



Hitler's Holy Relics: : A True Story of Nazi Plunder and the Race to Recover the Crown Jewels of the Holy Roman Empire

Sidney D. Kirkpatrick

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From Paris to Stalingrad, the Nazis systematically plundered all manner of art and antiquities. But the first and most valuable treasures they looted were the Crown Jewels of the Holy Roman Empire. In *Hitler's Holy Relics*, bestselling author Sidney Kirkpatrick tells the riveting and never-before-told true story of how an American college professor turned Army sleuth recovered these cherished symbols of Hitler's Thousand-Year Reich before they could become a rallying point in the creation of a Fourth and equally unholy Reich.

Anticipating the Allied invasion of Nazi Germany, Reichsführer Heinrich Himmler had ordered a top-secret bunker carved deep into the bedrock beneath Nürnberg castle. Inside the well-guarded chamber was a specially constructed vault that held the plundered treasures Hitler valued the most: the Spear of Destiny (reputed to have been used to pierce Christ's side while he was on the cross) and the Crown Jewels of the Holy Roman Empire, ancient artifacts steeped in medieval mysticism and coveted by world rulers from Charlemagne to Napoleon. But as Allied bombers rained devastation upon Nürnberg and the U.S. Seventh Army prepared to invade the city Hitler called "the soul of the Nazi Party," five of the most precious relics, all central to the coronation ceremony of a would-be Holy Roman Emperor, vanished from the vault. Who took them? And why? The mystery remained unsolved for months after the war's end, until the Supreme Allied Commander, General Dwight D. Eisenhower, ordered Lieutenant Walter Horn, a German-born art historian on leave from U.C. Berkeley, to hunt down the missing treasures. To accomplish his mission, Horn must revisit the now-rubble-strewn landscape of his youth and delve into the ancient legends and arcane mysticism surrounding the antiquities that Hitler had looted in his quest for world domination. Horn searches for clues in the burnt remains of Himmler's private castle and follows the trail of neo-Nazi "Teutonic Knights" charged with protecting a vast hidden fortune in plundered gold and other treasure. Along the way, Horn has to confront his own demons: how members of his family and former academic colleagues subverted scholarly research to help legitimize Hitler's theories of Aryan supremacy and the Master Race. What Horn discovers on his investigative odyssey is so explosive that his final report will remain secret for decades.

Drawing on unpublished interrogation and intelligence reports, as well as on diaries, letters, journals, and interviews in the United States and Germany, Kirkpatrick tells this riveting and disturbing story with cinematic detail and reveals—for the first time—how a failed Vienna art student, obsessed with the occult and dreams of his own grandeur, nearly succeeded in creating a Holy Reich rooted in a twisted reinvention of medieval and Church history.

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From Reader Review Hitler's Holy Relics: : A True Story of Nazi Plunder and the Race to Recover the Crown Jewels of the Holy Roman Empire for online ebook

Bill Kerwin says

I'd recommend this book to anyone who is interested in Nazis and the Occult. Hitler's fascination with "The Spear of Destiny" has been exploited by various books and movies, but to my knowledge the story of the concealment of the Crown Jewels of the Holy Roman Empire--in what appears to have been an attempt to establish the foundations for a Fourth Reich--has never before been told. Perhaps this is because the two Americans directly responsible for their recovery were native German expatriates--Lieutenant Horn, an art historian and son of a Lutheran pastor, and Rosenthal, a Jewish intelligence officer whose family died in Dachau.

In the course of presenting the background for the solution of this mystery, Kirkpatrick gives an excellent overview of Hitler and Himmler's connections to the occult and demonstrates the crucial importance of Nurnberg in the creation of a thousand year empire. In addition, this book gives us a realistic look at the supremely difficult, haphazard and often corrupt bureaucracy of the American occupying forces in the first days after the end of the war.

Lauren says

Here's some considerable background before I even get to the review: Walter Horn was born and raised in Germany by Lutheran parents and studied art history (with an emphasis in pan-Germanic art) before fleeing to the United States to escape Nazism (something many of his family members would embrace). He landed a teaching job in art history at the University of California, Berkeley before enlisting in the U.S. military. In the immediate aftermath of World War II, when Europe is in near-chaos, Horn's fluency in German and his academic specialty made him the perfect man to join a program created by the U.S. military to protect Europe's cultural heritage. His first assignment, detailed in this book, is a race to recover the missing pieces of the crowned jewels of the Holy Roman Empire, believed by some to be coveted by fugitive Nazis in order to create a Fourth Reich. That's a lot of detail for a short review, but those unique details make this nonfiction story and give it a wonderful depth. The adventure to recover the crown jewels would have been a good story on its own, but it wouldn't have been as memorable or thought provoking. For all I've read about World War II, this is the first time I've come across such a detailed account of the chaos and compromises of post-war Germany and the religious and ideological foundations of Nazism. If possible, the latter makes Hitler and his minions even more frightening: There's something about understanding the framework of how people justify hatred and violence that makes evil much more chilling than a black-and-white caricature. My one complaint is that for a book with such a phenomenal story, it's somewhat dull and occasionally relies on explanatory tangents that break up the flow. However, I credit the somewhat monotonous tone of the book with a desire to stay close to the facts and avoid unnecessary embellishment, so I'm hesitant to be too critical of that shortcoming. Recommended.

Susanhayeshotmail.com says

I'm sure this book deserves four stars. I am. But since I listened to it while driving to visit the grandchildren I have gaps that make it hard for me to thoroughly sum up. I have long known that listening is not my primary learning style and every time I listen to a book on CD this sad fact is confirmed. If I'm listening to a book while riding as passenger in the car this is especially true. Allow me to ramble a bit.

When I was a little girl my grandmother lived over or, rather, along the river and through the woods next to the ocean. The roads were twisty and winding and we children were wedged in the back seat, plagued with motion sickness. I only remember actually heaving once but I remember many hours of feeling like I was going to blow chips as we slowly wound our way up (down?) the Columbia River to Grandma's house. I can also remember setting out from Grandma's to visit various points of interest and picnic spots, traveling, always wedged in the back seat, over yet even more twisty roads for what seemed like great distances, feeling queasy every minute of the way. I was completely astounded as an adult to discover these beauty spots were for the most part a mere 20 minutes from Grandma's driveway but back to my trip down memory's twisty lane. I clearly remember one particular trip, wedged in the back seat between my teenaged aunt and uncle. I must have looked green, utterly miserable and about to puke because my uncle told me that if I could close my eyes and fall asleep I wouldn't feel sick and when I woke up we would be there. This became my de facto survival tactic and though I haven't been car sick for 30 years (and really, that was morning sickness) it has never failed me yet.

So, I get in the car, get comfy and out of habit and for self defense purposes, my head starts to nod, my eyelids drift south at an amazing pace. Which makes it even harder than usual to follow a book on tape. If somehow I'm not actually sleeping my mind will grasp on some arcane point, say celtic runes, and begin a merry wander through J.R.R. Tolkien's works and onto that weird kid in high school who developed his own elvish tongue and set of runes and wrote in green ink whenever he could get away with it ... until I suddenly realize that the author has moved on a page or two or chapter ago.

What I'm saying here is, I missed bits. And it's not the author or the narrator's fault. It's me. Sad but true. I am sure this was a very engrossing tale of real life detective work and treasure hunting and filled readers and listeners in on lots and lots of interesting (and horrifying) bits of information regarding Hitler's fascination with the occult and building himself a nice justification for his actions based on myth, legend and history. I'm sure because the parts I heard, really, most of the book, were just that, interesting and fascinating. And because my husband said so and since it kept him awake for the whole drive, I'm gonna go with that.

Jill Hutchinson says

An engrossing book about the post-war search for art treasure pilfered by the Nazis. I had already read *The Monuments Men* which was also excellent and covered somewhat the same topic. But this book concentrates on one particular treasure that the Nazi's considered sacred, the crown jewels of the Holy Roman Empire. Hitler saw himself as the rightful owner of these artifacts as he felt they represented the validity of the Third Reich as rulers of the world. They had been housed in a bunker in Nuremberg but disappeared shortly before the occupation by the Allies. One man, a scholar of ancient history, was given the responsibility of finding them with little to no clues as to where they were.

The author delves into the mystical side of the Nazi party and the relics of the past which were felt would protect the Reich for 1,000 years. There is much information here that will fascinate the reader and help make some sense out of the Aryan myth. A great read and highly recommended.

M says

Just finished the book. As a cultural anthropologist I found this book full of information in one place . The author editorializes a bit much for my tastes, but it is his story. Good research gets tainted when you write for a specific audience. Reading through the Third Reich's last days in Germany, and the history of how the Crown Jewels were lost and found takes one through a maze of allied armies, SS officials, and friendships. The fact that Americans looted priceless relics is not new. They certainly did that in Baghdad.

The comments that the author makes in order to maintain a level of sympathy for the Jews and the families whose information helped in the research did not serve him well. I wrote a paper on Adolph Hitler for my Abnormal Psychology class in 1980, at Queens College, New York which received an A as I described the abuse that he endured as a child. Which surprised me, because Q.C. was 90% Jewish at that time and it meant that my instructor had to be very objective. Nowhere does this author mention this except to say he was an itinerant young man, sleeping in benches and at odds with his family. Therefore the portraiture painted is not clear. After years of reading everyone's history one realizes that the accounts will always be skewed in favor of the culture telling the story.

The story is very interesting. This site then helps to understand the anthropological search for the root of the "Aryan race" and I would like to add that if blond here is the determinant then should the Australian aborigines with their blond hair be included? or does the pigmented skin issue a different perspective?<http://www.bradmeltzer.com/novels/boo...>

I say read the book anyway. It will give you some background.

Audra says

riveting and bonkers.

Chris says

I'm at a bit of a loss as to what this book was trying to do. Kirkpatrick takes an interesting if uneventful event in the life of Walter Horn, a soldier known for his recovery of numerous important art and historical objects at the end of World War II, and somehow turns it into a rambling, dull narrative with pretensions of being an Indiana Jones adventure. Kirkpatrick begins by taking a single event in Walter Horn's life, his recovery of the regalia of the Holy Roman Empire from Nurnberg. Under the city, there was a vault where the objects were supposed to be, but they had been moved. Horn does a lot of racing around and giving long lectures to people before finally leaning on the right person a little and that person tells him where the objects are. He then finds them. It is an interesting, if straightforward, tale that certainly deserves to be told, perhaps as a chapter in a larger book. Kirkpatrick tries to turn Horn into some dashing scholar-hero (which he was to some extent) but the way everything he does is shown to be upstanding and honorable becomes a farce. Presumably everything actually happened—but from divorcing his wife in a polite and civil way in the midst of this adventure to rescuing his German relatives by bribing some Soviets, driving them to safety, and not

mentioning that they helped the Nazis even though he's thinking it very, very hard during a family dinner, it all gets to be a bit much. Add to this that Kirkpatrick goes far beyond the expected level of recreating dialogue and such in this work, and you start wondering if you're reading a novelization based on facts. However, what really makes this a tough read is that the author has decided a certain amount of historical, cultural and theological background is needed to understand the story (is it interesting, certainly in an academic sense, is it necessary to understand Horn's search, not really) and delivers it not by including a few chapters of background material inserted at the appropriate points, but by having Horn give long lectures to every person he meets about topics they have no reason to learn about for the benefit to the reader. Kirkpatrick spends most of the second half flirting with conspiracy theory territory, seeing spears everywhere, and following Horn on a visit to a Nazi gathering place apparently to explain to us that 1. Concentration and Labor camps are wrong and 2. Nazis are creepy. I never would have figured this out without Kirkpatrick's help.

As a chapter or two in a larger biography of Horn, or perhaps in a book about Nazi symbolism, this would have worked great. As a stand along book, I wasn't impressed. There are certainly some interesting points to be made, but I'm sure there are other books that do this in a better manner.

Charlie says

If you're interested in something besides the battles that took place and want to know more about some of the other stuff that took place then this book may be what you are looking for.

A True Story, at the end of the War, about the Crown Jewels disappearing and needed to be found pronto - in a matter of weeks.

The fear of the Nazis having the hidden Crown Jewels of the Holy Roman Empire for their use in the possible Fourth Reich became a high priority for LT. Walter Horn to investigate and recover them quickly. He was given this task by the higher ups.

There is a good source of info in this Kirkpatrick book. His outstanding research made this book a very worth while book to read. Enjoyed the heck out of it.

Bettie? says

blurb from book depository: *Had Hitler succeeded in conquering Europe, he would have crowned himself Holy Roman Emperor. The Nazis had in their possession priceless artefacts that would give Hitler legitimacy in his subjects' eyes: the Crown Jewels of the Holy Roman Empire including the Spear of Destiny, alleged to have pierced Christ's side at the Crucifixion. Looted from the royal treasury in Vienna, Austria, the Crown Jewels were hidden in a secret bunker deep beneath Nurnberg castle, known to few but Heinrich Himmler, his staff - and a captured German soldier whose family lived above it. As luck would have it, the officer in charge of interrogating the soldier was First Lieutenant Walter Horn, art history professor. Following his report to General Patton, Horn would be assigned to recover this ancient treasure. Would he find it before covert Nazi agents could use it to revive the defeated regime? Based on recently discovered and previously unpublished documents and interviews with all remaining living participants, this is a tale that surpasses fiction: part thriller, part detective story, all true.*

The Holy Roman Empire regalia were normally kept in Nuremberg, and a smaller part in Aachen. However, with the advance of the French in the French Revolutionary Wars, they were taken away in 1796 and brought to Vienna for safety. They have remained in the Schatzkammer ever since, even after the dissolution of the Holy Roman Empire in 1806. The cities of Aachen and Nuremberg tried many times, unsuccessfully, to reclaim the regalia. The regalia briefly left Vienna after the so-called "Anschluss", when Hitler had them sent to Nuremberg in 1938. After the war, in an adventurous story, they were found by American troops in a bunker and eventually returned in 1946.

The regalia are made up of many pieces, some of which are more than a thousand years old. It is one of the most important and complete collections of medieval royal regalia. Some of the most important items are listed below:

Imperial Holy Bible
St. Stephen's Purse
Sword of Charlemagne
Imperial Crown
Imperial Cross
Holy Lance
Imperial Sword
Imperial Orb
Coronation Mantle
Ceremonial Sword
Imperial Sceptre
Vestments
Reliquaries

Josephine Baker's Banana Dance: <http://youtu.be/wmw5eGh888Y>

Who hasn't wondered why Hitler had such a strong yearning for these objects whilst patently being anti-established church (raping of nuns, destruction of churches). I won't spoil anything except to say Christ on the Cross was within 1st Reich and Hitler was squirreling away stuff for the formation of the 4th Reich where he would get to swan around in capes, crowns and highly dodgy fascist architecture, lording it over a beaten humanity. Proof is there that the Catholic Church was aware and helped in many ways, not least by facilitating the members of Odessa to escape. *shudder*

Documentary on 4th Reich: <http://youtu.be/Yy0KHBXh1jo>

Still can't get my head around how one person would wish to destroy (and in some cases nearly succeeded) so much of the population of the only known inhabited planet in the whole universe just to play dress up to a ferociously diminished audience.

The nub right there.

Ashley says

I think the author tries too hard to make this a story. It's okay if you're going to write most of it that way, but when he starts speculating entire chapters of conversations based on what certain people may or may not have said because they once said something similar to another person a couple decades later...that's not history. Plus some of the facts seem off. For example. I think it is page 79 the author says Jesus was killed the Friday before Passover? It was a Friday, but it was the actual day of Passover (Jewish days being counted what would to us be sundown Thursday to sundown Friday).

Stephen says

I love this book. It entails the race to recover some of the stolen art and symbols of leadership stolen by the Nazis during World War II. The author even goes into why these symbols were important as they symbolized the power of the Holy Roman Emperors and their dynasty.

Kyle says

Kyle: All right, let's see. Milk, eggs. Cookies. More cook- whoa, am I having a flashback?

[The supermarket is washed away by visual wavy lines, resettling into the remains of what appears to be a café in a war-ravaged city.]

Kyle: If this is happening because Neil Gaiman is attempting to capitalize on another obscure mythical being, so help me –

Sidney: Hello. Or should I say, guten tag?

Kyle: Oh! Sidney. What's going on? Where are we?

[He sits and begins munching on leftover cookies on the table.]

Sidney: We are in Germany, but the when is important as well. It is, in fact, the summer of 1945.

Kyle: I am not a huge fan of the mixing of this place with that year, either in reality or in weird literary daydreams.

Sidney: Never fear, we are perfectly safe. You are just here as a byproduct of my uncanny ability to make factual surroundings seem intense and alive.

Kyle: Well, it's not the war that I'm afraid of. It's just that...well, how do I say this? Books about American heroes in this period seem to either read like textbooks or ridiculous propaganda. How in the world did you manage to find a middle ground, especially in a story about the theft of art and relics?

Sidney: I don't know what you're talking about. I simply wrote what was there.

Kyle: Yeah, but you wrote it so well! Over and over, I kept thinking, “I can’t believe I am so involved in the non-fiction story about recovering lost relics.” There were so many opportunities for this work to utterly derail into minutia about history or unrelenting apologizing for one of the worst atrocities known to mankind, but you really stuck to your target beautifully.

Sidney: As you may read about me on my page or even on the blog I created for this work, history is important to keep accurately. The story was just too important to let it be bogged down with anything else. I tried to keep things professional, as you might notice. If nothing else, my book jacket photo ought to have told you that.

Kyle: It did, and more. I felt like I was right in the middle of Lt. Horn’s investigation, picking up clues and trying to figure it out along with him. Really, the fascinating thing was knowing what I’ve learned in history and comparing it to what was going on – this really was a completely different take on what followed the war than I’ve seen before. Where I felt you really felt like you went the extra mile was in characterization. I know you had to pull it all from correspondence, interviews, and reports. It was a ton of work, I’m sure, but you built each person into incredibly complex people, with wants and problems – completely more interesting than any fictional soldier I’ve ever read. Many times, I’d think, “Wow, it’s weird that he’d include that,” about a revelation of a character, but then later, I’d be grateful for how well I could understand his motives.

Sidney: Peter Graves can eat his heart out. What you see in movies and TV isn’t always accurate. These were real people, and had more to them than just a 30-second backstory about a wife waiting at home and such and oh yes, perhaps they have a drinking problem, or maybe play the trombone or something.

Kyle: And their interactions were ridiculously interesting. It is pretty obvious that you know your way around a scene, and have worked with screenwriters in the past. I know you had to reconstruct a lot from reports, but even those notes brought so much life to the story I couldn’t believe it. In fact, my only gripe with the storytelling came at the few points where it seemed like the reports contained a really compelling narrative and you knew it, and I knew it, but there was just no way to really bring it together except for having been there.

Sidney: There were definitely points that could’ve been strengthened by being a little more creative with the story, but my duty here was to fact. There’s been enough speculation about these things already.

Kyle: I totally agree. I love that this story had such a great amount of intrigue and respect for the artifacts Horn was after, and even with the huge amount of conjecture and rather dark theory going around about the people involved, there was so much that can be backed up with documentation and actual observation. Mike Mignola isn’t entirely making it all up?

Sidney: Mike Mignola? Was he a part of the Axis?

Kyle: Er, nevermind. Either way, the story is really well told. It was a fantastic journey of an unsung hero of both the Allied and German cultures with all the mystery and adventure of the first and third Indiana Jones movies.

Sidney: Heh, Jones wishes his adventures were this interesting. Every bar story he has is just “Oh, I saved a long lost artifact with some implausible whip-cracking and ridiculous banter with a female and rescued my hat/female and –“

Kyle: Wait, you mean he’s real?

Sidney: Oh! Of course not. [under his breath] Not according to any reports you’ve read, anyway.

Kyle: ...Right. So, my only other problem is this cover. Is there anything you could've done to keep people from staring at me in the library for holding a book covered in giant bold type reading "Hitler" and "Holy Relics," separated by a swastika?

Sidney: Oh and look at the time, I must be off. Something..., uh, historic is happening in... Russia. Yes. Russia.

[Sidney makes his exit, and visual wavy lines again reveal the supermarket.]

Kyle: Hey! Come back here, Kirkpatrick! I'm not done with you! The least you could do is leave me some of those fictional cookies!

Prongs says

Research is for *BACK*story. Kirkpatrick takes a fascinating subject and turns it into thick boring paragraphs of information without almost any dialogue. 99% of speech in this book is told by narration. What is the point of making a novel out of this research if you have no events and no rythm ? This is a long article trying to have plot, only trying in the laziest possible way. You can *feel* the documentation, and I do not mean that as a compliment. The book feels way too much like research itself, not research backing good story. You can't engage in a story when the book is organised by theme instead of events. At some point, we have 3 chapters in a row of the same person "talking" (more like a description of someone talking) with no interruption. Example: Troche takes Horn there, 20 pages description about how he explains this. New chapter. Troche takes Horn two doors further. 15 pages description about how he explains that, and so on...

The interrogations which usually provide the investigation thrill, are clumsy and unrealistic. This overuse of narration gives a definitive feel to any information we get, even from an unreliable protagonist, stripping the statements, testimony changes and major revelations of their weight. In the end, we just don't care.

Backcover says:

"It's like Da Vinci Code, except everything is true"

Except without skill. Dan Brown is far from being a great author, but he knows how to pull off an exciting chapter. This would have made a great History magazine. Instead, it is an awfully flawed novel. There is no emotion, no life. Horn is barely alive in this. When he enters the Nuremberg vault, he seriously describes the way the floor is made BEFORE the treasures lying on it. This should have been a powerful moment for the art lover and connoisseur he is, but nothing. Just facts and descriptions. Same thing when he finally finds the relics.

Worst of all are the moments when the author suddenly wakes up and attempts to describe how Horn feels. I don't want to sit through terrible prose of made up emotions running through a caracter who does not speak. It is not enough made up to not feel made up. The very rare passages where the author had to fill the blanks are way too obvious and awkward. It results in dialogs lacking credibility and characterisation.

We do learn a lot and it is unquestionably a captivating subject. So this had to be really poorly executed to feel so much like work. Besides, such heavy research is occasionally stained with outrageous mistakes like:

"Zeus, the god of war"

Are you serious ?!

Or:

" It was as if the Knights of the Round Table had returned to Avalon, and King Arthur, or his evil twin, accompanied by Merlin— which was how Himmler must have viewed himself- strode into Camelot wearing Excalibur"

The knights should return *from* Avalon *to* Camelot. Avalon is the island where Arthur is taken when he dies. The fact that the author places Camelot on it makes me wonder about similar shortcuts I may have failed to pick up throughout the book and assimilated as truth.

Please give Walter Horn to a competent author.

Debra says

What an amazing ride through the ending of World War II and the search for the missing Holy Roman Empires crown jewels. Horne, the man put in charge of the 3 week search, is made incredibly human and likable. The incidents revealed along the way to the recovery of the items are jaw-dropping and scary. I found myself re-reading the information because I could not bring myself to believe the intricacies of the plots behind the Nazi facade. Now I know that this empire was trying to be world rulers and I know that this was a cultish regime steeped in weird religion, but I never knew the depth of it all. In light of today's ongoing world stories, I can only realize we are so much like the people during the rise of Hitler, ignorant of the truth of the situation.

Matthew Hawout says

A fun and informative historical thriller that dives into the strange occult origins of National Socialism.
