

the case of Nazi Germany, killed without remorse and without reason. Though Dachau in 1939 was not yet the horrendous concentration camp the Americans would discover in 1944, it was nevertheless apparent for any intelligent person what was happening and would happen. It is therefore likely that unable to extract himself from the cocktail he had created, he knew that suicide was the only way out. And for Nigel Graddon, the little evidence available about Rahn's death is that his suicide could indeed have been performed conform to how it was believed Cathars had committed suicide. Just like the Cathars preferred suicide over abandoning their faith and purity at the fall of Montségur, so, it seems, Rahn preferred his own spiritual purity rather than aide a regime that aimed for racial purity.



Rahn was dead, but a myth was born, both about himself, and about the quest for a physical Grail. We know Himmler came to the Pyrenees convinced that it was there. In 1943, a group of German geologists, historians and ethnologists camped on Montségur's summit and made searches in the vicinity of the Gorge de la Frau. The excavation lasted until November 1943 and resumed in the spring of 1944. What or if they found something is unknown, and as such the subject of intense speculation. Buechner and others, like Johannes and Peter Fiebag in "The Discovery of the Grail" [Die Entdeckung des Grails], claim that a group of people around Himmler in the last days of the war realised it was now or never if they wanted to recover the Grail from Montségur. They claim that Otto Skorzeny was identified as the expedition leader. If such a mission was ever going to be organised, Skorzeny would indeed have been the ideal candidate. In July 1943, he was personally selected by Hitler from among six German Air Force (Luftwaffe) and German Army (Wehrmacht Heer) special agents to locate and free the Italian dictator Benito Mussolini, who had been overthrown and imprisoned by the Italian government. On September 12, Skorzeny organised a daring glider-based assault on the Campo Imperatore Hotel at Gran Sasso, where Mussolini was kept. He was rescued without firing a single bullet and Skorzeny escorted him back to Rome.



In his memoirs, Skorzeny makes no mention of any expedition to the Pyrenees, though of course, the question is whether one should expect to see such a mention. On the one hand, Skorzeny had little time for Himmler, who used to irritate him during meetings and official dinners. On the other hand, Skorzeny was married to Schacht's daughter, and noting that Rahn was a family friend of the Schacht's, perhaps Skorzeny was willing to lead such an expedition because of these family ties? But by 1944, Germany knew it would loose the war and it was Skorzeny who almost single-handedly had to delay the surrender, so that he had more time to secure the Nazi money for post-war purposes and prepare the so-called Ratlines, which would allow the Nazi leaders to escape to foreign and safe shores. Against this background, Skorzeny would likely have foregone any expedition to retrieve the Grail, knowing it was in a secure location in France already. Instead, he would likely have preferred to use his network after the war, which would not only provide him with a low-profile, local team of specialists, but also with plenty of time to do what he wanted to do. However, there is no evidence he ever did anything. Instead, on March 16, 1944, Montségur residents gathered on the Pog to commemorate the 700th anniversary of the massacre of Montségur, in which hundreds Cathars preferred to burn at the stake rather than renounce their Cathar faith. Eyewitnesses state that as noon was approaching, a German Fieseler Storch arrived overhead and put on an impressive aerial display, carving an enormous Celtic cross into the sky, before flying off towards Toulouse. The onlookers bared their heads in respect. Later, authors claimed that the pilot was Skorzeny, or even Rahn – in his new identity – but it is known neither man was in the right location at this time in order to pull of this feat. Instead, it is perhaps best to conclude that the pilot had become exposed to Rahn's literature and while stationed in France, would have decided to commemorate Catharism in his own special way. If Rahn had still been alive, he would no doubt have appreciated the gesture.

This article appeared in New Dawn, Volume 10, Number 9 (July - August 2008).

