



The Nazi Titanic: The Incredible Untold Story of a Doomed Ship in World War II

Robert P. Watson

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Built in 1927, the German ocean liner SS *Cap Arcona* was the greatest ship since the RMS *Titanic* and one of the most celebrated luxury liners in the world. When the Nazis seized control in Germany, she was stripped down for use as a floating barracks and troop transport. Later, during the war, Hitler's minister, Joseph Goebbels, cast her as the "star" in his epic propaganda film about the sinking of the legendary *Titanic*.

Following the film's enormous failure, the German navy used the *Cap Arcona* to transport German soldiers and civilians across the Baltic, away from the Red Army's advance. In the Third Reich's final days, the ill-fated ship was packed with thousands of concentration camp prisoners. Without adequate water, food, or sanitary facilities, the prisoners suffered as they waited for the end of the war. Just days before Germany surrendered, the *Cap Arcona* was mistakenly bombed by the British Royal Air Force, and nearly all of the prisoners were killed in the last major tragedy of the Holocaust and one of history's worst maritime disasters.

Although the British government sealed many documents pertaining to the ship's sinking, Robert P. Watson has unearthed forgotten records, conducted many interviews, and used over 100 sources, including diaries and oral histories, to expose this story. As a result, *The Nazi Titanic* is a riveting and astonishing account of an enigmatic ship that played a devastating role in World War II and the Holocaust.

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The Nazi Titanic: The Incredible Untold Story of a Doomed Ship in World War II Details

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Mary says

I heard the author speak on this topic and wanted to read the book. I rarely get annoyed with bad writing, but this book annoyed me. It is full of information about the last days of WWII in Germany, but there are repetitions and the accounts are poorly organized. Watson badly needed an editor. Watson is an academic-- and this writing would not get a C. It's an interesting and little known story, but how I wish it had been better written.

Darcie Saunier says

I've read many books on WWII, but I never knew of the activities on the Baltic at the close of the war. An amazing and violent end to an already amazing and violent war. This book had a lot of information. So much information that at times I thought it was going off topic, but it then came back around. The final chapters involving the mass evacuations of the concentration camp prisoners to the Baltic was incredible and are a must read for anyone interested in WWII.

Backoff51 says

A great book about the end of WWII and what the Nazis are doing to the prisoners from the concentration camps. The Nazis did not want any of them to be able to tell the world what had been going on in the camps. An old out-of-service German luxury ocean liner was suddenly of importance.

Robert P. Watson is a very talented story teller.

Donna says

I picked up this book due to my ongoing interest in narrative non-fiction about disasters, both natural and man-made. This book tells the story of the Cap Arcona, a German ocean-liner that was considered upper, upper class between the World Wars. What I learned is another tragic story to illustrate the madness, depravity, and horror of Nazism. I didn't need a reminder myself, but, lately, I have come to realize that some do. I'm writing this one week after the new Nazi disaster in Charlottesville, VA.

Shell says

This book tells the fascinating story of the SS Cap Arcona. At the beginning we get a wonderful description of the luxury of the liner and find out which celebrities sailed on her. Then we move on to how she was used during the war as a floating concentration camp and at one point was tidied up to be used in a film. Later we hear the terrible story of how she was sunk by the British RAF who believed she was carrying German

soldiers, when, in fact, she was carrying German prisoners. It's a very harrowing book but full of facts about many of the prisoners who both died and survived the sinking of the ship. There are lots of interesting facts about Hitler and the prison camps too. It never gets bogged down in too many facts and is really easy to read. I'm very glad I picked it up and learned a lot.

Larry says

A difficult but necessary read

Dr Watson's incredibly fact filled accounts of the birth and death of the once glorious Cap Arcona left me sad and angry. Sad because of the continued atrocities of innocent people and angry because the truth seemed to be hidden simply to protect those who, although clearly did not know what they were doing, still did it.

Thank you Dr Watson. This is a must read

L says

The movie mentioned in this book may be available in your public library. It is a fairly good movie with good special effects for the time. However, it is a propaganda piece, painting the British in a bad light.

Andy Dale says

This is a book about a famous German ocean liner that was sunk at the end of World War II. It was a luxurious liner built after the Titanic and improved on its design. WWII Germany's economic issues and time led to the ship being used for wartime use, but eventually kept at anchor in a harbor to rust. The Nazi propaganda minister had a crazy idea to make a movie about the sinking of the Titanic making fun of the British. A wacky director was hired and the story of that movie is in the book which was interesting and parts of the movie were shot on this ship.

A section of the book talked about a Swedish nobleman who with the Red Cross rescued some of his countrymen and other Europeans from concentration camps at risk of his own life. Eventually though, the 2nd & main part of the book was about how at the end of WWII, concentration camp inmates were shipped to Northern Germany to be taken to Norway to hide them from the Allies to hide German atrocities. Many of the inmates died on the way in trains or on forced marches in the middle of winter. Only part of the inmates were transported to Norway, and most were packed into every available spot in several big ships including this ocean liner and left to starve to death on the ship without food or water.

British planes found the ships and bombed them and sank all of them killing most of the concentration inmates a few days before WWII ended unfortunately. Only a few survived by jumping off the ship and swimming or getting on lifeboats. But, when they got to land, the German soldiers shot everyone they could find. So, 15-20K inmates died in a day during this attack. Eventually allied soldiers got to the harbor and stopped the Germans, but not until many concentration camp inmates died.

This was very sad to hear about and I've never heard of this before. This is a story we all should know about

and strive to not repeat.

Leah says

Boring. I started off reading it, had to renew it, then switched to the audiobook. It was just so, so tedious with all these details about propaganda films.

Zach Koenig says

From looking at the cover/title of this book, one would suspect that the entire experience would be devoted to the subject depicted...the ship Cap Arcana, or “Nazi Titanic”. For maybe the first third-to-half of this book that is how things play out, but after that it expands into a much larger WWII tale of concentration camps, propaganda, and even inside Hitler’s bunker during the final days of his life and the Nazi regime.

I think that the problem this book runs into is that it is difficult to tell a story about an inanimate object...in this case a ship. It starts off with good intentions, but as the narratives unfold they inevitably shift towards the people involved in such activities. Ironically enough, those “people stories” end up being the most exciting and interesting parts of the whole book! It just makes for a bit of a confusing read in that it seems for awhile to be focused squarely on the ship’s fate, but steadily moves further and further from that thesis as the pages turn. Because of this lack of focus, I can’t really give “Nazi Titanic” more than three stars here.

All of that being said, there are many interesting points in this book...you just have to realize that those parts will kind of pop up randomly and not necessarily fit into the story of the Cap Arcana directly. Author Robert P. Watson is masterful at telling the stories of the Nazi propaganda machine, the cruelty of the concentration camps/officers, and the final days of the Nazis as the entire regime came crashing down. Those passages in “Nazi Titanic” were as interesting and exciting as any narrative nonfiction I’ve ever read.

So, overall I have to say that reading “Nazi Titanic” was a rather strange experience for me. While I was “supposed” to be learning about the usage/fate of the Cap Arcana, I found myself much more interested in Watson’s descriptions of the other aspects of the Nazi regime. Once the narrative would loop back onto the ship again, I found myself skimming through more of those passages; odd considering the goal of the book.

Francine Rattner says

Didn't finish

Elynn says

I would have given this book 4 stars except I didn't really like some of the writing style, but the story was very intriguing. It chronicles events at the end of WWII that I had never heard of before. The book is nearly 2 different stories as it follows the unlikely history of a German luxury liner throughout the war. It gives an interesting glimpse into the Nazi propaganda initiatives in cinematography, and then the forced closure of

concentration camps at the very end of the war (both stories tied together by the unlikely ship). It culminates in a maritime disaster to rival the Titanic. I felt the story put a face on human nature: even people who do horrible things can have moments of compassion, and good people in desperation can literally walk over others in need. Stories like this remind me that there is always another story to learn.

While the story was good, the author had a tendency to repeat things over and over. Especially at the beginnings of each chapter. It was like a mini series where they give a brief recap at the beginning of each episode. This made the story feel drawn out. I listened to this in audio book and I think it was easier to listen to than if I had been reading the book.

Margaret Sankey says

Built in 1927, the Cap Arcona was the luxurious pride of the Hamburg-Sud line, ferrying passengers and cargo to South America until the Kriegsmarine requisitioned her in 1940 to serve as a barracks ship off Germany's north coast. In 1942, Goebbels had the bizarre idea to produce an epic Titanic film to mock the British, and assigned the Cap Arcona to play the starring role (turns out that a movie about a reckless and greedy captain endangering a ship carrying stupid people is not a good wartime metaphor). The Cap Arcona then made dangerous runs across the Soviet-sub infested Baltic to evacuate German refugees from the Russian advance, before being loaded with concentration camp prisoners from Neuengamme with the plan to scuttle it and murder them all. The RAF foiled this horrific plan by bombing the ship themselves, accidentally killing thousands of the prisoners (the survivors who made it to shore were often beaten to death by the local Hitler Youth and Home Guard on the beaches--just as British commandos showed up to occupy the town). This is a striking story, but told using casual citations and disjointed, artificially cliff-hanged structure.

Dave Hoff says

Book is more than the German's answer to a luxury liner. Hitler wanted his own Hollywood, he certainly could make better movies than Jews. Driving the director endlessly for the perfect propaganda film of the Titanic and then hanging him. The making of the movie like Keystone Kops, the model used for the film sank, but not like the Titanic. Book got very sad when 42,000 prisoners in concentration camps were crowded on to the liners that were no longer seaworthy and with the help of the RAF, accomplished the plan Himmler and the SS had for them. Most were machine gunned, or drowned when the ships were sunk by the RAF.

Carolye says

I enjoyed the historical data that was shared in this book, it was very enlightening. However, there were many parts that seemed to be dragged out too much. Overall a good read though.
