

1

00:00:00,076 --> 00:00:16,448

This series presents information based in part on theory and conjecture.

2

00:00:16,448 --> 00:00:20,972

The producer's purpose is to suggest some possible explanations but not necessarily

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00:00:20,972 --> 00:00:27,977

the only ones to the mysteries we will examine.

4

00:00:35,983 --> 00:00:43,989

April 1945. As Allied forces obliterate German cities, Nazi party functionaries scramble for cover,

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00:00:43,989 --> 00:00:50,995

carrying with them far more than their own worldly goods.

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00:01:00,002 --> 00:01:05,005

From D-Day the 6th of June to the complete collapse of German military strength,

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00:01:05,005 --> 00:01:07,007

a brief eight months had gone by.

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00:01:07,007 --> 00:01:12,011

There had been little time for the looters to hide their ill-gotten wealth.

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00:01:15,013 --> 00:01:24,020

By war's end, hundreds of millions of dollars in jewels, gold and artworks were being stuffed into strong boxes

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00:01:24,020 --> 00:01:28,023

to be hidden in the most unlikely places.

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00:01:31,025 --> 00:01:35,028

The plunder set off one of the greatest treasure hunts in history.

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00:01:45,036 --> 00:01:57,045

From the east, Russian forces hammer Berlin in the last days of World War II.

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00:01:57,045 --> 00:02:14,058

In the spring of 1945, Adolf Hitler ordered the German army to defend Berlin to the death of the last man.

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00:02:15,059 --> 00:02:24,065

Russian soldiers sealed off Berlin as American troops mopped up the scattered pockets of German resistance east of the Rhine River.

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00:02:24,065 --> 00:02:34,073

In the closing days of the war, every foot of land was paid for with a life.

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00:02:45,081 --> 00:02:57,090

The once haughty German legions defended Hitler's capital city with companies made up of old men and young boys.

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00:02:57,090 --> 00:03:05,097

Russian infantrymen poured into the marble halls of the capital and sounded the death knoll of the so-called Thousand Year Reich.

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00:03:05,097 --> 00:03:15,104

Even as the Allied armies were writing an end to the Third Reich in Berlin,

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00:03:15,104 --> 00:03:18,106

Hitler's henchmen were scurrying to save themselves.

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00:03:18,106 --> 00:03:23,110

Men like Martin Borman, the architects of Nazi power for a dozen years,

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00:03:23,110 --> 00:03:27,113

weren't about to surrender or commit suicide as their leader had done.

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00:03:27,113 --> 00:03:32,117

They had access to the plunder of Europe, gold bullion worth hundreds of millions of dollars,

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00:03:32,117 --> 00:03:35,119

and priceless works of painting and sculpture.

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00:03:35,119 --> 00:03:42,125

They snatched what they could and ran for their lives, some to be caught later, others never to be seen again.

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00:03:42,125 --> 00:03:48,129

Their disappearance touched off the greatest manhunt in history and the greatest search for treasure.

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00:03:48,129 --> 00:04:02,140

As Berlin fell, more than 500 top-ranking Nazis disappeared from sight.

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00:04:02,140 --> 00:04:11,147

They took to the roads, wearing civilian clothes and using any means of transportation they could beg, borrow or steal.

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00:04:12,147 --> 00:04:19,153

The stolen treasures they carried would have been passports to a new life.

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00:04:19,153 --> 00:04:32,163

The departure from Berlin of Nazi leaders was a far cry from their triumphant marches through conquered cities just six years earlier.

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00:04:32,163 --> 00:04:38,167

On a spring day in 1940, the streets of Paris played host to a strange caravan.

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00:04:38,167 --> 00:04:47,174

Riding in an open-staff car, selected officers accompanied Adolf Hitler on a tour of the city of light.

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00:04:47,174 --> 00:04:54,179

In less than eight hours, Adolf Hitler would leave Paris never to return.

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00:04:54,179 --> 00:05:07,189

Himself a frustrated artist, he would order his troops to confiscate the great art treasures of private and public collections and bring them back to the Third Reich.

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00:05:09,191 --> 00:05:16,196

Art historians have often attempted to trace the plundering that occurred during the Nazi occupation of Western Europe,

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00:05:16,196 --> 00:05:24,202

but an impossible jungle of documents has subverted most of their attempts.

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00:05:24,202 --> 00:05:33,209

Like children playing with newfound toys, Hitler and Goring examined each new collection that was brought to Germany.

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00:05:39,214 --> 00:05:50,222

Countless hundreds of millions of dollars in paintings and sculpture adorned the walls of the Nazi Museum in Munich.

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00:05:56,226 --> 00:06:02,231

Still other great treasures were hidden in a 15th century castle called Nuschwanzstein.

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00:06:02,231 --> 00:06:07,235

The castle was the creation of Ludwig II, the Mad King of Bavaria.

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00:06:07,235 --> 00:06:14,240

In a sense, one madman's monument had become a storehouse for the greed and fantasies of another.

41

00:06:14,240 --> 00:06:25,249

For a time, Ludwig's collection of cheap glass and plaster fixtures was dignified by some of the finest works of Europe's old masters.

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00:06:26,249 --> 00:06:35,256

As World War II ended, American GIs were sent to the castle to recover its treasures.

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00:06:35,256 --> 00:06:43,262

What they found were the works of incomparable artists haphazardly grouped with paintings of little or no merit.

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00:06:56,272 --> 00:07:04,278

A salt mine had been the Nazi treasure repository.

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00:07:13,285 --> 00:07:20,290

In the perfectly controlled humidifier, an elaborate vault had been created in which the paintings could be safely housed.

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00:07:21,291 --> 00:07:24,293

To this day, the salt mine remains.

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00:07:24,293 --> 00:07:33,300

It is possible to enter each of the wood clad rooms and conjure up images of rack upon rack filled with priceless art.

48

00:07:50,313 --> 00:08:00,321

The search for treasure taken from the salt mine was assigned to men like Walder Horn, a German-born art historian who worked with U.S. military intelligence after the war.

49

00:08:00,321 --> 00:08:05,325

He was then sent to the castle to find the treasure.

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00:08:05,325 --> 00:08:21,337

The search for treasure taken from the salt mine was assigned to men like Walder Horn, a German-born art historian who worked with U.S. military intelligence after the war.

51

00:08:21,337 --> 00:08:32,345

I was assigned to an intelligence unit which was in charge of the recovery of treasures, art treasures that had been displaced or stolen.

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00:08:32,345 --> 00:08:36,348

There were two very interesting cases.

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00:08:36,348 --> 00:08:46,356

One of them was the recovery of the crown jewels of the Holy Roman Empire, five of the most important pieces of which had disappeared.

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00:08:46,356 --> 00:09:01,367

The other one, psychologically perhaps more interesting because the key figure in that story was a woman, was the disappearance of two million dollars worth of gold coins from the salt mines of Altaussi.

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00:09:03,369 --> 00:09:19,381

The only thing that was known about them was that they were lost in the hands of an SS major called Bum Hummel, who was the right-hand man of Martin Bormann, who was the right-hand man of Adolf Hitler.

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00:09:19,381 --> 00:09:24,385

The problem was to find a man who had disappeared six months earlier.

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00:09:24,385 --> 00:09:33,391

Disappeared from a burly and under fire. Martin Bormann left the bunker where Hitler was to die and made a frantic race for freedom.

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00:09:38,395 --> 00:09:44,400

Years later, his chauffeur retraced the escape route used by Bormann and his men.

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00:09:44,400 --> 00:09:51,405

As Russian tanks bombarded the area around the Reichstag, they made their way across the Spree River.

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00:09:51,405 --> 00:09:56,409

In the very center of the city, they took refuge in an underground train station.

61

00:09:56,409 --> 00:10:06,417

In the subway tunnel, wearing civilian clothes, they mingled with frightened Berliners, praying that their meager concrete roof would stand up under the bombardment.

62

00:10:10,420 --> 00:10:18,426

Once they reached the western edge of the city, they took temporary refuge in a broken ruin, hoping to last out the day.

63

00:10:19,426 --> 00:10:32,436

I went on to the normal, using the normal methods of searching for a man by trying to meet the people who saw him last and see whether his tracks disappeared or did not disappear, they disappeared.

64

00:10:33,437 --> 00:10:41,443

Apparently, the escapees weathered that night in an abandoned building, and the next day set out on a prearranged escape route south.

65

00:10:42,444 --> 00:10:52,451

Bormann's face was well known to almost every German. In the chaos surrounding war's end, however, he slipped out of Berlin and made his way to the Alps.

66

00:10:53,452 --> 00:11:08,464

After about two weeks in the Austrian mountains, including a search in the Alpine huts and a search in Slamiers all the way down from the high Alps to the valley of Salzburg,

67

00:11:08,464 --> 00:11:11,466

I had come to the conclusion that he was lost.

68

00:11:11,466 --> 00:11:16,470

Were it not for the dedication of the hunter, the treasure might have been forever lost.

69

00:11:17,470 --> 00:11:21,474

I had no other choice now than to approach Mrs. von Hulm.

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00:11:21,474 --> 00:11:36,485

At the end of the conversation, rather than interrogation of about 45 minutes, she admitted that she knew where he was and declared her willingness to go and see him and to inquire about the whereabouts of the points.

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00:11:37,486 --> 00:11:50,496

I left her alone for three days, saw her again, and she declared, Lieutenant Horn, I'm happy to report that the points are in the hands of the Prince Archbishop of Salzburg.

72

00:11:50,496 --> 00:11:55,499

I said, this is fine, Mrs. von Hulm, my mission is accomplished.

73

00:11:56,500 --> 00:12:04,506

Other pieces of treasure, however, were not found, and years later would become the subject of life and death struggles.

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00:12:07,508 --> 00:12:12,512

Trainloads of priceless treasure rolled across the German countryside.

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00:12:12,512 --> 00:12:16,515

Hitler's officers made sure the plunder of Europe was complete.

76

00:12:16,515 --> 00:12:21,519

It included the most precious thing of all, humanity.

77

00:12:21,519 --> 00:12:29,525

Hundreds of thousands of Jews would be herded aboard Hitler's trains. Many would die of starvation along the way.

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00:12:29,525 --> 00:12:35,530

The trains leaving collection centers throughout Europe were expressions of fundamental Nazi philosophy.

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00:12:35,530 --> 00:12:42,535

To be other than German was to be inferior. To be Jewish was to be despised.

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00:12:42,535 --> 00:12:51,542

At the end of the line with the concentration camps, they were foul stockyards of humanity stripped of hope.

81

00:12:56,546 --> 00:13:03,551

With the Jews, Hitler found the scapegoat he needed to explain Germany's failures between the wars.

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00:13:03,551 --> 00:13:09,556

The Nazis were stealing lives now, and they weren't above making a profit at it.

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00:13:10,556 --> 00:13:15,560

Grizzly crimes were committed by the Nazis in their dozen year reign of terror in Europe.

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00:13:15,560 --> 00:13:21,565

Worse to these were the assaults on human dignity, typified by the robbing of gold from the mouths of murdered Jews.

85

00:13:21,565 --> 00:13:29,571

Another atrocity was the collection of huge sums in gold and diamonds from concentration camp

inmates who thought they could buy back their lives.

86

00:13:29,571 --> 00:13:33,574

They couldn't, but they made their killers rich trying.

87

00:13:35,575 --> 00:13:39,578

The horror of it struck home when the Allies took over the camps.

88

00:13:39,578 --> 00:13:47,584

They entered as liberators, but there were no cheering crowds. They beheld instead a tragic spectacle.

89

00:13:50,587 --> 00:13:57,592

Treasure could be recovered, but lives could not. The task would be enormous. Perhaps it would never be completed.

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00:13:58,593 --> 00:14:02,596

The great bulk of Nazi plunder would be recovered immediately after the war.

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00:14:02,596 --> 00:14:10,602

Uncounted millions, however, disappeared with Hitler's henchmen, men who, like Martin Borman, are

still at large.

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00:14:10,602 --> 00:14:18,608

Among them, Dr. Joseph Mengele. He conducted unspeakable research on the inmates of concentration camps.

93

00:14:18,608 --> 00:14:22,611

Inmates would have sooner faced the ovens than Mengele's knife.

94

00:14:23,612 --> 00:14:29,616

At Nuremberg, the Allies tried top Nazi leaders captured at war's end.

95

00:14:31,618 --> 00:14:37,622

But the colonels and majors of the Third Reich carried their treasures with them into peacetime Europe.

96

00:14:39,624 --> 00:14:48,631

Austria's Lake Toplitzsee, gold bars and hundreds of thousands of counterfeit English pounds were recovered from the lake in 1957.

97

00:14:49,632 --> 00:14:56,637

What better place for hiding treasure quickly than a deep alpine lake? How much remains to be discovered?

98

00:14:56,637 --> 00:15:00,640

Two men have disappeared trying to answer that question.

99

00:15:05,644 --> 00:15:15,651

The search goes on in spite of the lake's ominous history. The Austrian government tries to discourage treasure hunters, but the lure of Nazi gold is powerful.

100

00:15:19,654 --> 00:15:26,660

Two volunteer firemen from a nearby city have dreamed of the riches that may lie beneath the lake.

101

00:15:26,660 --> 00:15:32,664

The dream brings them to Toplitzsee again and again. Perhaps this will be the day.

102

00:15:32,664 --> 00:15:38,669

The quest is exhilarating, but not without danger. Vigilance is important.

103

00:15:38,669 --> 00:15:49,677

Treasure hunters are optimists, and it is a fine day for a dive.

104

00:15:59,685 --> 00:16:05,689

Optimists, yes. But the treasure hunters know other hunters may be abroad.

105

00:16:06,690 --> 00:16:13,695

The men who hid the gold were not strangers to killing. Who knows where they are now?

106

00:16:16,698 --> 00:16:23,703

The water is deep and cold. It is easy to see how it has kept its secret for more than 30 years.

107

00:16:24,704 --> 00:16:35,712

The divers are spurred by the knowledge that the quest paid off once.

108

00:16:41,717 --> 00:16:46,721

There was another time when blood may have been spilled to keep the secret of the lake.

109

00:16:47,721 --> 00:16:54,727

The secret was born in 1945. The Nazi hierarchy, not killed outright, was in flight.

110

00:16:54,727 --> 00:17:02,733

If they were caught, they might lie their way out of long prison sentences, but not if they were caught with treasure.

111

00:17:02,733 --> 00:17:09,738

Fortunes must have been hidden in haste. Lakes along the escape route beckoned.

112

00:17:10,739 --> 00:17:15,743

Almost 20 years later, some of the treasure has already been found.

113

00:17:15,743 --> 00:17:20,746

Perhaps someone was there to make sure no more would be.

114

00:17:33,756 --> 00:17:40,762

Did the divers find something? Something that cost them their lives? We only know that they vanished.

115

00:17:40,762 --> 00:17:45,765

Something the underground Nazi movement called Odessa was involved.

116

00:17:45,765 --> 00:17:52,771

It is 1976. No one will vanish on this dive. There will be no treasure either.

117

00:17:52,771 --> 00:17:59,776

It is possible that the gold remaining in Toplitzet was moved years ago when its guardians felt others closing in.

118

00:17:59,776 --> 00:18:05,781

The gold remains in Toplitzet, but it is not.

119

00:18:05,781 --> 00:18:12,786

It is possible that the gold remaining in Toplitzet was moved years ago when its guardians felt others closing in.

120

00:18:15,788 --> 00:18:18,790

There are many other lakes and many secret bank accounts.

121

00:18:22,794 --> 00:18:30,800

Serious investigators don't dismiss the notion that there are still men in hiding who would see Hitler's nightmare world reborn.

122

00:18:30,800 --> 00:18:37,805

Great treasure would have to be close at hand to once again unleash the dogs of war.

123

00:18:41,808 --> 00:18:48,813

That prospect alone may be enough to drive men to continue the search for Nazi plunder.

124

00:18:48,813 --> 00:18:52,816

The Capital of Renaissance Culture

125

00:18:58,821 --> 00:19:07,828

Florence. The capital of Renaissance culture is the center for the continuing search for the plundered art treasures of Europe.

126

00:19:07,828 --> 00:19:12,832

Rudolfo Siviero is the most active of the art detectives.

127

00:19:13,832 --> 00:19:20,838

He stayed on the trail of Nazi art thieves long after others had given up.

128

00:19:20,838 --> 00:19:30,845

Siviero has searched thousands of German documents for clues. With them, he has recovered dozens of stolen masterpieces.

129

00:19:30,845 --> 00:19:39,852

Manifests, bills of lading, army memos, reminders of past outrages.

130

00:19:43,855 --> 00:19:52,862

The collections of the Uffizi Gallery and the Pitti Palace in Florence have been reconstructed for the work of Siviero and his colleagues.

131

00:19:52,862 --> 00:19:58,866

Yet Siviero estimates that a third of Italy's plundered art is still missing.

132

00:19:58,866 --> 00:20:03,870

He thinks much of it is hidden behind the iron curtain in East Germany.

133

00:20:04,871 --> 00:20:13,878

One of his hardest tasks has been to root out the fake masterpieces that began showing up after the war.

134

00:20:13,878 --> 00:20:19,882

Museums, anxious to restore their collections, often fell victim to swindles.

135

00:20:19,882 --> 00:20:24,886

A flood of copies has made it even harder to trace the fate of the originals.

136

00:20:24,886 --> 00:20:36,895

Siviero remains dedicated to restoring his nation's art heritage, no matter how difficult the task.

137

00:20:54,909 --> 00:20:59,913

It is important for men like Siviero to believe that beauty can endure.

138

00:20:59,913 --> 00:21:04,917

It must endure if man is to banish the ugliness of war.

139

00:21:04,917 --> 00:21:12,923

Perhaps if beauty endures, the flaming destruction of the past can finally be cast aside.

140

00:21:13,923 --> 00:21:18,927

The History of the World

141

00:21:18,927 --> 00:21:30,936

Lost civilizations, extraterrestrials, myths and monsters, missing persons, magic and witchcraft, unexplained phenomena.

142

00:21:30,936 --> 00:21:35,940

In search of cameras are traveling the world seeking out these great mysteries.

143

00:21:36,941 --> 00:21:43,946

This program was the result of the work of scientists, researchers and a group of highly skilled technicians.

144

00:21:44,947 --> 00:21:49,951

Coming up next, in search of continues with the journey to Peru to find Inca treasure.

145

00:21:49,951 --> 00:21:55,955

Then an agent has no alibi when he's accused of murder on FBI, the Untold Stories.

146

00:21:55,955 --> 00:22:02,961

And later tonight, History's Mysteries brings you the true story of Robin Hood at 8, here on the History Channel.