000

Room 8's not a room at all. It's more of a cavern than anything.

60

00:06:42,000 --> 00:06:50,000

75 feet wide, 150 feet deep, 12 foot ceilings. It's a massive open space.

61

00:06:50,000 --> 00:06:57,000

They count 8,198 individual bars of gold, each worth thousands of dollars.

62

00:06:57,000 --> 00:07:02,000

The world hasn't seen this much gold in one place outside of Fort Knox.

63

00:07:02,000 --> 00:07:05,000

And that's just the beginning.

64

00:07:05,000 --> 00:07:17,000

Besides the gold bars, they also find gold bullion, currency from England, France and Germany, gold coins, platinum, and the plates used to make German Reichsmarks.

65

00:07:17,000 --> 00:07:22,000

Also hidden in the mine, hundreds of priceless, stolen artworks.

66

00:07:22,000 --> 00:07:26,000

In other words, this was the largest German pawn shop of the time.

67

00:07:26,000 --> 00:07:33,000

Anything that had any value at all had been crammed into this one cavern inside this mine complex.

68

00:07:33,000 --> 00:07:38,000

So everyone is ecstatic and amazed by this once in a lifetime discovery.

69

00:07:38,000 --> 00:07:45,000

There's so many riches, so many treasures, but then they get to the back of the room and the mood changes.

70

00:07:46,000 --> 00:07:56,000

In addition to the precious metals, they find 189 suitcases filled with gold and silver household items that have clearly been stolen from everyday people.

71

00:07:56,000 --> 00:08:02,000

But that's not the worst of it. In some of the suitcases, they find a horrific sight.

72

00:08:02,000 --> 00:08:08,000

Hundreds and hundreds of teeth, human teeth that all have gold fillings in them.

73

00:08:08,000 --> 00:08:13,000

Nobody has to ask where these gold fillings came from. They already know.

74

00:08:13,000 --> 00:08:20,000

They're the teeth of thousands of Jews extracted from the living and the dead in concentration

camps.

75

00:08:20,000 --> 00:08:25,000

They had gold fillings ripped out of their head because that gold had value.

76

00:08:25,000 --> 00:08:36,000

It gives you an idea of how cynical the Nazi view was towards humanity, towards human decency and dignity.

77

00:08:36,000 --> 00:08:42,000

I don't know of anybody else besides the Nazis who did anything like that.

78

00:08:42,000 --> 00:08:48,000

As they come to terms with their grisly discovery, American forces need to figure out the next steps.

79

00:08:48,000 --> 00:08:55,000

It's a task so daunting that Generals Patton and Eisenhower show up in person to supervise.

80

00:08:55,000 --> 00:09:04,000

The Generals approve a logistical plan to get all this heavy stuff out from 2,000 feet below the

ground and move it to safety.

81

00:09:04,000 --> 00:09:10,000

Remember, there's still a war going on very close by, so it's an already difficult job made even harder.

82

00:09:10,000 --> 00:09:19,000

As all of this material is moved from inside the mine to above ground, it's taken into Frankfurt to an old bank building that had been captured by Allied forces.

83

00:09:19,000 --> 00:09:29,000

And as all of the material is being deposited at that bank and an accounting of all of it is being completed, there's recognition for the fact that there's a lot still missing.

84

00:09:29,000 --> 00:09:36,000

The gold, silver and currency that was found at Merckers adds up to about \$250 million.

85

00:09:36,000 --> 00:09:41,000

But according to Allied estimates, the Nazis stole closer to \$600 million.

86

00:09:41,000 --> 00:09:46,000

So what was found at Merckers isn't all of it, not even close.

87

00:09:46,000 --> 00:09:50,000

This of course means one thing, there's more out there.

88

00:09:50,000 --> 00:09:56,000

So now the real mystery begins. Where else did the Nazis hide their stolen treasure?

89

00:09:57,000 --> 00:10:13,000

The discovery of \$250 million in stolen Nazi loot in Merckers, Germany in 1945 inspires a military treasure hunt that lasts long after the end of World War II.

90

00:10:13,000 --> 00:10:18,000

The U.S. and our allies continue to occupy the area for many months after the war.

91

00:10:18,000 --> 00:10:31,000

There's a lot of work to be done, helping displaced people, shoring up infrastructure, cleaning up dangerous, unused ammunition and explosives, and trying to track down more of what the Nazis stole.

92

00:10:31,000 --> 00:10:42,000

The overall quantity of treasure that was discovered at the Merckers mine is believed to be less

than half the total amount of treasure that Nazi Germany looted during the Second World War.

93

00:10:43,000 --> 00:10:53,000

Remember, this wasn't their goal to begin with. They took it from governments, banks, everyday citizens, all of whom deserve to have it returned.

94

00:10:53,000 --> 00:11:00,000

It's estimated that about 90% of what was found at Merckers was eventually returned to its rightful owners.

95

00:11:00,000 --> 00:11:03,000

But where did they hide the rest?

96

00:11:03,000 --> 00:11:08,000

After the salt mine, we know a few things about where the Nazis like to keep their stolen treasure.

97

00:11:08,000 --> 00:11:18,000

It's a remote location, it has cold, low oxygen conditions, ideal for preservation, and it's a facility that's already in use for something.

98

00:11:18,000 --> 00:11:24,000

So trucks coming and going wouldn't have been seen as suspicious, and they don't have to build a bunch of new stuff.

99

00:11:24,000 --> 00:11:29,000

There's already electricity, manpower, and plenty of storage space.

100

00:11:29,000 --> 00:11:37,000

Among the first possibilities, a Nazi weapons testing facility in Austria, near Lake Toplitz.

101

00:11:37,000 --> 00:11:45,000

Soldiers descend on the area in May of 1945 and begin interviewing potential witnesses.

102

00:11:45,000 --> 00:11:55,000

Eidweisenbacher provides a personal account in which she details the way that German troops arrived at her home and how they got a truck stuck in the mud,

103

00:11:55,000 --> 00:12:04,000

and they needed assistance transferring crates that carried something on board onto a horse-drawn cart so that they could move them toward the lake itself.

104

00:12:04,000 --> 00:12:12,000

Eide describes seeing possibly hundreds of sealed Nazi crates, and they take the crates up the mountain in multiple trips.

105

00:12:12,000 --> 00:12:17,000

Eide says she witnesses all those crates get dumped into Lake Toplitz.

106

00:12:17,000 --> 00:12:24,000

Eide, of course, has no idea what's in these crates, but the allies suspect it might be Nazi treasure.

107

00:12:25,000 --> 00:12:36,000

Lake Toplitz sits at the edge of the Austrian Alps, an ideal site for covert operations.

108

00:12:36,000 --> 00:12:41,000

It's so remote and hard to reach, the allies would never spot it.

109

00:12:41,000 --> 00:12:47,000

It's over a mile long, a quarter of a mile wide, and it has a depth of up to 300 feet.

110

00:12:47,000 --> 00:12:54,000

This area is known as the Dead Mountains. It's inaccessible and frozen over for five months of the

year.

111

00:12:54,000 --> 00:13:03,000

When it is accessible, its only entrance is a steep dirt path. Let's just say it's a pretty good place for the Nazis to hide anything.

112

00:13:03,000 --> 00:13:07,000

These same conditions make it a difficult place to search.

113

00:13:07,000 --> 00:13:11,000

First off, it's very hard to get equipment in and out of there.

114

00:13:11,000 --> 00:13:16,000

An underwater search of a 300-foot deep lake requires a lot of machinery.

115

00:13:16,000 --> 00:13:19,000

Even just sending in divers is going to be difficult.

116

00:13:19,000 --> 00:13:22,000

Keep in mind this is the mid-1940s.

117

00:13:22,000 --> 00:13:29,000

At this point, the first scuba apparatus, the aqua lung, has only just been invented by Jacques Cousteau.

118

00:13:29,000 --> 00:13:35,000

And there's no such thing as a drysuit, which is what divers today use to keep warm and cold temperatures.

119

00:13:37,000 --> 00:13:43,000

The Navy spends two years devising a plan to explore the 300-foot deep lake.

120

00:13:43,000 --> 00:13:47,000

In 1947, they're finally ready.

121

00:13:47,000 --> 00:13:51,000

They go down about 60 feet, and then they have to stop.

122

00:13:51,000 --> 00:13:54,000

They've encountered an impenetrable wall of wood.

123

00:13:54,000 --> 00:14:03,000

Topliss is surrounded by a forest, so over the years trees have fallen into the lake, creating this wooden barrier about 60 feet down.

124

00:14:03,000 --> 00:14:05,000

It's very, very difficult to operate in that environment.

125

00:14:05,000 --> 00:14:10,000

The divers are challenged just to get beyond it to see what's on the other side of it.

126

00:14:10,000 --> 00:14:13,000

And that could easily hide things of great value.

127

00:14:13,000 --> 00:14:19,000

The divers then begin swimming along the barrier, hoping to find the crates that may have fallen on top.

128

00:14:19,000 --> 00:14:22,000

But sadly, they don't find anything.

129

00:14:22,000 --> 00:14:28,000

Whatever was in those crates was heavy enough to sink past that barrier, which implies possibly Nazi gold.

130

00:14:28,000 --> 00:14:35,000

And the fact that these crates sunk to the bottom of Lake Topliss means it's extremely difficult to pull them back out.

131

00:14:35,000 --> 00:14:39,000

After one of their divers drowns in 1947,

132

00:14:39,000 --> 00:14:41,000

the Navy calls off the search.

133

00:14:41,000 --> 00:14:45,000

The Navy finally decides this is basically an impossible task,

134

00:14:45,000 --> 00:14:49,000

but that's not going to stop others from trying to explore Lake Topliss.

135

00:14:49,000 --> 00:14:52,000

And it doesn't stop people from dying either.

136

00:14:52,000 --> 00:14:56,000

There's a string of suspicious deaths associated with Lake Topliss.

137

00:14:56,000 --> 00:15:00,000

These begin soon after World War II ends.

138

00:15:00,000 --> 00:15:07,000

In 1946, two men, Helmut Meyer and Ludwig Picher, are both found murdered near the lake.

139

00:15:07,000 --> 00:15:14,000

During the investigation into this murder, it is ultimately revealed that the two men had once worked at Lake Topliss during the war.

140

00:15:14,000 --> 00:15:19,000

You have to wonder, did they come back knowing there was something worth retrieving from that area?

141

00:15:19,000 --> 00:15:23,000

They certainly had the background to know what might be down there.

142

00:15:23,000 --> 00:15:26,000

And if so, were they killed because of it?

143

00:15:26,000 --> 00:15:30,000

In the 1950s, there are several more deaths.

144

00:15:30,000 --> 00:15:33,000

In 1952, a French civilian is found dead at the lake.

145

00:15:33,000 --> 00:15:38,000

And during the investigation into his death, the bodies of two other people are found,

146

00:15:38,000 --> 00:15:41,000

and those two people have both been shot in the head.

147

00:15:41,000 --> 00:15:45,000

This is getting kind of creepy. One death, that's one thing.

148

00:15:45,000 --> 00:15:52,000

But this is a string of murders around a lake that supposedly has Nazi gold at the bottom.

149

00:15:52,000 --> 00:15:54,000

As these stories start to spread through the press,

150

00:15:54,000 --> 00:16:01,000

more and more people really do believe that there is something secret and valuable hidden at Lake Topliss.

151

00:16:01,000 --> 00:16:04,000

And maybe someone's guarding it.

152

00:16:04,000 --> 00:16:13,000

In 1959, an expedition sponsored by German magazine Der Stern tries to finally solve the mystery.

153

00:16:13,000 --> 00:16:19,000

By this time, diving technology has improved substantially, so it's slightly less dangerous to dive the lake.

154

00:16:19,000 --> 00:16:25,000

It's not without risk, but the Der Stern divers are able to stay there for more than five weeks at the site,

155

00:16:25,000 --> 00:16:29,000

and eventually they reach the bottom.

156

00:16:29,000 --> 00:16:32,000

What they see is truly remarkable.

157

00:16:32,000 --> 00:16:38,000

The crates are down there. This is incredible, and they're able to bring 15 of them up to the surface.

158

00:16:38,000 --> 00:16:43,000

But when they pry the crates open, they don't find gold. They find paper money.

159

00:16:43,000 --> 00:16:48,000

Millions of British pounds, 700 million to be exact.

160

00:16:48,000 --> 00:16:55,000

The reason that the Nazis dumped all of this British paper currency into Lake Topliss was because

it was all counterfeit.

161

00:16:55,000 --> 00:17:03,000

Back in the 1940s, Adolf Hitler started a plan called Operation Bernhard to flood Great Britain with fake currency

162

00:17:03,000 --> 00:17:08,000

to drive up inflation and basically wreck the British economy.

163

00:17:08,000 --> 00:17:13,000

Operation Bernhard was never fully realized, and now, thanks to the Der Stern divers,

164

00:17:13,000 --> 00:17:18,000

we now know what happened to at least some of those counterfeit bills.

165

00:17:18,000 --> 00:17:20,000

But is there more to uncover?

166

00:17:20,000 --> 00:17:25,000

The Der Stern divers reported that there were more boxes at the bottom of the lake,

167

00:17:25,000 --> 00:17:31,000

but because of all the money already spent on this mission, they were told to leave those boxes alone.

168

00:17:31,000 --> 00:17:36,000

Those 15 crates, though, linked them directly to Operation Bernhardt,

169

00:17:36,000 --> 00:17:41,000

and they also established the truth of the Eide Weisenbacher personal account.

170

00:17:41,000 --> 00:17:46,000

In the decades since, several expeditions, some very well-funded ones,

171

00:17:46,000 --> 00:17:49,000

are mounted to try to recover the rest of the crates.

172

00:17:49,000 --> 00:17:55,000

They find some Nazi artifacts, some divers report seeing aircraft and other weapons down there,

173

00:17:55,000 --> 00:17:59,000

but so far, no stolen Nazi treasure.

174

00:17:59,000 --> 00:18:03,000

Unless we figure out some technology to go and drain Lake Topliss,

175

00:18:03,000 --> 00:18:08,000

it doesn't look to me like anybody's ever going to figure out exactly what's down there.

176

00:18:08,000 --> 00:18:12,000

And so, we're going to have to live with this mystery for a long time to come.

177

00:18:20,000 --> 00:18:30,000

From 1945 until 1948, all branches of the American military are involved in trying to discover looted Nazi treasure.

178

00:18:30,000 --> 00:18:35,000

And one of the elements of the American military that's involved in this search is the OSS.

179

00:18:35,000 --> 00:18:41,000

The OSS, the Office of Strategic Services, is the precursor to today's CIA.

180

00:18:41,000 --> 00:18:47,000

But in 1947, it's an unexpected agency that makes a breakthrough.

181

00:18:47,000 --> 00:18:51,000

When we think of government agencies and important investigations,

182

00:18:51,000 --> 00:18:54,000

we don't think of the US Department of the Treasury.

183

00:18:54,000 --> 00:19:00,000

But as it turns out, a Treasury agent by the name of Emerson Bigelow is searching for Nazi treasure.

184

00:19:00,000 --> 00:19:08,000

And in many ways, a Treasury agent is the right person to go sniffing around this idea of looted Nazi gold.

185

00:19:08,000 --> 00:19:17,000

In 1947, Bigelow sends a memo to his superiors claiming to know what happened to a large chunk of the stolen Nazi gold.

186

00:19:17,000 --> 00:19:21,000

His memo is so incendiary that it really just gets swept under the rug.

187

00:19:21,000 --> 00:19:27,000

And it isn't until 50 years later when it gets declassified that this bombshell finally comes to light.

188

00:19:27,000 --> 00:19:32,000

The Bigelow Memorandum is ultimately revealed in a 1997 documentary.

189

00:19:32,000 --> 00:19:39,000

What it found was that a very, very large quantity of money went into a bank account that was owned by the Vatican.

190

00:19:41,000 --> 00:19:44,000

Bigelow's theory begins in Croatia.

191

00:19:44,000 --> 00:19:49,000

In World War II, the Nazis set up a puppet government in Croatia called the Ustasa.

192

00:19:49,000 --> 00:19:53,000

They're in power from 1941 till the end of the war in 1945.

193

00:19:53,000 --> 00:19:57,000

Let's be clear, they're put there by the Nazis for the Nazis.

194

00:19:57,000 --> 00:20:01,000

The Ustasa are just as vile as the Nazis.

195

00:20:01,000 --> 00:20:10,000

They participate in the same form of racist terrorism that's fueled by a distorted view of both Roman Catholicism and Islam,

196

00:20:10,000 --> 00:20:13,000

something they called Croatian nationalism.

197

00:20:13,000 --> 00:20:21,000

Like Hitler, they want to purify the blood of the country by mass murdering Jews, Serbs, and Roma.

198

00:20:21,000 --> 00:20:25,000

It's estimated that they kill hundreds of thousands of people.

199

00:20:25,000 --> 00:20:34,000

The Ustasi extorted gold and jewels and other valuables from people who they threatened,

200

00:20:34,000 --> 00:20:39,000

saying that if you did not give this to us, you could be shot, you could be otherwise killed,

201

00:20:39,000 --> 00:20:43,000

and so people who had the gold gave it.

202

00:20:43,000 --> 00:20:49,000

They were killed as well as the people who didn't have the gold, but that was the Ustasi method.

203

00:20:50,000 --> 00:20:57,000

The stolen gold is sent to Germany's Reichsbank to be melted down into bars and coins.

204

00:20:57,000 --> 00:21:03,000

According to Bigelow's report, towards the end of the war, the Ustasha make efforts to hide this money,

205

00:21:03,000 --> 00:21:07,000

and they also help German Nazis hide some of theirs.

206

00:21:07,000 --> 00:21:15,000

When Bigelow talks to intelligence agents, they tell him that 350 million Swiss francs have been taken out of the country.

207

00:21:15,000 --> 00:21:20,000

That money would be worth \$1.5 billion today.

208

00:21:20,000 --> 00:21:24,000

But more eye-popping than the amount is what happened to it.

209

00:21:24,000 --> 00:21:30,000

According to Bigelow's sources, that transfer of wealth was overseen by officials with the Vatican.

210

00:21:30,000 --> 00:21:34,000

Bigelow's sources claim they have proof.

211

00:21:34,000 --> 00:21:36,000

Some of it was discovered.

212

00:21:36,000 --> 00:21:43,000

About one-third of it was confiscated by British authorities at a checkpoint on the Austria-Switzerland border.

213

00:21:43,000 --> 00:21:52,000

It traveled up from Croatia into Austria, and Bigelow's sources believe it was ultimately headed for a Swiss bank account owned by the Vatican.

214

00:21:52,000 --> 00:22:02,000

Meanwhile, according to the Bigelow memo, approximately 200 million Swiss francs worth of gold did get through to a Vatican bank account in Switzerland.

215

00:22:02,000 --> 00:22:05,000

Bigelow's research ends there.

216

00:22:05,000 --> 00:22:14,000

But in 1997, investigative journalists Mark Arons and John Loftus pick up where he left off.

217

00:22:14,000 --> 00:22:20,000

Mark Arons has made a name for himself in Australia for hunting down former Nazis,

218

00:22:20,000 --> 00:22:26,000

and John Loftus is a former prosecutor with the U.S. Department of Justice's Nazi hunting unit.

219

00:22:26,000 --> 00:22:30,000

In that capacity, Loftus has access to CIA files.

220

00:22:30,000 --> 00:22:35,000

As they dig deeper, more shocking evidence emerges.

221

00:22:35,000 --> 00:22:43,000

The CIA documents prove that this gold is directly linked to these high-ranking Croatian priests in Rome,

222

00:22:43,000 --> 00:22:50,000

one of which has a Vatican association who are involved in getting this looted Nazi gold into Swiss bank accounts.

223

00:22:50,000 --> 00:22:54,000

But that money doesn't stay in there for long.

224

00:22:54,000 --> 00:23:03,000

They claim some of the Nazi gold was used to relocate Croatian Nazi officials.

225

00:23:03,000 --> 00:23:11,000

Arons and Loftus' research seems to blow the lid off of a three-part scheme involving the Vatican, the Nazis, and the Swiss banks.

226

00:23:11,000 --> 00:23:16,000

So when they publish their research in 1998, what do they call the book?

227

00:23:16,000 --> 00:23:18,000

Unholy Trinity.

228

00:23:18,000 --> 00:23:25,000

Many top-ranking Nazis are put on trial and executed in Nuremberg after the war.

229

00:23:25,000 --> 00:23:28,000

But the Ustasha are notably absent.

230

00:23:28,000 --> 00:23:33,000

Almost the entire Ustasha hierarchy just walks away scot-free.

231

00:23:33,000 --> 00:23:42,000

Their leader, Ante Pavlich, aka the Butcher of the Balkans, is actually received as an honored guest at the Vatican for two years after the war.

232

00:23:42,000 --> 00:23:47,000

Other high-ranking Ustasha escape to relative luxury in South America.

233

00:23:47,000 --> 00:23:49,000

And that's where some of the gold went.

234

00:23:49,000 --> 00:23:54,000

It paid for passports, transportation, places to live, food to eat, etc.

235

00:23:54,000 --> 00:24:01,000

If this is true, this money goes back into the hands of the Nazi puppets who stole it in the first place.

236

00:24:01,000 --> 00:24:06,000

According to Arons and Loftus, the conspiracy doesn't end there.

237

00:24:06,000 --> 00:24:12,000

Just when you thought you couldn't be more disgusted by this whole affair, it gets worse.

238

00:24:12,000 --> 00:24:18,000

The authors present evidence that the CIA not only knew about it, but they helped make it happen.

239

00:24:18,000 --> 00:24:29,000

In 1998, the U.S. Congress passes the Nazi War Crimes Disclosure Act, which requires the release of any government records pertaining to Nazi war criminals.

240

00:24:29,000 --> 00:24:37,000

As a result, over 300,000 pages of documents linking the U.S. Army and the CIA to this have been disclosed.

241

00:24:37,000 --> 00:24:47,000

A now declassified Army Intelligence Report states that by the summer of 1947, the U.S. forces were actively supporting the people-smuggling operation.

242

00:24:47,000 --> 00:24:51,000

The CIA wanted Nazis to escape Europe for two reasons.

243

00:24:51,000 --> 00:24:55,000

Some of them were advanced scientists that could help the U.S. military.

244

00:24:55,000 --> 00:24:59,000

Others could be planted in areas that faced the growing threat of communism.

245

00:24:59,000 --> 00:25:10,000

They placed high-ranking former Nazis in various South American countries, with a mission to quell any potential communist uprisings there, and install U.S. friendly leadership.

246

00:25:10,000 --> 00:25:20,000

One of the most notable examples is Operation Condor, where Nazi war criminal Klaus Barbie is used to help overthrow the government of Bolivia.

247

00:25:20,000 --> 00:25:25,000

The influx of ex-Nazis into South America is known as the Rat Line.

248

00:25:25,000 --> 00:25:31,000

According to Bigelow, Aaron's and Loftus, this Rat Line operation was paid for.

249

00:25:31,000 --> 00:25:42,000

It was financed by the very gold that had been looted by the Ustasha on behalf of Nazi Germany that then ultimately made its way into Vatican Bank accounts.

250

00:25:42,000 --> 00:25:48,000

But here's the thing. Whatever wasn't spent on this de Feria scheme should still be sitting in the Vatican's bank.

251

00:25:48,000 --> 00:25:54,000

This could be hundreds of millions of dollars in gold, which will probably never be able to recover.

252

00:25:55,000 --> 00:26:06,000

Unsurprisingly, the Vatican denies every last bit of this. This is, of course, a denial coming from an entity that has a document policy by which they destroy everything every 10 years.

253

00:26:06,000 --> 00:26:14,000

One thing we know, if history tells us anything, it's that money can corrupt even the most seemingly sacred institutions.

254

00:26:14,000 --> 00:26:20,000

Perhaps someday some long lost document will show what happened to all that gold that made its way to Switzerland.

255

00:26:20,000 --> 00:26:25,000

But until then, it's part of the significant tally that remains lost.

256

00:26:44,000 --> 00:26:47,000

One team announces a breakthrough.

257

00:26:48,000 --> 00:26:51,000

September 4th, lower Silesia, Poland.

258

00:26:51,000 --> 00:27:00,000

Researchers Piotr Koper and Andrzej Rikter claim that they know where to find a massive cache of Nazi treasure.

259

00:27:01,000 --> 00:27:04,000

Koper is Polish, Rikter is German.

260

00:27:04,000 --> 00:27:20,000

Together they release an announcement that they have received a deathbed confession from a former German officer who knew the whereabouts of a train laden with Nazi gold that was on its way through Poland and back to Germany.

261

00:27:20,000 --> 00:27:23,000

But it never made it to its destination.

262

00:27:24,000 --> 00:27:35,000

During the war, Hitler orders that 330 tons of gold will be loaded onto a train and moved west to a more secure location.

263

00:27:35,000 --> 00:27:41,000

If this story is true, this would represent a giant chunk of the gold that we think is still missing.

264

00:27:42,000 --> 00:27:48,000

According to Koper and Rikter, the planned route of the train was from Breslau to somewhere in Germany.

265

00:27:48,000 --> 00:27:54,000

But at some point, the train was diverted and sent near the city of Bidgost.

266

00:27:54,000 --> 00:27:58,000

The question is, where did it go from there?

267

00:27:58,000 --> 00:28:03,000

The pair starts by looking for potential hiding spots along the train route.

268

00:28:03,000 --> 00:28:07,000

Hitler is many things, but he's not short-sighted.

269

00:28:07,000 --> 00:28:12,000

And by 1943, he sees how the tides of the war are starting to turn.

270

00:28:12,000 --> 00:28:17,000

Allied air raids are increasing and they're taking a toll on Hitler's war machine.

271

00:28:17,000 --> 00:28:21,000

So he starts making plans for worst-case scenarios.

272

00:28:21,000 --> 00:28:26,000

This is the beginning of Project Riese, Hitler's attempt to fortify and move his operations underground.

273

00:28:26,000 --> 00:28:31,000

Project Riese was a German construction project during the Second World War

274

00:28:31,000 --> 00:28:39,000

that sought to establish this very extensive underground bunker network in the Owl Mountains in Silesia.

275

00:28:39,000 --> 00:28:45,000

The Nazis excavate a massive labyrinth of tunnels, though it's never finished.

276

00:28:45,000 --> 00:28:54,000

Some suspect the purpose is to create an underground headquarters and miles of underground factories safe from Allied bombers.

277

00:28:54,000 --> 00:28:59,000

Koper and Richter zero in on a location near the Project Riese tunnels.

278

00:28:59,000 --> 00:29:06,000

It's a widely held belief in Poland that this Nazi gold train could have entered Project Riese locations

279

00:29:06,000 --> 00:29:10,000

and then ended up where Koper and Richter were actually looking.

280

00:29:10,000 --> 00:29:14,000

At some point in 2015, Koper and Richter went without a license

281

00:29:14,000 --> 00:29:19,000

and used ground penetrating radar to do a readout of a site along the Wabzich rail line.

282

00:29:19,000 --> 00:29:23,000

And they believed that this showed an underground structure

283

00:29:23,000 --> 00:29:28,000

which they believed was the correct density to be a train.

284

00:29:28,000 --> 00:29:33,000

Encouraged, the researchers share their evidence with the local press.

285

00:29:33,000 --> 00:29:36,000

As Koper and Richter's claim sort of gets out,

286

00:29:36,000 --> 00:29:40,000

the Polish government, both local and national, are forced to respond

287

00:29:40,000 --> 00:29:44,000

and by and large they seem to support the assertion that the train is there.

288

00:29:44,000 --> 00:29:50,000

Polish Deputy Culture Minister Piotr Zuchowski throws the weight of the government behind the claim

289

00:29:50,000 --> 00:29:57,000

saying that there's a 99% probability that a train more than 300 feet long was found in the Owl Mountains.

290

00:29:57,000 --> 00:30:03,000

Later, it's also revealed that Koper and Richter have made a pretty sweet deal with the Polish government

291

00:30:03,000 --> 00:30:09,000

saying basically, hey, if you support the excavation, we'll give you 90% of the profits.

292

00:30:09,000 --> 00:30:13,000

It's an astronomical figure if it pans out.

293

00:30:13,000 --> 00:30:18,000

This, of course, ignites a media circus and the hunt is on.

294

00:30:18,000 --> 00:30:24,000

Before they can dig, the Polish army is sent in to secure the area.

295

00:30:24,000 --> 00:30:27,000

All of Europe was littered with munitions after the war

296

00:30:27,000 --> 00:30:31,000

and in this area in particular, it was a hot spot of German activity.

297

00:30:31,000 --> 00:30:38,000

So before there can be any digging, they had to perform a UxO or unexploded ordnance search.

298

00:30:38,000 --> 00:30:41,000

Then they clear cut the area of its trees.

299

00:30:41,000 --> 00:30:47,000

Finally, they scan and probe the area to certify that there are no dangerous explosives below.

300

00:30:47,000 --> 00:30:55,000

On August 15, 2016, Koper and Richter, along with a large group of volunteers, officially begin digging.

301

00:30:55,000 --> 00:30:58,000

This team consisted of about 60 people.

302

00:30:58,000 --> 00:31:03,000

They had a geologist, they had engineers, they had laborers, of course Koper and Richter.

303

00:31:03,000 --> 00:31:09,000

The cost of this dig amounted to about \$130,000 and it was all funded privately.

304

00:31:09,000 --> 00:31:15,000

After one week of digging, the team halts their work, finding no evidence of a train,

305

00:31:15,000 --> 00:31:21,000

train tracks or any other man-made objects, at least not to a depth of 60 feet.

306

00:31:21,000 --> 00:31:27,000

They found that this GPR anomaly turned out to be a natural geologic formation.

307

00:31:27,000 --> 00:31:32,000

Koper and Richter didn't give up because at this point they claimed to have found many other anomalies,

308

00:31:32,000 --> 00:31:35,000

but they simply didn't have the funds to excavate them.

309

00:31:35,000 --> 00:31:41,000

Richter eventually leaves the team, but Koper continues to search for the Nazi gold train.

310

00:31:41,000 --> 00:31:48,000

In 2021, he announces he's found new evidence of a train at the bottom of a lake in a Polish village.

311

00:31:48,000 --> 00:31:55,000

Additional site analysis is ongoing, so hopes of recovering this particular stash of Nazi gold aren't over yet.

312

00:31:56,000 --> 00:32:05,000

By 2016, most searches for stolen Nazi plunder are helmed by amateur investigators.

313

00:32:05,000 --> 00:32:12,000

Among them, German treasure hunter Jürgen Prowska, who's working on a unique approach.

314

00:32:12,000 --> 00:32:16,000

Prowsk has taken a different method for looking into looted Nazi gold,

315

00:32:16,000 --> 00:32:23,000

whereas others are more consumed by trying to find additional hordes or deposits of gold that are undiscovered out there.

316

00:32:23,000 --> 00:32:32,000

What Prowsk is doing is he's looking at the records associated with hordes that have already been discovered to determine if anything was overlooked.

317

00:32:32,000 --> 00:32:40,000

He turns his attention to a story that unfolds in 1945 at Mittenwald, Germany, right near the Austrian border.

318

00:32:40,000 --> 00:32:50,000

There, on April 20th, 1945, Nazi Colonel Franz Pfeiffer and six officers gather at a German military base.

319

00:32:50,000 --> 00:32:53,000

Coincidentally, this is Hitler's birthday.

320

00:32:53,000 --> 00:33:01,000

The Allies are closing in, and Pfeiffer's given one final mission to hide a stash of Nazi gold.

321

00:33:01,000 --> 00:33:07,000

The Nazis consider this gold their last best hope for preserving the future of the regime.

322

00:33:07,000 --> 00:33:15,000

The aim is to hide it until they can return to power, and a new right can be formed, which will be funded by the gold.

323

00:33:15,000 --> 00:33:24,000

Pfeiffer swears his men to secrecy, then orders 365 sacks of gold loaded onto a convoy of trucks.

324

00:33:24,000 --> 00:33:29,000

The order itself comes from Reichstherer SS Heinrich Himmler.

325

00:33:29,000 --> 00:33:37,000

Himmler orders several truckloads of looted valuables to be transported to the area where Pfeiffer is in command.

326

00:33:37,000 --> 00:33:44,000

The Nazis' first plan is to hide it in this bowling alley that was abandoned, so they bring it all there and they deposit it in the building.

327

00:33:44,000 --> 00:33:48,000

Then, days later, Allied forces are approaching.

328

00:33:48,000 --> 00:33:53,000

They have to go back, take it all out of the bowling alley, and find someplace else to hide it.

329

00:33:53,000 --> 00:34:05,000

It's clear they're going to have to move this stuff much farther away, so they choose a new destination, a lodge up in the mountains outside of a little town called Einseedl.

330

00:34:05,000 --> 00:34:10,000

The lodge is owned by a man named Hans Neuhauser, who lives there with his wife and son.

331

00:34:10,000 --> 00:34:15,000

And Hans basically has no choice but to let the Nazis in and do whatever they say.

332

00:34:15,000 --> 00:34:24,000

After unloading the gold at Neuhauser's lodge, the Nazis next use mules to move it further into the mountains.

333

00:34:24,000 --> 00:34:31,000

In a span of just 24 hours, the Nazis had dug pits and they deposited the gold into these and then covered them back up.

334

00:34:31,000 --> 00:34:36,000

And it's none too soon because the Allies arrive on scene three days later.

335

00:34:36,000 --> 00:34:40,000

The freshly dug pits are easily spotted by the Allied soldiers.

336

00:34:40,000 --> 00:34:50,000

In total, 12 tons of gold bullion is unearthed, valued at nearly three-quarters of a billion dollars today.

337

00:34:50,000 --> 00:34:58,000

So they recover this gold. It's another great true story of buried Nazi treasure that continues to inspire treasure hunters today.

338

00:34:58,000 --> 00:35:06,000

Most treasure hunters use this story as evidence that other undisclosed locations of Nazi gold may exist, but not Pruska.

339

00:35:06,000 --> 00:35:12,000

Pruska decides to keep looking into this story. What if the Allies never found all the treasure?

340

00:35:12,000 --> 00:35:16,000

Is there any evidence to suggest that some of this did in fact get left behind?

341

00:35:16,000 --> 00:35:20,000

Sure enough, Pruska finds that evidence.

342

00:35:20,000 --> 00:35:27,000

In 2016, amongst a collection of antiques, Pruska finds the diary of a former Nazi officer.

343

00:35:27,000 --> 00:35:35,000

And in it, this guy claims to have taken some of the iron-seedle gold and put it in his own secret hiding spot.

344

00:35:39,000 --> 00:35:47,000

The diary says that about seven million dollars of Nazi gold was stolen by this officer and hidden somewhere nearby.

345

00:35:47,000 --> 00:35:53,000

Remember, this is gold the Nazis stole that this officer then stole from them.

346

00:35:53,000 --> 00:36:01,000

According to the diary, the officer hid the gold near the base of a steep hill on top of the hill is a flat area with a hut.

347

00:36:01,000 --> 00:36:07,000

To Pruska, this is like a pirate treasure map that's going to lead him right to the gold.

348

00:36:07,000 --> 00:36:10,000

There's just one problem.

349

00:36:10,000 --> 00:36:14,000

The story in the diary doesn't end after the war. It continues.

350

00:36:14,000 --> 00:36:19,000

Several years later, the officer goes back to this location to dig up the gold.

351

00:36:19,000 --> 00:36:22,000

When he returns, he can't find it. He lost it.

352

00:36:22,000 --> 00:36:28,000

The ensuing years have changed the landscape, so it looks very different from when the officer first buried it.

353

00:36:28,000 --> 00:36:31,000

If that isn't karma, I don't know what is.

354

00:36:31,000 --> 00:36:38,000

So what does it say to Pruska? It says maybe that gold is still out there waiting to be found.

355

00:36:38,000 --> 00:36:43,000

And Pruska has something the officer didn't. A metal detector.

356

00:36:43,000 --> 00:36:49,000

So far, Pruska has made dozens of trips to this area looking for the Nazi gold.

357

00:36:49,000 --> 00:36:58,000

And he's found several promising leads. He's found grenades, Nazi helmet, ammunition, all things which indicate activity in the area.

358

00:36:58,000 --> 00:37:02,000

And this isn't a place that had any active fighting during the war.

359

00:37:02,000 --> 00:37:08,000

These artifacts mean that maybe one or more Nazis were up to something in this area.

360

00:37:08,000 --> 00:37:10,000

Maybe hiding gold.

361

00:37:10,000 --> 00:37:16,000

So far, Pruska hasn't found any gold, but like any good treasure hunter, he's still at it.

362

00:37:19,000 --> 00:37:30,000

In 2019, decades after the end of World War II, a new lead to the location of lost Nazi treasure emerges.

363

00:37:30,000 --> 00:37:39,000

A Masonic Lodge in Kwedlenburg in Germany decides that they want to atone for their associations with Adolf Hitler and the National Socialist Third Reich.

364

00:37:39,000 --> 00:37:53,000

They have hung on to a large quantity of documents relating to the Nazi time period, including a diary that was maintained by a former SS officer who wrote under the assumed name Michalis.

365

00:37:53,000 --> 00:38:03,000

They decide to give all this memorabilia to the Silesian Bridge Foundation, a Polish-German anti-discrimination cooperative, as sort of an apologetic gesture.

366

00:38:04,000 --> 00:38:10,000

At first, the Silesian Bridge Foundation accepts all this stuff. Just thank you very much.

367

00:38:10,000 --> 00:38:15,000

It's just a nice way to accept and heal some of the wounds from the past.

368

00:38:15,000 --> 00:38:21,000

But when they start to read the diary, they realize this gesture could be worth much more.

369

00:38:21,000 --> 00:38:31,000

It immediately becomes clear why the author used a pseudonym, because the diary details 11 different locations that Himmler himself picked out to hide Nazi treasures.

370

00:38:31,000 --> 00:38:46,000

Many of these locations are thought to include gold coins, metals, jewelry, items that were deposited with Nazi police for safekeeping as Allied forces approached.

371

00:38:46,000 --> 00:38:55,000

One of these locations is described as having 47 valuable pieces of art from artists to include Botticelli and Rembrandt.

372

00:38:56,000 --> 00:39:03,000

The Silesian Bridge decides to go and inspect some of these locations, and they choose as their starting point the biggest hoard of them all.

373

00:39:03,000 --> 00:39:09,000

And it's a location that is supposedly warehousing 28 tons of Nazi gold.

374

00:39:09,000 --> 00:39:15,000

It's hidden in an abandoned castle called Hochberg Palace.

375

00:39:18,000 --> 00:39:24,000

The Foundation puts together a search team, led by their president, Roman Fermanian.

376

00:39:24,000 --> 00:39:32,000

The location actually makes sense, because Hochberg Palace has a special reputation as a Nazi hangout during World War II.

377

00:39:32,000 --> 00:39:40,000

During the Second World War, the German military maintained a network of bordellos, some for the common soldiers, some for the officers.

378

00:39:40,000 --> 00:39:49,000

And during World War II, Hochberg Palace was what they called an ofiziers bordelle, meaning an officer's bordello.

379

00:39:49,000 --> 00:39:54,000

It's not all that far-fetched to assume that there might have been some hidden treasure here.

380

00:39:54,000 --> 00:40:04,000

People are constantly coming in and out of this location, so Framaniac actually obtains eyewitness accounts of people who said they saw treasure being stored in the palace.

381

00:40:04,000 --> 00:40:12,000

Unfortunately, since the war, this site has severely deteriorated, making it dangerous to explore.

382

00:40:12,000 --> 00:40:16,000

The team starts carefully searching the area.

383

00:40:16,000 --> 00:40:23,000

They use ground-penetrating radar to sweep the area for safety purposes, and in the process, may have actually revealed the hiding spot.

384

00:40:23,000 --> 00:40:31,000

The diary says the gold, 48 crates of it, are buried 200 feet down at the bottom of a well.

385

00:40:31,000 --> 00:40:40,000

This well would have been encased in metal, and in their initial scan, the team discovers what appears to be a large metal casing.

386

00:40:40,000 --> 00:40:45,000

Encouraged by this promising find, the Foundation hopes to begin digging soon.

387

00:40:46,000 --> 00:40:52,000

It takes time to coordinate these big search efforts like this. You have to work with the government, you have to work with local authorities.

388

00:40:52,000 --> 00:40:57,000

There's always the danger of unexploded ordinance, so you have to coordinate with the military as well.

389

00:40:57,000 --> 00:41:03,000

They're only just now beginning this excavation at Hochberg Palace, and who knows what they'll find.

390

00:41:03,000 --> 00:41:09,000

Can you imagine \$1.7 billion worth of Nazi gold being returned to its victims?

391

00:41:09,000 --> 00:41:12,000

I hope it happens. The world is watching.

392

00:41:13,000 --> 00:41:24,000

In addition to their research at Hochberg Palace, the Silesian Bridge Foundation hopes to explore the other ten sites in the diary one by one.

393

00:41:24,000 --> 00:41:31,000

Each brings a fresh chance to fully recover the missing treasure, and perhaps one day, more will be found.

394

00:41:31,000 --> 00:41:37,000

I'm Lawrence Fishburne. Thank you for watching History's Greatest Mysteries.