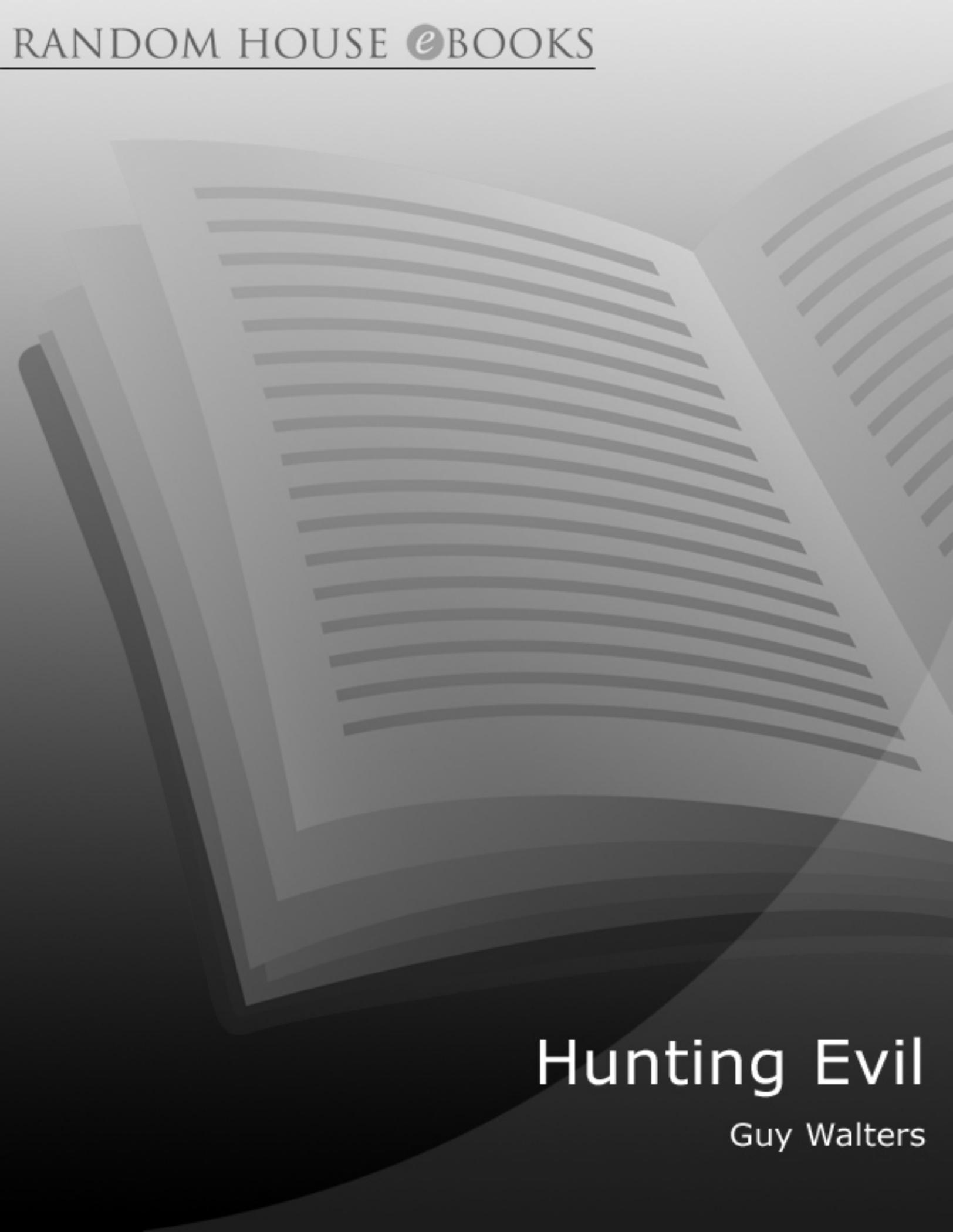


RANDOM HOUSE  BOOKS

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# Hunting Evil

Guy Walters

## About the Book

At the end of the Second World War some of the highest ranking members of the Nazi party fled from the ruins of the Third Reich. Many are names that have resonated deeply in twentieth-century history - Adolf Eichmann, Josef Mengele, Franz Stangl and Klaus Barbie - not just for the monstrosity of their crimes, but also because of the shadowy nature of their post-war existence.

Guy Walters has travelled the world in pursuit of the real account of how these fugitives escaped, the attempts, sometimes successful, to bring them to justice, and what really happened to those that got away.

He has interviewed Nazi hunters and Nazis alike, travelled the escape routes himself, and pored through archives in Germany, Britain, the United States, Austria, and Italy to bring this remarkable period of our recent history to dramatic and vivid life.

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# HUNTING EVIL

How the Nazi War Criminals Escaped and  
the Hunt to Bring Them to Justice

Guy Walters

*This book is for my brother,*

DOMINIC WALTERS

*Mundus vult decipi*

Petronius

# Preface

IF BOOKS TURNED out exactly the way in which authors expected, writing would be an unsatisfying process indeed. When I started this project three years ago, my knowledge of the subject matter was conventional: the Nazis escaped with the help of a network called Odessa, they ended up living in vast *estancias* in Latin American jungles, and were stalked by fearless and redoubtable Nazi hunters such as Simon Wiesenthal. The subject was clearly engaging and the huge interest shown in my book proposal confirmed my belief that the topic required an account that was both compelling and historically rigorous. It was only when I started my in-depth research that I realized that so much of what I held to be true was simply not so. For a while, I wanted to change the title to *Hunting Evil (Or Not)*, but I never dared suggest it to my editor for fear that he would think I had sold him a pup. Although much of what I have learned contradicts what I knew, there is no doubt that the book is the better for it, and the constant process of discovery has maintained my excitement over what has been a long haul, both temporally and topographically.

As is so common, I have found the truth to be far more satisfying than what has been served up by junk historians in print and online. I have also found the truth to be utterly scandalous, and on numerous occasions I have felt genuine anger at what I have discovered. I make no apology for the occasions at which that emotion shines through, because it was certainly new to me that the British employed a senior officer in one of the *Einsatzgruppen* as an MI6 agent. It

was also disturbing to discover that Simon Wiesenthal, for so long held to be some sort of secular saint, fabricated not only his role in the Eichmann hunt, but also countless other episodes in his life. I was also annoyed by the lack of political will for hunting Nazi criminals, many of whom could have easily been brought to justice had governments allocated even comparatively meagre resources to their pursuit. Some might suggest that as well as being angry I sometimes display retrospective wisdom, but once again, I make no apology. I certainly do my best to place any decisions made within their context, but where I judge those decisions to have been incorrect, I do not shy from condemnation. One of the privileges of writing history - and surely one of its purposes - is to make such judgements. Of course, the conclusions I reach are open to question and scrutiny, but I believe they are the correct ones based on the evidence available to me. I positively encourage correspondence, and interested readers can contribute their thoughts to the forum pages on [huntingevil.com](http://huntingevil.com), which also contains various features such as animated maps and films that are intended to complement these printed pages.

Unlike a website, a book does not of course have an almost endless capacity, and I have had to be ruthless in my selection of material. With potentially tens of thousands of escapees to write about, it would have been impossible to capture the whole story of how the Nazis fled and how they were tracked down (or not). Instead, I have presented the stories of a handful of criminals whose experiences are representative of the many. That these individuals - who include Josef Mengele, Adolf Eichmann, Franz Stangl - are well known will I hope serve to increase the readability of what follows. The other group of characters includes the hunters, and here I had a much easier time when it came to casting. The figure of Simon Wiesenthal was unavoidable, and it is he upon whom much of my focus is trained. Some

may feel that I have been overly harsh on the man, and that I have run a professional danger in seemingly allying myself with a vile host of neo-Nazis, Revisionists, Holocaust deniers, anti-Semites and other such nasty cranks. I should stress that I belong firmly outside any of these squalid camps, and it is my intention to wrestle criticism of Wiesenthal away from their clutches. As well as the hunters and hunted, I also write about the helpers, who include figures such as Juan Perón and Catholic priests such as Alois Hudal and Krunoslav Draganović. Thousands of people helped Nazis escape, but, once again, I have had to ration myself. I have nevertheless allowed myself the luxury of recounting the comic story of the British fascist and quondam camel specialist Arnold Leese, which would surely make the stuff of a comic film or play. My final group of characters is that of the 'hired': those criminals whom the Allies, including the Soviet Union, exploited as intelligence assets. Shockingly, there were many for me to choose from, and although the story of Barbie can stand on its own, I felt it important to enrich this aspect by revealing a host of other criminals who were used. I am more forgiving than some of the use of such criminals, and I have restrained myself from making naive and simplistic moral judgements, but at times it has been hard not to bang my head against the screen out of sheer frustration at the cynicism displayed by those who employed mass murderers.

I am aware that some may be disappointed at what I have omitted. Readers with more legalistic minds than mine might wish for more material on topics such as due process, statutes of limitations, legislation and trials, but I have reckoned them to be outside my remit. I have also shied away from writing about more recent cases, which, although important, involve figures who are seemingly insignificant compared to those such as Eichmann. Some of these cases - especially that of John Demjanjuk - are also

ongoing, and I felt it prudent not to dwell on subjects which have not yet been resolved. Although I regret these omissions, I am not sorry to let down the lovers of conspiracy theory. There have been too many books about this topic that make the most outrageous claims - especially about 'Odessa' and the direct involvement of Pius XII in engineering escapes - and I have refrained from entertaining such claims. My rule of thumb in preparing this book was that every fact I included had to be defensible in a court of law, which was a frustratingly high, but necessary, standard to maintain. However, conspiracy theorists are not so rigorous, and as a result are able to present material that is sensational and back it up with little more than a knowing tap against the nose. Conspiracy theorists rely on an absence of documentation to 'prove' their cases, whereas I feel that the duty of the conscientious historian is to draw only on solid evidence. Naturally, I have included conjecture of my own, but this is clearly flagged as such, despite there being an enormous temptation to claim truthfulness in the interests of commercialism. Even without the more outlandish theories, there is more than enough within these pages to make the general reader as surprised as I was when I discovered the true nature of Nazi hunting and its personalities.

Some may be deterred by the vast quantity of footnotes, but I suggest that these need be consulted only by the more academic reader. Those who peruse them will notice that I am particularly indebted to a number of other researchers and writers, and I fully acknowledge the excellent work of - in alphabetical order - Tom Bower, David Cesarani, Uki Goñi, Ernst Klee, Holger M. Meding, Gerald L. Posner and John Ware, Matteo Sanfilippo, Heinz Schneppen, Matthias Schröder, Gitta Sereny and Gerald Steinacher. At times I diverge from the conclusions they reach, but all of their works are invaluable for anybody who wishes to dig further. This book, however, is far from being a mere synthesis of

secondary sources, and I am also grateful to the staffs of the archives I have used in the United Kingdom and the United States.

I am also particularly grateful to my interviewees, who included both Nazi and Nazi hunter alike. Their names are listed in the bibliography, but I would especially wish to thank Eli M. Rosenbaum, the Director of the Office of Special Investigations, who has given me a great deal of time and corresponded regularly and at length. During the course of my research, I have noticed that the world of Nazi hunting can be as political as any other, and I have no doubt that there are some who will argue that in some respects my alignment with Rosenbaum is perhaps too close. For what it is worth, I happen to think that in many respects he is right, and the evidence tends to support his claims.

I have received assistance from numerous people in a number of countries. In Argentina and Paraguay, I was fortunate to have Tim Phillips and his wife Victoria as my guides and hosts. Matt Chesterton, Harry Hastings, Oliver Balch and Lilian Ruiz were also of great help in Buenos Aires and Asunción. In the United States, George Pendle and Charlotte Taylor were kind to once more let me stay in their Manhattan apartment. In that same city, Shelley M. Lightburn graciously guided me through the tortuous process of accessing the UNWCC archives, and Justin McKenzie Smith and Sara Yearsley at the UK Mission to the UN were instrumental in helping my application go through smoothly. In the Ukraine, Professor Yuriy Rashkevych and Natalya Vovk were instrumental in establishing the nature of Simon Wiesenthal's academic record, as was Magdalena Tayerlová in Prague. In Austria, I drew on the resourcefulness of journalists Christian May and Michael Leidig, without whom I would have floundered. In Rome, the incomparable Dr Johan Ickx kindly shepherded me through the Hudal archive, which proved to be a goldmine,

and my friend and former co-editor James Owen and his wife Marialuisa were kind and accommodating hosts.

In addition, I would also like to thank the following in alphabetical order for their expertise, support and in some cases linguistic ability: Simon Andreae, Tobyn Andreae, the late Bill Bemister, Peter Bennett, Michael Burleigh, Shaun Byrne at Lloyds TSB, Mike Constandy of Westmoreland Research, Debra Conway, Charles Cumming, James Delingpole, Andrew and Samantha de Mello, Marc Dierikx, Roger and Sandra Downton, Ute Harding, Lucy Hawking, Jason Hazeley and Sue Knowles, Sarah Helm, Nicholas Hodge, James Holland, Johan Ickx, Tobias Jones, Mary Kenny, Robert D. Leighninger Jr, Dan Mutadich, James Owen, Stephen Plotkin at the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library, Marta Urbańska, Belinda Venning, Richard and Venetia Venning, Dirk Verhofstadt, Martin and Angela Walters, Adrian Weale, Ed West, Julia Weston, Neil Wigan, Tory Wilks.

My editors, Simon Thorogood at Transworld and Charlie Conrad at Random House, deserve special mention for their patience and wisdom. I am extremely grateful they have allowed this project to stretch on for far longer than they - or I - had anticipated. My agents, Tif Loehnis in London and Luke Janklow in New York, are my twin pillars who have supported me now for almost a decade, and I am enormously appreciative of the efforts they have made to enable me to continue to live by the pen. Claire Dippel, Tim Glister, Kirsty Gordon, Rebecca Folland, Claire Paterson, Lucie Whitehouse and all other Janklovians are deserving of my utmost respect. Above all, Annabel, William and Alice are the ones who have given me the most. I can only hope that what follows does something to repay them for all the unhealthy number of hours their husband and father spent in his shed full of swastika-festooned books.

Guy Walters

Broad Chalke  
May 2009

# Chapter One

## ‘The air became cleaner’

ON 6 MAY 1945, two middle-ranking SS officers stood on a small road bridge in the Austrian Alpine resort of Altaussee. Below them raced a clear mountain stream, and above loomed the giant pale-grey limestone of the Loser plateau. Nearby stood several wooden houses and cottages, whose *gemütlich* interiors are designed for late-night schnapps in front of fires after exhausting mountain hikes or invigorating swims in the therapeutic waters of the lake. However, neither man would have had his mind on such pleasant activities. Instead, they were discussing their options now that the American tanks were just a few miles away. As SS officers, neither relished the prospect of Allied captivity, yet both had different ideas of their next moves.

The younger man, an *SS-Sturmbannführer* - the equivalent of a major in the German army - intended to stay. A member of the Nazi party since he was sixteen, the thirty-year-old Dr Wilhelm Höttl had spent his war working for the *Sicherheitsdienst* or SD, the SS intelligence service, and had served in Vienna, Berlin and Budapest. Although his career was meteoric, he was not without his detractors. One of his superiors had described him as ‘the typical troublesome Viennese - a liar, a toady, a schemer, and a pronounced operator’.<sup>1</sup> Such qualities are arguably useful for intelligence work, and it was these that Höttl intended to draw on. With his experience of waging a secret war against communist cells, he reckoned that he might be of

use to the Americans, and instead of treating him as a war criminal, they might even regard him as an asset.

Höttl's hopes were far from vain. Since February, he had been in contact with the American Office of Strategic Services (OSS), the forerunner to the CIA, in an attempt to broker a separate peace deal for his native Austria. The putative deal was codenamed 'Herzog', and was the formulation of Höttl's boss, SS-Obergruppenführer (General) Ernst Kaltenbrunner, himself an Austrian and the head of the Reich Security Main Office (*Reichssicherheitshauptamt* or RSHA).<sup>2</sup> Höttl had made several trips to Switzerland to talk to representatives of Allen Dulles, the OSS station chief in Berne, and he was keen to ingratiate himself with the Americans, offering them information about Axis military preparations for a desperate last stand in the so-called 'Alpine Redoubt', as well as about gold shipments that were to be buried deep in the Austrian mountains.<sup>3</sup> Unfortunately for Höttl, events overtook him, and before he could arrange a meeting between Dulles and Kaltenbrunner, an 'independent' Austria was declared in Russian-occupied Vienna on 27 April. Höttl made a final attempt to reach Switzerland at the beginning of May, but with French troops on the Austro-Swiss border, he was forced to stop when he had reached Liechtenstein and returned to seek refuge in Altaussee.<sup>4</sup> Unbeknown to him, the Americans were indeed making plans for his exploitation. On 21 April, Dulles reported that 'Höttl's record as [an] SD man and collaborator [of] Kaltenbrunner is of course bad, but I believe he desires to save his skin and therefore may be useful'.<sup>5</sup> Another OSS officer agreed, although he advised caution: 'To avoid any accusation that we are working with a Nazi reactionary,' reported Edgeworth Murray Leslie to Dulles, 'I believe that we should keep our contact with him as indirect as possible.'<sup>6</sup>

The other man standing on the bridge that day did not share Höttl's fluid sense of loyalty to the Nazi regime. Nine years older and one rank senior, the *SS-Obersturmbannführer* (lieutenant colonel) was far from interested in peace deals and was convinced that the fight was still worth waging. He told Höttl that his intention was to hide in the mountains with a group of trustworthy young SS men, where he felt his Alpine skills would enable him to survive for years.<sup>7</sup> Höttl would have had no doubt that his superior was sincere, as he had witnessed the depth of his commitment to the evils of Nazism. In fact, the two men had worked together in Hungary after the Germans had occupied that country the previous March. Höttl's job was to run SD counter-espionage operations<sup>8</sup> while his fellow Austrian's brief was to implement the role of the bland-sounding *Referat IV B 4* of the RSHA in the newly occupied territory. The *Obersturmbannführer* was to do his job well and with much zeal, because by June 1944, he had managed to deport some four hundred thousand Jews to be gassed at Birkenau.<sup>9</sup> The older man's name was Adolf Eichmann.

As the two men stood on the bridge, Höttl may have reflected on a meeting the two men had had in Budapest one morning in late August 1944. Höttl had been relaxing in his apartment when Eichmann had entered in a markedly nervous state because of the recent coup in Romania against the pro-Axis leader Ion Antonescu. With the country about to join the Allies, Eichmann was worried that nothing could now stop a Russian advance into Hungary and Austria. 'Eichmann then swallowed several glasses of brandy,' Höttl was to recall, 'one after the other [...] I set a bottle of arak down with a glass, so he could help himself.'<sup>10</sup>

Eichmann, who Höttl noticed was unusually wearing battledress, found little solace in the brandy. Towards the end of the conversation, he stood to say farewell to Höttl,

and added, 'We shall probably never see each other again.' When his subordinate asked him why, Eichmann told him that the Allies knew he was responsible for the deportation of so many Jews, and that they considered him a 'top war criminal'. Höttl then decided to question him as to the extent of the extermination programme. Höttl said:

To my surprise, Eichmann responded to that [...] He said that the number of murdered Jews was a very great Reich secret ... Eichmann told me that, according to his information, some six million Jews had perished until then; four million in extermination camps and the remaining two million through shooting by the Operations Units and other causes such as disease.

Eichmann then indicated that Himmler thought the figure had to be higher, but he was convinced that the total of six million was correct.<sup>11</sup> Although Eichmann was steady on his feet, Höttl cautioned his superior against driving with a bellyful of alcohol. The warning was doubtless ignored, as by many accounts Eichmann was no stranger to the brandy bottle.<sup>12</sup>

Now, just over eight months later, Eichmann appeared to be in a somewhat more redoubtable mood. He told Höttl that he intended to resist, but after many years of stress and spirits, he hardly looked the figure of some mighty Nazi recrudescence. Just 5½ feet tall, the balding Eichmann was also very slight; his face was bony and his cheeks sunken. His face was afflicted by a nervous twitch, and he had an unpleasant and exaggerated laugh. Since he was constantly under the influence of alcohol, much of his courage was probably of the Dutch variety.<sup>13</sup> It was just as well that he was going into the mountains, because his fellow Nazis wanted to have little to do with him. Eichmann's boss,

Kaltenbrunner, was also holed up in Altaussee and he saw his subordinate's presence as baleful.

'Eichmann burst in on us like a Typhoid Mary,' Höttl recalled, 'the personification of all the crimes that were now haunting Kaltenbrunner and his cohorts, the apocalyptic memento of their own sins.' According to Höttl, Kaltenbrunner told Eichmann 'to get the hell out of Altaussee, as fast as he could'.<sup>14</sup>

However, before he left, Eichmann had some personal business to attend to - he had to say goodbye to his family, who were renting his uncle's chalet a few hundred yards down the road at Fischerndorf 8.<sup>15</sup> Eichmann later recalled how in turn he took his wife Vera and three sons into his arms. 'I clung to them with a fervour that is only possible in such circumstances,' he would write. 'The smallest was only three years old. Just three - and I was seeing him for the last time. I knew that the finest gift a German father can bequeath his son is the gift of discipline. And so I beat him.'<sup>16</sup> Dressed in his camouflage uniform and carrying a submachine gun, Eichmann took the young Dieter between his knees and repeatedly struck him with his hand 'in a calm and considered manner'. The reason behind this brutal farewell was to impress upon the boy that he should not go near the edge of the lake, into which he had recently fallen. 'How he howled as my hand rose and fell! But, as it happened, he never fell into the water.'<sup>17</sup> Before he left, the man who had been responsible for the deaths of so many now presented his wife with the means of destroying herself and the children. He handed her four poison capsules and said: 'If the Russians come, you must bite them; if the Americans or the British come, then you needn't.'<sup>18</sup> He kept a capsule for himself too, although, according to Höttl, the fanatical Eichmann was more likely to try to shoot it out if he were cornered.<sup>19</sup>

The *Obersturmbannführer* now headed into the hills to join his team of 'trustworthy' SS men, who were ready for

him at the Blaa-Alm, an inn-cum-hunting lodge hiding in a secluded valley 3 miles north of Altaussee.<sup>20</sup> However, with the American army now so close, Eichmann decided to prune his cadre, and paid off most of his men. With a small group of officers, he then made his way 2 miles northwest to the hamlet of Rettenbach-Alm. Although the party had now descended some 1,000 feet, their new spot was far more secluded.<sup>21</sup> It was at this point that the party realized that no matter how deeply it penetrated into the Alps, it would be far safer if it divested itself of its most toxic constituent: Eichmann himself.

Ironically, the party's misgivings were voiced by a figure whose own toxicity was strong - SS-Obersturmführer Anton Burger, the commandant of Theresienstadt concentration camp from 1943 to 1944, before which he had worked in Auschwitz.<sup>22</sup> 'We've been talking about the situation,' said Burger. 'We mustn't fire on the English or the Americans; the Russians aren't coming here. You're being looked for as a war criminal, not us. If you leave and appoint a different commander, then you do a great service to your comrades.'<sup>23</sup> It was impossible for their leader not to agree, and after a farewell schnapps, Eichmann headed north, accompanied by his adjutant, SS-Obersturmführer Rudolf Jänisch.

Despite Eichmann's fine talk to Höttl of waging his own private war, he and Jänisch must have quickly realized that scurrying around the mountains in their SS uniforms was foolhardy. As a result, the two men decided to adopt new uniforms and even new identities, and so SS-Obersturmbannführer Adolf Eichmann now became the more humble Obergefreiter (Corporal) Bart of the Luftwaffe.<sup>24</sup> The two men hiked through the mountains, and Eichmann would years later recall spotting an abundance of wildlife, including roe-deer, chamois, foxes and hares. He wrote:

These wild animals I knew well from childhood days in the mountains and forests of Upper Austria. Not that I had been a good huntsman. I never found any pleasure in shooting to kill. I think the man who can look through the sights of his rifle into the eyes of a deer and then kill it is a man without a heart in his body. I thanked God that in the war I had not been made the actual instrument of killing anybody.

Such was the magnitude of Eichmann's self-delusion. He would continue to deny his role as an instrument of slaughter for the rest of his life. But for the time being he had his own pelt to save. 'But anyhow, I was the quarry now,' he acknowledged. 'The hunted animal. Unprotected by "out of season" rules.'<sup>25</sup>

Back in Altaussee, the remaining Nazis prepared themselves for the arrival of the Americans. Some, such as the scheming Höttl, had decided to stay, but others, like Eichmann, opted to disappear into the mountains. The most notorious of these was Ernst Kaltenbrunner, the head of the RSHA since January 1943. Established by Himmler in 1939, the RSHA combined all three of the Nazi state's police forces, which included the Gestapo, the Criminal Police, and the SD, for which Höttl worked. The role of the RSHA was to track down and arrest all enemies of the state, before handing them over to the concentration-camp system. As those enemies also included the Jews in Germany and the occupied territories, the RSHA had a definitive role in executing the 'Final Solution'.<sup>26</sup> Thanks to Eichmann's efforts, it was also extraordinarily effective.

Kaltenbrunner, then, was a major criminal, and as Eichmann's boss, arguably a greater one. Towering at 6 feet 7 inches (2.01 metres), the stocky 41-year-old even looked like a criminal, with a pockmarked face, the type of thin mouth that is usually described as cruel, and a scar

that stretched from his left ear down to his mouth. Just being in his presence made many feel uneasy. 'His small, penetrating, brown eyes were unpleasant,' wrote one Nazi, 'they looked at one fixedly, like the eyes of a viper seeking to petrify its prey ... From the first moment [I met him] he made me feel quite sick.'<sup>27</sup> Despite his disturbing physical presence, Kaltenbrunner had the requisite blue-eyed blonde 24-year-old mistress with him in Altaussee.<sup>28</sup> Countess Gisela von Westarp had even born her lover twins, Ursula and Wolfgang, who had been delivered in a cowshed in the village on 12 March.<sup>29</sup>

The Kaltenbrunner-Westarp circle during that May also featured a couple called the Scheidlers. The husband, SS-Obersturmbannführer Arthur Scheidler, was Kaltenbrunner's adjutant. Born in 1911, Scheidler had been educated at business school and had worked for a rail freight firm before he joined the SS in November 1934. One of his earliest jobs was as a guard at Sachsenburg concentration camp, although his acumen with finances was soon noticed, and he became an administrator in the SD's account department in 1935. In 1939 he became an administrative aide to the infamous Reinhard Heydrich, Kaltenbrunner's predecessor as chief of the RSHA. Conscientious and diligent, Scheidler embodied the type of middle-class efficiency that the Nazi apparatus required, and despite doubts about his lack of combat experience, he started to work directly for Kaltenbrunner in November 1943.<sup>30</sup> Scheidler's wife was a vivacious and attractive 33-year-old brunette called Iris. A Viennese by birth, Iris had previously been married to a Dr Rudolf Praxmarer, who was a friend of Kaltenbrunner when they had studied at the University of Graz.<sup>31</sup> The couple separated amicably in July 1943, and Iris became Frau Scheidler the following month. As well as being the mother of two children by Praxmarer, Iris was expecting her first baby with her new husband at the end of June. She combined parenthood with working for

the official Nazi photographer Heinrich Hoffmann, which gave her access to what passed for high society in Nazi Germany, including Eva Braun and Baldur von Schirach, the leader of the Hitler Youth. In short, the Scheidlers were a well-connected couple, and they were at the heart of the Kaltenbrunner clique in Altaussee, a clique made cosier by the fact that Iris's former husband was the SS Chief of Hospitals and military commander of Altaussee.<sup>32</sup> And, just to make the circle that little bit tighter, Iris and Höttl were lovers.<sup>33</sup> The Scheidlers lived at the Villa Hohenlohe, an imposing house in the centre of town, and even today Iris Scheidler is remembered. 'She was tall and very pretty,' recalled one villager, who admitted being somewhat smitten whenever he served her at the post office.<sup>34</sup>

Kaltenbrunner's house in Altaussee was the Villa Kerry, which was situated on the outskirts of town and looked over the lake. Before he fled, like some villain in a pot-boiler, Kaltenbrunner buried his treasure in his garden. According to one estimate, he had shipped to Altaussee 50 kilograms of gold bars, fifty cases containing gold articles, two million US dollars, the same number of Swiss francs, five cases of jewels, and a stamp collection worth five million gold marks.<sup>35</sup> Although it is impossible to be definitive about how much booty Kaltenbrunner had at his personal disposal, there was no doubt he had a lot - too much to bury under his lawn. Instead, he wanted to hide much of the treasure in a mountainside which he would have then had dynamited, stopping not only himself getting his hands on it, but also anybody else. It appears that Arthur Scheidler talked his boss out of this almost childish gesture.<sup>36</sup>

Kaltenbrunner fled the Villa Kerry on 7 May. With him travelled the loyal Scheidler, two SS men, and two hunters, Fritz Moser and Sebastian Raudaschl, who acted as guides. Their destination was a small hunting lodge near Wildensee Alm, a good five-hour hike up to the Loser plateau, where

the snow lay up to 20 to 30 feet thick. The party reached the hut late that night, and had to shovel the snow from the entrance. Eventually, they stumbled into the hut, and collapsed on to some hard straw mattresses while the huntsmen made tea. Like Eichmann, Kaltenbrunner and Scheidler had adopted new identities, with Kaltenbrunner now posing as a senior military doctor called Dr Josef Unterwogen, while Scheidler acted as his colleague. The party could now do little more than sit and listen to their leader speculating about whether the Americans would want to employ him in a fight against the Soviets.<sup>37</sup> To keep their spirits up, the group did have some creature comforts, in the form of champagne, French bonbons and American tax-free cigarettes.

Kaltenbrunner's hoped-for collaborators arrived in Altaussee on 9 May, the day after VE Day. Far from securing the village with overwhelming force, the Americans deployed just five soldiers, one tank and one jeep, all under the command of Major Ralph Pearson of the 80th Infantry Division of Patton's Third Army.<sup>38</sup> Not far behind them were two members of the US 80th Counter-intelligence Corps (CIC): Captain Robert E. Matteson and his interpreter Sydney Bruskin. Matteson was a political-science teacher and a Harvard MA, and his job was to hunt down and arrest ranking Nazis, and to collate as much intelligence as possible. In Altaussee he would have some rich pickings. Among those he arrested were General Erich Alt of the Luftwaffe; Walter Riedel, the construction chief of the V-2 rocket programme at Peenemünde; Gunther Altenburg, the German Minister Plenipotentiary to Greece; William Knothe, General Counsel of the Foreign Office; and Dr Bailent Homan, a minister in the Hungarian puppet government installed by the Nazis. Matteson also paid a visit to the Villa Kerry, and there he found Wilhelm Waneck, the chief of the RSHA's intelligence section for southeastern Europe; Werner Göttsch, an SD official; and

an expectant Wilhelm Höttl. All were arrested and sent off for interrogation.<sup>39</sup>

But Matteson did not have the man he really wanted: Kaltenbrunner. For the next two days, he questioned members of the Kaltenbrunner clique, but no information was forthcoming. In fact, Matteson found that Gisela von Westarp and Iris Scheidler were themselves anxious to discover what had happened to their men. Finally, on the morning of 11 May, Matteson got his break. Kaltenbrunner and his team had been spotted in their hut by an Altaussee forest ranger who was a member of the Austrian resistance movement. Matteson quickly assembled his team, which consisted of four Austrian guides, all of whom had served in the Wehrmacht. However, a nervous Major Pearson insisted that Matteson take along a squad of American GIs, much to the CIC man's reluctance.

'I was afraid their presence might bring on a pitched battle,' Matteson recalled, 'leaving either a dead or an escaped Kaltenbrunner, and my arguments achieved at least the compromise agreement that I would have the authority to use the infantry squad in any manner I saw fit.' Matteson ordered the squad to stick well to the rear, although the GIs themselves were deeply uncomfortable at being led by men who had been their enemy just three days before. 'They wanted it made clear that if they made a single false step, the guides would be dead ducks. After coming through the war alive, they didn't want to get killed with peace and home in sight.' Before the team left that night, Matteson visited Westarp and Scheidler. Despite her condition, Iris insisted that she came along, claiming that if her husband and Kaltenbrunner saw her in the search party, they would be unlikely to start shooting. Perhaps ignorant of the logistics of helping a 34-week-pregnant woman up a snow-covered mountain in the middle of the night, Matteson agreed, but Iris soon thought better of the idea, and decided not to come. However, Matteson did

secure assistance of a more practical nature from Westarp - a letter from her to her lover, urging him to accompany Matteson into the safe custody of the American forces, rather than allow himself to be captured by the Russians, who would probably kill him on sight.

Matteson's motley crew departed at midnight, their leader sporting a pair of lederhosen, an Alpine jacket and hat, and spiked shoes. The plan was for an unarmed Matteson to pose as an innocent passerby when they approached the hut in the early morning. Considering the potential ruthlessness of a man like Kaltenbrunner, there can be no doubting the American's bravery. However, he had to get to the hut first, and progress was slow. 'There were unexpected obstacles,' Matteson would write. 'Trees swept down by snowslides lay across the path, and the footbridge over the Stammern stream had been carried away by the spring floods.' Matters were not helped by the GIs, who were laden with weaponry and lacked spiked mountaineering shoes. Three of them were injured in falls as they wound their way up the narrow trail, and had to be left behind. Nevertheless, by five o'clock in the morning, just as dawn was breaking, Kaltenbrunner's lair came into view. The hut lay at the end of an exposed down-slope, just below the crest of a ridge. Matteson now had two options: should he and his team skirt the ridge, using the overhanging crags as cover, or should they just proceed directly down the slope in full view of the hut? The team was tired, and skirting the ridge would be exhausting work. Wary of his men's condition, Matteson plumped for the latter.

As they approached, it looked as though the hut was deserted. The ranger's information had either been wrong or out of date. When the team got within 300 yards, Matteson left his guides and the GIs behind a small ridge and advanced alone. 'The shutters were tightly closed,' Matteson recalled. 'No smoke was coming from the

chimney; no fresh foot-tracks were visible in the snow.' He soon reached the door and knocked on it - there was no response. He then tried the door, but it was bolted. Just as he was about to give up, Matteson heard a noise coming from the room to his left. He rattled the shutter on the window, determined to get some response. Eventually, the window opened, and a bleary-faced man asked, 'What do you want?' The man was not Kaltenbrunner, but Matteson asked if he could come in, as he was cold. The man refused. The American then thrust Gisela von Westarp's letter forward, which the man read carefully before telling Matteson that he had no idea to whom the letter was referring, and that he himself was just a passerby.

Just then, the man noticed something over Matteson's shoulder. Matteson turned, and saw the four guides advancing down the slope with their rifles. He turned back to see the man making for a revolver next to the bed. 'I retreated to the protection of the cabin's west side,' said Matteson, 'and he slammed the shutter shut. The guides, alarmed, brought the eight infantry boys down in a half-circle around the front of the cabin.' The man opened the front door and stepped on to the porch, but as soon as he saw the advancing troops, he darted back inside, bolting the door behind him. Matteson called out for the occupants to come out and surrender. There was no reply. 'For ten minutes we kept repeating the call, but with no results. Not wishing to start shooting, we went on to the porch and began to knock down the door.'

This had the desired effect, and shortly four men emerged from the hut, their hands above their heads. Although Kaltenbrunner was immediately recognizable, he denied his identity, as did Scheidler. The other two men admitted they were SS guards, and claimed that they had nothing to do with Kaltenbrunner. Inside the hut, Matteson found Kaltenbrunner's identity disc in the ash in the fireplace, but still the giant pockmarked-face Austrian

claimed to be Dr Unterwogen. By eleven thirty that morning, the party had arrived back at Altaussee. News travels quickly in rural communities, and the Salzkammergut that May was no exception, because the group was met by a large crowd on the main street. As Matteson took his charges into custody, Iris and Gisela leaped from the crowd and kissed and hugged their men. As Matteson wryly observed, 'Kaltenbrunner and Scheidler now had to drop their masks.'<sup>40</sup>

It is not known whether Vera Eichmann was among the crowd that Saturday morning. Had she been, she might have wondered whether her husband was going to be the next Nazi to be brought down the mountain.

In the small Bavarian village of Autenried some 220 miles northwest of Altaussee, the wife of another Nazi war criminal was reflecting on the whereabouts of her husband. Just a few days before, on 3 May, Irene Mengele had been listening to the radio when she heard Allied reports outlining the crimes for which her husband had been responsible while serving in Auschwitz.<sup>41</sup> The crimes that SS-Hauptsturmführer (Captain) Dr Josef Mengele had committed were so horrific that Irene must have struggled to believe them. Like many Germans, she probably suspected that the reports were nothing more than victors' propaganda. Even when the Germans were presented with actual photographs of piles of corpses from concentration camps such as Dachau, many dismissed the images as pictures of the victims of the Allied raid on Dresden.<sup>42</sup> But the reports were true, and they were based on the stories of those who had actually survived Mengele. Numerous testimonies gathered by the Allies revealed that a hitherto obscure doctor was actually a sadist of the highest order, and a sadist who inflicted the utmost savageries in the name of science. As one report was to put it years later, Mengele 'became synonymous with the evil of Auschwitz,

the site on which more people were murdered than any other in recorded human history'.<sup>43</sup>

One of these testimonies was given by Katherine Neiger, a 23-year-old Czechoslovak Jew who had survived both Auschwitz and Belsen. Arrested with her parents and her two sisters on 23 October 1941, she and her family were initially sent to a ghetto in Poland before being transferred to Auschwitz. During the same week that Irene Mengele was listening to her radio and on the same day that Höttl and Eichmann were bidding an uneasy farewell on the bridge in Altaussee, Neiger told her story to Major P. Ingress Bell, a British officer serving on the staff of the Judge Advocate General.

At AUSCHWITZ Concentration camp there was a Doctor named MENGELE. When my draft arrived at the camp we were made to parade in front of him. He sorted out the fit ones and all others, old people, sick people, pregnant women, and every child were sent to the gas chamber. The rest after having their hair shaved and being washed were examined naked and further selections were made for the gas chamber. From then on similar examination took place every few days. Any person with visible signs of illness, disease or anything else was sent straight to the gas chamber.<sup>44</sup>

Neiger's father, mother and baby sister were among those who were gassed. She and her remaining sister were transferred to Belsen in August 1944 and survived typhus, malnutrition and physical abuse. But it was Mengele who decided her initial fate, and what Neiger witnessed has now become an enduring image of the Holocaust: that of the darkly handsome young doctor in his white laboratory coat, selecting those who were to live and those who were to be gassed. According to another survivor, Mengele

performed his role with a calm demeanour. 'He had a gentle manner,' remembered Arminio Wachsberger, a Jew from Rome, 'and a quiet poise that almost always lay between the edges of smugness and the height of charm. He whistled a Wagnerian aria as he signalled right or left for prisoners.'<sup>45</sup> Some even spoke of Mengele as a dangerously glamorous figure. One female inmate thought that he had 'star quality' and that he was a 'very charismatic man'.<sup>46</sup> Certainly, the 33-year-old cut a *bella figura* at the selections, with his tight-fitting SS uniform, medals, white gloves, and highly polished boots and cane.<sup>47</sup>

But Mengele was not always so serpentine sleek. He had a vicious temper that would be vented with the mildest provocation. One Auschwitz inmate, Ruth Guttman, once witnessed one of the doctor's vicious outbursts.

... on one occasion I saw DOCTOR MENGELE, who was the Chief Doctor, seize and beat with a stick an elderly woman who had been cutting wood. I do not know the reason for the beating nor do I know what effect it had on the victim, but using a stick he struck the woman very hard some ten or a dozen times, starting on the lower part of the back and finishing with one or two particularly vicious blows on the side of the neck, which might obviously do considerable physical harm.<sup>48</sup>

However, such punishments were comparatively mild compared to what the doctor practised in his laboratory. Mengele's Ph.D. thesis had been an examination of differences between the lower jaw structures of four racial groups, and he had always maintained a keen interest in racial anthropology.<sup>49</sup> In Auschwitz, Mengele was able to pursue his studies unmolested by niceties such as patient welfare, or indeed patient survival. His subjects, especially young twins, were experimented on as if they were little