LOSTRIA

From the beginning of the war Eastern Europe was regarded by the Germans as a colony destined for colonization of the German people. As early as 1914, the "Akademie fuer das deutsche Recht," at the request of the Government, prepared a draft of a plan for colonization and Germanization of Poland. This thoroughly elaborated political and economic plan proceeds on the assumption that Germanization of Poland would evoke a strong reaction on the part of the Poles against the Germans, but would then find a fertile soil thanks to the difficult position with which the Poles would be faced. In order to discharge this anti-German feeling, it was necessary on the one hand to create a conflict with other peoples living in Poland, and in the first place with Jews, and on the other to show the Poles that the German Government would protect them from the Jewish domination by organizing a "Schatz fuer juristische Ausbuchtung." One of the best means of attaining this protection would be, in the opinion of the author of the report, the complete removal of Jews and, particularly, of "parasitical" Jews from certain regions.

Apparently, the policy suggested by the elite of juridical scholars and published in the "Akademie fuer das deutsche Recht" was approved by the Government. Exclusion

of funds and confiscation not only of small but also of large real estate, farms, and
the like went on in an accelerated tempo, entailing ever more new regions. However,
the confiscated property was turned over not by the Nazis but by Reich Germans of pure
blood. Moreover, in order to inspire the army to commit not only military but also
criminal deeds, orders were issued informing that whoever took part in them would
have the privilege to receive his share in the conquered territories.

P. Tolstov, in a note of April 27, 1942 delivered to the Allies cites the order

Following

Reich Reich

issued by Reich Commissar Rudolf Fick in the Occupied Ukraine:

"I have already given you my word that in the Eastern regions,
which you have conquered, you will be given enterprises and places
of employment before anyone else. You and your children will fill
with German life the land which has been saturated with German blood." 2

As its instructions issued on July 12, 1941, the German military High Command
provides for

"The utilization in each officer and soldier of the German army
of a feeling of personal material concern in this area." 2

a special fund for German veterans was set up mainly at the expense of Jewish
property.

Directions for the handling of the Jewish Question, 3 issued at the beginning
of the war, provide that

2) "Jewish Question", p.
3) Professor Erlich, "Eshchel, Nachalat Yisrael" Press, Moscow, 1944, pp. 43-44.
"the entire Jewish property is to be seized and confiscated with exceptions of that which is necessary for a bare existence. As far as the economical situation permits, the power of disposal of their property is to be taken from the Jews as soon as possible through sales and other measures given by the government, so that the saving of property will quickly cease."

On September 19, 1940, Göring signed a decree providing for the confiscation of property in the part of Poland annexed by Germany. This decree made a distinction between mandatory confiscation and authorized confiscation. The former category included:

"Sequestration of movable and immovable property, stores and other intangible property interests of Jews and persons who have fled or are not merely temporarily absent."

Property belonging to persons of German origin was not subject to confiscation.

Needless to give proof of the fact that the entire Jewish property was confiscated, or listed, an analogous decree was issued also for the Baltic States which, as we saw above, were called the "Ghetto."

But listing of Jewish property signified not only material objectives, but also "ideological" ones. On March 1, 1940, Hitler charged Rosenberg with:

"to explore libraries, archives, lodges, and other ideological and cultural establishments of all kinds for suitable material and to confiscate such material and for the ideological tasks of the RSHA and for scientific research work by the university (Bake institute)."

The same decree provides for cultural goods which are in the possession or are the property of Jews, which are abandoned or whose origin cannot be clearly established. This measure was prompted by the necessity to conduct a spiritual struggle against "Jews, Freemasons and the ideological enemies of National Socialism... (who) are the originators of the present war against the Reich."

On the strength of this order State Secretary Lemcke sent out a memorandum on July 5, 1942 informing "the highest Reich authorities and the services directly subordinate to the Führer" that Rosenberg had been authorized to take all the necessary measures for the implementation of the orders given by the Führer "and to request the competent Reichsbahm and police services to seize the material found in order to support the RSHA in fulfillment of its spiritual task and for the later scientific research work of the 'Habe Schule.'"

The army High Command, in its turn, hastened to issue the necessary instructions. Keitel, Chief of the High Command of the armed Forces issued an order on the same day providing that corresponding measures should be carried out in all the territories of Holland, Belgium, Luxembourg and France which are occupied by us.

9) In addition to his title of Reichsmiinister, Rosenberg received the purpose title of "Commissioner for the supervision of the entire spiritual and philosophical indoctrination and education of the SS RSHA." His Edelstahl is sometimes called "Special Purpose Staff or 'Special Service Staff.'" By order of December 31, 1942, the army High Command defined in detail his functions. Doc. 159-90, Footnotes and Appendix, Vol. III, p. 194.

10) Doc. 159-90, Footnotes and Appendix, Vol. III, p. 193, Vol. III, p. 195, as early as June 22, 1940, about two weeks after Paris' occupation, Gen. Keitel gave an order to Gen. von Rethenberg, Military Governor of Paris, to seize all art works and objects of historical interest in private possession, especially in the possession of the Jews. This measure was not to be regarded as appropriation, but was a guarantee for the peace negotiations. (Off. Tr., p. 9905 - Italiens comp).
Rosenberg immediately began implementing the assignment given him and soon requested permission "to form staffs in all occupied territories." By decree of May 1, 1941 Goering sanctioned this request instructing all Party organizations, State and military authorities to offer Rosenberg full cooperation in his "battle against Jews, Poles, and other affiliated forces of opposite Weltanschauung."  

This Staff for Special Purposes represented, as appropriately termed by Mr. Gorkauffer, member of the French Commission, "the official organization for pillaging."  

It may be added only that this body was one of the largest and best organized blitzkrieg places in the world for stolen and looted property. This is confirmed by the following report on the activities of Rosenberg's staff in France from the beginning of their activities up to August 1, 1944:

"In addition to this seizure of property (cultural), at the suggestion of the Director Unit of the Special Purpose Staff it was proposed to the Reichsleiter that the furniture and other contents of the unoccupied Jewish homes should also be secured and dispatched to the Minister for the Occupied Eastern Territories, for use in the Occupied Eastern Territories."  

The report also describes the way in which these measures were carried out. Although at first only abandoned property of the Jews who fled was to be confiscated, members of the 'confronting' gang were searching all Jewish homes without mercy, regardless...
whether they abandoned their property or closed their homes in the belief that their property would thus be safe. The looted property was then loaded on trucks, for which purpose 150 trucks were used daily in the course of several months. It first the property was dispatched to special camps where 700 Jews had to sort and repair the stolen goods. Among other things, foreign currency in the amount of 11,695,516 M was found in Paris. Scrap metal, paper and textiles alone weighed 1,291,382 kg.

The property of Jews pillaged because of "ideological" reasons was then sent to various organizations in Germany. 30 divisions and private individuals received 577 loaded wagons, the German police - 251 wagons, post office employees - 196, and German State Railways - 1,976. Mainly railroad workers who suffered from house demolition received such a large amount of stolen furniture for their services in transporting them. Belgian, French and Dutch workers often sabotaged these activities by damaging boxes and wrappings, but the German workers disclosed the sabotage and protected Jewish furniture designed for Germans. It is interesting to note that while sending household furniture to the German population which had suffered from house demolitions, the German Government reserved the right of ownership of this property. In this connection the Government systematically pursued

15] This operation was called "Aktion."
the policy initiated after the 1938 pogroms when it took over the pledged property
from the lenders and then sold it at regular prices to its own citizens, or trans-
ferred it to the state. The aforementioned memorandum states that the furniture has
been given to persons suffering under the bomb damage on a loan basis, while

"The determination of the value and the definite evaluation by the
persons suffers under the bomb damage remains in abeyance till a labor ac-
counting. Up to the time of recording the goods are High property
and are subject to the evaluation right of the Allied Minister for the
occupied Eastern territory."(26)

At the same time, Rosenberg's Finiststab was active in collecting paintings
and objects of art. In an extensive report by Robert Scholz, Chief of the Special
Staff for Pictorial Art, which embraces nearly a four-year period of activities —
from October, 1940 till July, 1944 — it is stated that 32,902 art objects...

were inventoried." The author of the report particularly stresses that "the clearly
established Jewish origin of the individual owners was proved in each case."...

At the same time he calls attention to the extreme difficulty in establishing iden-
tification, because of the

"proven seizures by French authorities, as well as by confiscations
of Jewish possessions by trusteeship of French utilities covering up
for the German..."

anticipating such a consequence, the Supreme Command provided, by decree of October

30, 1940, that

...The ownership status of art objects before the war in France, prior to the declaration of war on 1 September 1939, shall be the criterion. Ownership transfers after this date are irrelevant and legally invalid."

Dismissing the material value of the listed art objects, Schola had to admit that "it could not be expressed in figures. The paintings, period furniture of the 17th and 18th centuries, the Gobelins, the antiques and renaissance jewelry of the Rothschilds are objects of such a unique character that their evaluation is impossible, since no comparable values have so far appeared on the market." 18)

In his opinion the collection of French furniture of the 17th and 18th centuries in perhaps even more highly to be evaluated than paintings, as well as the collection of Gobelins and Persian tapestries "contains numerous world famous objects." 19)

But the members of Rosenberg's Einsatzstab searched these valuables not only among the "abandoned" Jewish property. They found them in the baggage of emigrants in Holland, Belgium and occupied zones of France, 20)

The third object of the ideological plunder were books, and particular importance was attached to them. By order of the Supreme Command of the armed Forces

...the material from libraries, archives, inventories and similar things, safeguarded by the Special Purpose Staff Rosenberg in the execution of its mission, is to be treated like armed forces goods. All other goods are expressly excluded from this. 21) (Italics ours).
Books were to serve as a basis for the establishment of the "Holocaust" in 
Frankfort-on-the-Main — The Institute for Exploration of the Jewish Question.

The report of this "scientistic" institute admits that all collected material and 
books were "derived from Jewish property, not centrally collected to serve the 
research, doctrine and education of the German people."

For this purpose the following were despatched:

1. The library of the "Alliance Israélite Universelle" (Paris) — 40,000 volumes 
in many languages including Judaism and Hebrew, a very valuable collection 
of clippings regarding the Dreyfus affair and 230 manuscripts,

2. The library of the "Rabbinical" (Paris) — 20,000 volumes,

3. The library of the "Fédération des Sociétés de Pâques du Monde" — 4,000 

4. 20,000 volumes from the stock of the Jewish bookstore Librairie of Paris, 
containing valuable bibliographical works.

5. Various collections of the entire Rothschild family and important archive 
matter concerning the position of Jews in France.

6. Collection of "Hebrewisms" books — 20,000 volumes, mainly German language 
literature on the Jewish question.

7. The library of the Yugoslav Jewish Community in Amsterdam — about 25,000 vol.

8. About 260,000 volumes located in the USSR and Poland.

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Altogether the report refers to 250,000 volumes which were packed in 3,000 boxes and sent to Germany.

If the SS men, post office employees and those who suffered from harassment were interested in plundering and robbing Jewish furniture and property, the elite of the SS also, and in the first place Hitler himself and Goering, were interested in appropriating art objects.

As early as November 5, 1940, Goering sent a letter to Rosenberg's Special Office subdividing all art objects into 5 categories, whereby the first category included those art objects about which the Führer has reserved for himself the decision as to their use, and in the second category those art objects which serve to the completion of the Reich Marshall's collection.

The ideological purpose of looting concurred with the aims of personal enrichment, which Goering unsuccessfully tried to deny during the trial.

On April 16, 1943, Rosenberg wrote to the Führer congratulating him on the occasion of his birthday and wishing him "some joy and good health."

A folder containing photos of some of the most valuable paintings, secured from countless Jewish art collections in the occupied Eastern territories. These photos represent an additional to the collection of 51 of the most valuable objects of art delivered some time ago to your collection. 23 (Italics ours).

23) Apparently, this report does not list all the books and archives located in Holland. In a special report on Holands, especially published in the Netherlands, the following references are made to books taken from the Jewish library Beth-Debra and the Szyrer collections, established in Amsterdam in 1740, the Rhenish Jewish library, containing books published from the years 1500 to 1650, or the collection of Press-Schar, consisting of 1,500,000 pictures devoted to Jewish life. Boc. 976-97, Boc. 098-099, Boc. 099-100, Boc. 100-101.
Thus we see that 33 valuable paintings, and not photos, were sent previously to Hitler. Rosenberg addressed his servile letter by stating that during the forthcoming requested audience he will give the Führer:

"Another 30 folios of pictures, with the hope that this short occupation with the beautiful things of art which are nearest to your heart will send a ray of beauty and joy into your revered life." [26]

Goring, in a letter to Rosenberg, stating that his collection of paintings is the most important private collection at least in Germany, if not in Europe, expressed his desire to support some of the requisitioned works from Jews, pointing out that the Führer had already approved his plan.

However, one must be just and say that Goring's love for painting was not confined only to those which belonged to Jewish collections. He showed the same passion for paintings in Paris museums as well. An interesting conversation between Goring and one of the masters of Rosenberg's Ministry was made public during the trials. Goring ordered that all art objects collected in Jews' hands be sent immediately to Germany. When the official of Rosenberg's office, highly experienced in leasing of property, remarked that the order would most likely raise protests on the part of the military commander in France and that "the jurists would probably be of a different opinion," the Reichsminister answered:

"Dear Sonja, let us worry about that; I am the highest justice in the state." [27]

[27] Ibid., p. 42, 6022.
The plundering of Jewish property was not, naturally, limited to these few dates. We tried to give only a picture of systematic looting as of cultural treasures collected by Jews, as well as looting of furniture and all other forms of household property. When Göring and Rosenberg were charged accordingly, they attempted to defend themselves by saying that it referred to ownership property. But when they were asked who was responsible for the fact that the owner had to flee or live in hiding, there was no answer.

Against this the general background of German atrocities, these plunderers do not appear too horrible. After the extermination of 6 million Jewish lives, one cannot dwell too much on looting of paintings, even if they represent the most invaluable cultural treasures. But this looting pursued the same aim of destruction of Jews as a people which possessed its own libraries, picture galleries in private possession, archives, and an own culture rich in its varied folklore, developed under the influence of conditions of life and history of the peoples among whom the Jews lived. By destroying the centers of Jewish culture, the Germans destroyed these spiritual treasures which are subject neither to evaluation nor to calculation. Major Walsh, member of the U.S. Prosecution, was quite right when, concluding his speech on the crimes against the Jewish people, he said the following:
The slaughter of the Jews in Europe cannot be expressed in figures alone, for the impact of this slaughter is even more tragic to the future of the Jewish people and mankind. Ancient Jewish communities with their own rich, cultural, spiritual, and economic life, broken up for centuries with the life of the nations in which they flourished, have been completely obliterated. The contributions of the Jewish people to civilization, the arts, the sciences, industry and culture, need not, for sure, be elaborated upon before this Tribunal. Their destruction, carried out intentionally, deliberately, intentionally and methodically by the Nazis, represents a loss to civilization of special qualities and abilities that cannot possibly be reconquered.