

It is a tall claim to make, and one unsupported by any evidence. Though the US Army did investigate claims of alleged mistreatment of German guards at Dachau, there are no reports or references to an incident in which 346 SS men were shot at the coal yard wall. Buechner himself, in testimony given during that 1945 investigation, never referred to this incident. He only wrote about it in 1986 in his self-published book. In his book, "The Day the Thunderbird Cried", David L. Israel wrote: "Buechner's inaccuracies and arbitrary use of figures in citing the untrue story about the total liquidation of all SS troops found in Dachau was eagerly accepted by Revisionist organizations and exploited to meet their own distorted stories of Dachau. However, in a report published by the Dachau International Committee it is clearly stated that 160 German prisoners were utilized in cleaning up the camp in the days following liberation."

Col. Howard Buechner



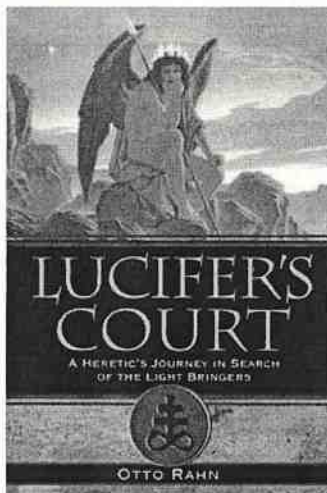
So Buechner's biography of Rahn and his role within the SS is not only controversial, but also inaccurate. Furthermore, whether or not Rahn was sent to France on an SS mission only takes away from what we know about his exploits there. For example, in March 1932 a controversy broke out in a local newspaper, "La Depeche", which published articles about the activities of a group of Polaires that were excavating in Montségur. Otto Rahn was mentioned – though his name twice misspelled, once as Rams, once as Rahu. It was said that he was the leader of this group, and his German nationality was underlined, as there was still much anti-German sentiment amongst the French population because of the First World War. Gadal wrote a letter to the paper in Rahn's defence, saying that his visit had nothing to do with the Polaires, and Rahn himself subsequently wrote in that his stay in France was totally legitimate, that he had never heard of the Polaires before coming to the Ariège, and that he was simply a writer interested in the Cathars. Indeed, Rahn became involved with the Polaires, and several authors have made controversy out of a molehill. Still, the Polaires were an interesting group, who were indeed doing excavations at Montségur, not for the Grail, but for "the Oracle", which they believed would enable communication with Agartha, a mythical place in the Tibetan Himalayas, and the "Masters of the World" that had apparently taken up residence there. We can only wonder whether Schäfer's mission had anything to do with them.

The Polaires believed that the Pog of Montségur was specifically important because the Pyrenean mountain acted as a type of "relay mountain" for messages that were to be communicated to – if not from – the Agartha Masters in their Himalayan stronghold.

Though Rahn was officially not a member of the Polaires, that in itself is a technicality: he definitely knew everyone involved. It had been Maurice Magre who had encouraged Rahn, at that time researching at the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris, to leave the books behind and do work on the ground. Magre was a member of the Polaires and he introduced Rahn to the likes of Countess Pujol-Murat, who not only financed the excavations, but who was claimed to be the incarnation of Esclarmonde de Foix, one of the last Cathar heretics that had taken refuge in Montségur. Rahn had a deep Platonic friendship with her – Rahn known to have been gay. In this circle was also Arthur Caussou, who told Rahn that Esclarmonde de Foix had been none other than the character Repanse de Joie, the Grail Maiden of the Grail novels. And it is here that the backbone of his 1933 book was born, and the belief that the Grail was physically real.

Much of the information about Rahn's personal life comes from Paul Ladame, a trusted friend of Rahn. Though Ladame only knew Rahn while the latter was in France, Ladame unexpectedly crossed his friend in a Berlin street during the 1936 Olympic Games, but was surprised to see him in a black SS uniform. Ladame said Rahn was ill at ease to be seen like that, but claimed he had received "a mysterious telegram while he was in Paris. As usual, he was depressed because he was having difficulties finding backers for a French translation of Crusade. He was so poor that he had to pawn his watch to buy bread. The person who wrote the telegram did not give his name, but offered him 1000 Reichsmarks per month to write a sequel to the book." After the money was transferred, Rahn was told to return to Germany, 7, Prinz Albrechtstrasse, in Berlin. The man who welcomed him there was Heinrich Himmler himself, who invited him to join the SS as a civilian historian and archaeologist. Rahn told Ladame: "What was I supposed to do? Turn him down?" Thus, Rahn became the SS expert on the Grail and, it seems, a friend of Himmler.

Rahn has often been depicted as a vagabond, largely because he indeed seemed unable to work with money. Still, his promotion to the inner circle of the SS – working closely for Himmler – should not have come as a total surprise. In 1933, following the publication of his book, Rahn was making new friends in the broadcasting world. These included Sven Schacht, son of bank-president Hjalmar Schacht, a man who was up close and personal with the Nazi elite.



Rahn's second book, "Lucifer's Court, a Journey to Europe's Good Spirits" [Luzifers Hofgesind, eine Reise zu den guten Geistern Europas] was published in 1937. The book is largely a travel diary – including his participation in an SS expedition to Iceland, no doubt in search of evidence for "Thule" – and is largely in the same line as his Grail book. This time, rather than identify Lucifer with the Devil, he identifies him with the Pyrenean Abellio or the Greek God Apollo – all light bearers. Some believe that Rahn purely wrote the book for the money and that it was largely a critique of the Nazi party – which he may have held to be the true court of the devil. There is evidence that some amendments to the manuscript were made, specifically anti-Jewish sentiments, to make it fit into the Nazi party line.

Though Rahn had made it to the higher ranks of the Nazi elite, it is not altogether clear what happened next. Some claim that after the publication of the book, there was a frank exchange of words with Himmler, resulting in Rahn's guard duty at Dachau concentration camp as a penalty for this disobedience. Others merely see his military service at the Dachau in late 1937 as something every SS officer had to do, and Rahn was no different. Indeed, it is likely that this posting was postponed as long as possible, so that Rahn could finish the book. Furthermore, after his service at Dachau ended, he was granted leave to devote himself totally to his writing. But soon after, in February 1939, he resigned from the SS, dying shortly afterwards on March 13, 1939 on the mountains near Kufstein. The precise details of his death are unknown and have been the subject of immense speculation. Some speak of an accident, others of murder, though the conclusion that it was suicide is nevertheless the most likely.

But Rahn would remain a man of mystery even in death. French author Christian Bernadac believes his death was merely part of a larger Nazi ploy, with Rahn changing his name to Rudolph Rahn, who died in 1975. As there are photographs of both men, their difference in appearance is explained by Rahn

having received extensive cosmetic surgery. However, that Rahn died in 1939 is the most likely option; if he was alive, why would Himmler, in 1940, have had to resort to Rahn's book while visiting the various Cathar strongholds in the Pyrenees – if the author himself was still alive?

So what is the appeal of Rahn? Today, it is largely the question whether the Nazis were purely monsters, or whether they were obsessed with sacred relics and went to any lengths in order to attain them.

It is definitely a fact that in his time, Rahn popularised the notion that the characters described by Wolfram von Eschenbach in his Grail account were not fictional, but were fictionalised: that, in origin, they were Albigensian Cathars, and that Montségur was the Grail Castle.

Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke in "The Occult Roots of Nazism. Secret Aryan cults and their influence on Nazi ideology" underlines that Rahn, Himmler and Weisthor, who was labelled Himmler's Rasputin, were like-minded individuals, working closely together. He observed: "This common ground concerns the search for a lost Germanic tradition, supposedly obscured or destroyed by the Catholic Church and other hostile interests. In September 1935 Rahn wrote excitedly to Weisthor about the places he was visiting in his hunt for grail traditions in Germany, asking complete confidence in the matter with the exception of Himmler. The attempt to discover such a tradition indicates the passion shared by Rahn, Weisthor and Himmler alike. All three men believed a secret key to ancient pagan culture could be found in the present."

Heinrich Himmler



But in the final analysis, Rahn was an author who became caught up in a national obsession, meeting very important and influential people, but equally realising absolute power corrupts absolutely, and in