

PRISONER OF WAR ON THE RUN



KAPPLER
Herbert

A documentary
Eugenio Costantini
produced by
SD Cinematografica

Herbert Kappler, the notorious SS Lieutenant-Colonel and head of the Gestapo in Rome, who was responsible for numerous war crimes, including the massacre of the Ardeatine Caves, escapes from an Italian military hospital during the night of 14 and 15 August 1977

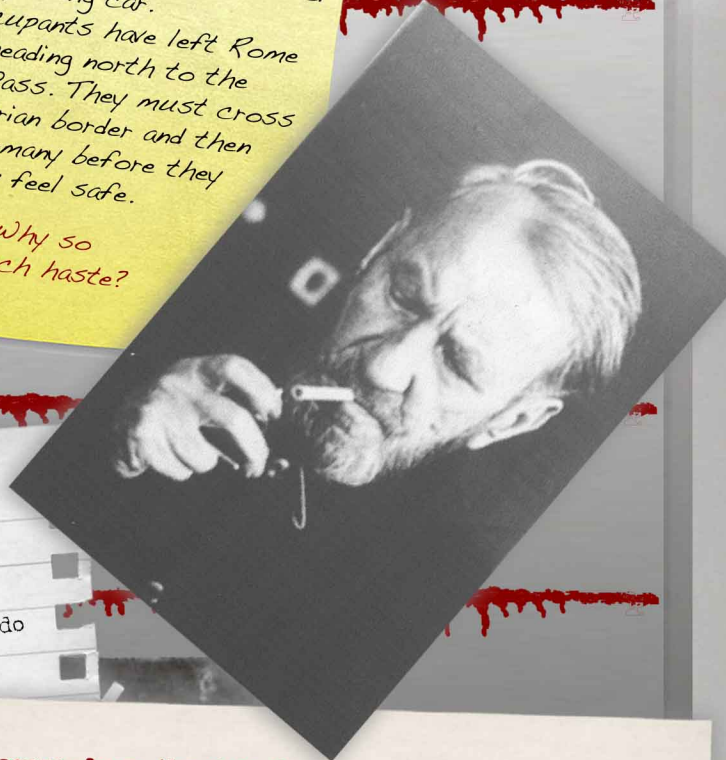


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August 15, 1977
On the Motorway Autostrada del Sole, a speeding car.
It's occupants have left Rome and are heading north to the Brenner Pass. They must cross the Austrian border and then reach Germany before they can finally feel safe.

Why so much haste?



Two people of German nationality are sitting in the car, a man and a woman, husband and wife. The woman is driving; the man is in the back seat. He is a fugitive. He has just escaped from the Celio military hospital in Rome. He is seriously ill and has only a few months to live; cancer is devouring him. All he wants is to die in Germany. And to do so, he must get there before his escape is discovered.

Who is travelling in that car?

The woman behind the wheel is Annelise Wenger, a homoeopathist, and the man in the back seat is **Herbert Kappler**, the notorious SS Lieutenant Colonel and head of the Gestapo in Rome, who was responsible for numerous war crimes, including the massacre of the Ardeatine Caves.

How did he escape from the Celio? In a suitcase, as claimed at first, dropped on a rope, as his wife wrote in her book "I'll Take You Home", or on foot, as he claimed in a recent interview (2007)? In front of our cameras, Eckehard Walther, Annelise's son, who was involved in the escape, tells his truth.

When it was discovered, the escape plunged the Italian government into chaos and embarrassed the German's. The news filled the front pages of leading newspapers throughout Europe and beyond. In Italy, the Minister of Defence, Vito Lattanzio was forced to resign.

Thus concluded the case that, for about thirty years, imprisoned one of the few leaders of Nazi massacres ever convicted in Italy. More than 30 years later, many questions remain unanswered. Now we want to find those answers.

Did someone allow or protect Kappler's escape? His wife has always claimed to have done everything alone. General Ambrogio Viviani, however, argues that it was a joint operation of the Italian and German intelligence services. Vito Lattanzio, the then Defence Minister, claims he was never able to find out who among Andreotti, Moro and Forlani ordered that surveillance be reduced.



1947: Herbert Kappler during the first period of his imprisonment

What is the truth?

With a compelling tale, much of it reading like a thriller, we retrace the events of the escape and then of the military career and long detention of Lieutenant-

Colonel Herbert Kappler. And along with this, the web of secret political and diplomatic agreements that characterised relations between Italy and West Germany after the war and which led, as recent historians - both Italian and German - have revealed, to clouding the investigations and to the release of almost all the prisoners.

So why did Kappler in Italy have only one companion in prison, Walter