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THE HIDING PLACE

American troops gathered in a forest. They stared into a **mine**. Its entrance was a big hole. Beyond that, tunnels went into darkness. Explosives were inside. About 400,000 tons were there. These could go off at any time.



A stack of ammunition tins full of bullets

The troops were part of a team. They were in Germany. Their job was to find **ammunition**. Germans were storing weapons. Americans wanted to find these. Then the weapons couldn't be used against the **Allies**.



These troops walked into a long tunnel. Jagged rock lined it. Weapons seemed to be everywhere. Dynamite lay in stacks.

The men went about a quarter of a mile. Then they saw something odd. It was a wall. This was in the side of the tunnel. The **mortar** was fresh. Someone had just made it.

Soldiers tore down the wall. It was five feet thick. Then there was a door. A padlock was on it.





Hundreds of sacks of gold and valuables hidden by Nazis in a German salt mine

The men broke in. What they found made them stare. It was a room. Hundreds of flags filled it. Four **caskets** were under the flags. Each casket had a label. One said Frederick the Great. Another said Paul von Hindenburg. These were famous German leaders.

Looking around, the men saw glints of gold. One soldier gasped. He picked up an object. It was a crown. There was a **scepter** too. A row of swords stood nearby. These were German royal treasures.

More rooms opened off this first one. They held art. There were hundreds of paintings. Many were by famous artists. This art belonged in museums.

The men saw something else. Ribbons were hanging. Each had a small design. It was a swastika. They knew what they had found. This was Adolf Hitler's hidden loot.



U.S. generals Dwight Eisenhower (right) and Omar Bradley (left) inspecting stolen art



Fast Fact

The Bernterode salt mine had about 15 miles of underground tunnels. It was one of many places where Nazis hid stolen art.