

Kimball, Warren F. The Most Unsordid Act Ever
Lease, 1939-1941 Baltimore, JH Press, 1969

make on plant expansion. Jones said the R.F.C. would advance money only in the same percentage as the supplies actually would go to the United States, and when Edward Foley, Morgenthau's legal adviser, told Jones it was legal for the R.F.C. to loan the money since the plants would benefit national defense, Jones replied that he did not care. Even if the Attorney General ruled it was permissible, he did not want to do it. Foley continued to gather legal arguments in favor of the arrangement, but Jones was adamant. A month later, in mid-August, the disagreement was still there. Jones complained that Morgenthau had delayed the entire operation by promising too much to the British, and he further noted that to build a plant that would serve primarily the British would violate international law. He flatly asserted he did not have the authority to lend the money if he knew some of the production would go to Great Britain.

Frustrated, the British tapped their reserves and began putting up the large amounts of cash necessary to get construction started, and Morgenthau returned to his original proposal of a few months previous—that the government build the plants and retain ownership. This notion, however, was dismissed by the National Defense Advisory Commission as socialistic. Tempers flared as Morgenthau privately characterized Jones's excuses as "perfectly stupid." Philip Young finally managed to get Jones cooled down and late in August reported to Morgenthau that he believed Jones, if he were left alone, would work out a solution. Young had a hunch that Jones wanted a larger role in Anglo-American financial planning and if given credit for the deal would eventually go along.

On September 10, it appeared things were running smoothly at last. The British had put down a payment on some tank engines, and the R.F.C. seemed ready to co-operate, but except for this one contract with the Packard Corporation, this pattern of financing was rarely used. On November 7, Purvis sent a memo to Morgenthau complaining that the authorities were reluctant to certify to the R.F.C. that further plant expansion was necessary for the national defense, and the program was again delayed. Purvis was finally forced to caution the London authorities that they had best not expect the United States to pay any capital costs.⁵⁴ Thus, in spite of an old-fashioned college try by

⁵⁴The details on this episode are found throughout the Morgenthau Diary for the summer and fall of 1940. The specifics mentioned in this summary are in Morgenthau Diary, July 8, 1940, 280:332-35; July 12, 1940, 282:546-52; July 15, 1940, 282:323-24; July 23, 1940, 285:191-205; July 24, 1940, 286:11, 174; 243ff.; Aug. 3, 1940, 288:247; Aug. 13, 1940, 292:113-14; 196-200, 207-12; Aug. 15, 1940, 294:6, 177-86; Aug. 22, 1940, 295:137-40; Aug. 28, 1940, 296:178-80, 181-85; Sept. 10, 1940, 304:258-59; Oct. 17, 1940, 317:275-77; Nov. 7, 1940, 330:3-11. A little additional information can be found in Stettinius, *Lend-Lease*, pp. 54-55; Hall, *North American Supply*, pp. 208-9; and FEA records, box 227, file of President's Liaison Committee, "Lend-Lease," mimeographed paper entitled "Evolution of the Lend-Lease Idea: President's Liaison Committee," pp. 7-8.

Morgenthau, petty jealousies, timidity, the lack of effective leadership by an election-conscious Roosevelt, and a general reluctance to circumvent so obviously the spirit of existing laws, all combined to insure that Britain's dollar reserve rapidly continued to disappear.

As inconclusive as were the events of the summer, one seed was planted which ultimately blossomed beyond anyone's expectations. On August 2, Harold Ickes wrote a personal letter to Roosevelt, primarily in support of the destroyer-bases deal, which he ended with a now familiar story: "It seems to me that we Americans are like the householder who refuses to lend or sell his fire extinguishers to help put out the fire in the house that is right next door although that house is all ablaze and the wind is blowing from that direction."⁵⁵ The analogy stuck in Roosevelt's mind, and a few days later in a talk with the recently returned Ambassador to France, William Bullitt, the President retold the story, with some small but significant changes. According to Bullitt's account:

The President cocked his cigaret holder, stared at the ceiling, then scratched his head and said: "Bill, if my neighbor's house catches fire, and I know the fire will spread to my house unless it is put out, and I am watering the grass in my back yard, and I don't pass my garden hose over the fence to my neighbor, I am a fool. How do you think the country and the Congress would react if I should put aid to the British in the form of lending them my garden hose?"⁵⁶

If Bullitt's recollection is accurate, then in the few days between receiving Ickes's letter and talking to Bullitt, the President dropped the word "sell" and instead spoke of "lending them my garden hose." Too much should not be made of that change in wording, especially since Bullitt's memory or notes might not be completely accurate. What is most significant is Roosevelt's reference to putting the question to Congress. Clearly, the President realized that subterfuge was no longer sufficient. If aid to Britain were to become truly effective, Congress and the President had to get together. In four months' time, the garden hose story would become public property, but first there was an election to be fought.

There was no hint of financial relief for Britain in either of the platforms of the two major parties in 1940. Each generally supported aid to Britain—although not specifically by name—but only to the degree that it was consistent with law. There were no promises of credits, loans, or major legislative chances that would ease the money crisis at hand. In fact, a reference to the World War I debts in the

⁵⁵Ickes to Roosevelt, Aug. 2, 1940; Roosevelt Papers, PSE, Ickes.

⁵⁶William C. Bullitt, "How We Won the War and Lost the Peace," *Life*, XXV (Aug. 20, 1948), 88.

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BEYOND BELIEF

*The American Press and
the Coming of the Holocaust
1933-1945*

Deborah E. Lipstadt



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THE RAPE OF EUROPA

*The Fate of Europe's Treasures
in the Third Reich and the
Second World War*

LYNN H. NICHOLAS



ALFRED A. KNOPF · NEW YORK
1994

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prise, Hitler insisted on preparing the legal documents which would transform the Austrian nation into an integral part of the Reich, henceforth to be referred to as the Ostmark. The next day, forced to linger in Linz by the embarrassing breakdown of large numbers of German tanks and trucks which had completely blocked the roads to Vienna (indeed, the British ambassador to Berlin described the whole invasion as "a slovenly performance"²⁴), Hitler made the best of things by laying a wreath on his parents' nearby grave and meeting with the director of the Linz Provincial Museum to discuss plans for rebuilding the town, which, along with Munich, Nuremberg, and Berlin, was to become one of Germany's "ceremonial cities."²⁵ It was not until Monday, March 14, that an irritated Hitler was able to make his triumphal entry into Vienna, the armored vehicles in the parade having been rushed to the city on railroad flatcars.

It was not a happy day for everyone. In the middle of the night of March 11-12, Heinrich Himmler and his SS staff had flown to Vienna to supervise "security" arrangements. The borders were sealed.²⁶ Using intelligence carefully gathered in the previous months, plus Austria's own files on political undesirables, the SS imprisoned thousands, first at Dachau and later at a new camp at Mauthausen. The Austrian Nazis, catapulted into power, now revealed a degree of vicious anti-Semitism which surprised even the Germans. Historian William Shirer, in Vienna for CBS, described the scene:

On the streets today gangs of Jews, with jeering storm troopers standing over them, and taunting crowds around them, on their knees scrubbing the Schuschnigg signs off the sidewalks. Many Jews killing themselves. All sorts of Nazi sadism, and from the Austrians it surprises me. Jewish men *and* women made to clean latrines. . . .²⁷

Along with humiliations of this nature came the blatant looting of Jewish personal property from shops and houses. This too went far beyond anything which had thus far taken place in Germany. The magnificent collections of Vienna's prominent families were among the first to go. Baron Louis de Rothschild was forcibly returned to his Vienna residence from the airport as he tried to leave on March 12, and jailed later in the day. His arrest was unusual: the first SS officers sent for him were told that the Baron was at table, and were asked to make a later appointment. They obeyed.²⁸ A few hours after his incarceration, his cell is said to have been supplied by his valet with all the comforts of the Rothschild home, from tapestries to orchids. But the Nazis were deadly serious. The collections of Baron Louis's brother Alphonse, who had left the country only days before, were immediately confiscated, as were the paintings and library of

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Baron Gutmann, the Bloch-Bauer porcelains, the Haas, Kornfeld, Trosch, Goldman, and Bondy collections, and many more. Shirer, trying to get to his own apartment near the Rothschild palace, saw the first things being taken away:

We almost collided with some SS officers who were carting up silver and other loot from the basement. One had a gold framed picture under his arm. One was the commandant. His arms were loaded with silver knives and forks, but he was not embarrassed.²⁹

Less prominent families fared no better. Those who had managed to flee before the borders closed left houses full of possessions behind, which were quickly stripped by SS troops or the neighbors. Those who remained were soon required to register their property with the Gestapo, thus providing excellent inventories for future confiscation. No one could be trusted. Dealers, conservators, and friends suddenly revealed a new allegiance. Customs and shipping agents broke open packed cases and removed valuable items. It was Goering who had personally ordered the sealing of the borders. Although it was avowed Nazi policy to encourage Jewish departures, the demand for funds under Goering's Four-Year Economic Plan was too great to allow their considerable assets to slip away.

In the next year and a half, before the outbreak of war, more than eighty thousand Jews would be allowed to leave Austria, but only by buying their way out. Exit visas could be obtained by surrendering one's possessions to the Office of Jewish Emigration, organized under the aegis of Karl Adolf Eichmann. Strict application of all the German racial laws and increasing imprisonments encouraged participation in this program. The expropriation of Jewish property was made even more torturous by requiring reams of paperwork, multiple notarizations, and visits to different agencies. The American Consul General in Vienna observed in July:

There is a curious respect for legalistic formalities. The signature of the person despoiled is always obtained, even if the person in question has to be sent to Dachau in order to break down his resistance. The individual, moreover, must go through an endless series of transactions in order to liquidate his property and possessions, and proceed abroad penniless. He is not permitted to simplify matters by making everything over en bloc to the state.³⁰

By the fall of 1938 Eichmann's office was requiring the completion of three hundred dossiers daily, a nearly impossible demand given the shocking reluctance of other countries to issue entrance visas.

The liquidation of the Rothschild properties was particularly protracted.

Because of the multinational character of their holdings, it took a year of negotiations to satisfy the Nazi mania for the "legal," during which time Baron Louis remained in prison. In the eyes of the Reich Finance Ministry, the art collections were inextricably bound up with the rest. When at last the final signatures were affixed and Baron Louis was released, the Ministry initiated proceedings to sell off the works of art at auction in order to satisfy tax claims.³¹

In the meantime, thousands of German officials and entrepreneurs poured into Austria to take over government posts and dispossessed businesses and to celebrate the Anschluss with sprees in the restaurants and shops of Vienna. Albert Speer, repelled by the frenzy, limited himself "to buying a Borsalino."³² The influx left no doubt as to who would really be in charge in Austria. It was an unpleasant revelation to Chancellor Seyss-Inquart and his newly appointed State Secretary for the Arts, Dr. Kajetan Mühlmann, a sometime Goering confidant, both of whom had been intimately involved at the highest levels in the traitorous negotiations which had brought down the Schuschnigg government. Over their heads Hitler immediately installed a German "Reichskommissar," Joseph Buerckel, thereby rendering the Seyss-Inquart administration virtually powerless.

Delicious pastries and Borsalinos were not all some Party members wanted from Austria. The mayor of Nuremberg had a much bigger dream: the crown jewels of the Holy Roman Empire. The thirty-two spectacular objects, which included Charlemagne's bejeweled prayer book, several sceptres, orbs, swords, reliquaries, jewel-encrusted gloves, and other coronation arcania, had been kept in Nuremberg for some four hundred years before they were taken to Vienna in 1794 to save them from Napoleon. There they had remained, enshrined at the Hofburg, since the dissolution of the Holy Roman Empire in 1806.

As early as 1933 Mayor Liebl had plaintively revealed his desires in a speech welcoming Hitler to his city. For the 1934 Party congress the mayor had reproductions brought to Nuremberg, after a vain attempt to borrow the real things. Immediately after the Anschluss the curators of the Germanisches Museum prepared a report enumerating which items had been "plundered" over the years, and which, in particular, had been removed from Nuremberg in 1794. And by June 1938 Liebl had written to the Reichschancellery saying that it was the "Führer's wish" to have the regalia at the next Party congress on September 6, and that arrangements for its transfer should begin immediately. The city of Nuremberg paid for a heavily guarded special train and gourmet meals for the escort. Liebl must have been disappointed that Hitler had decided only the week before not to take part in the acceptance ceremony. Alas, the mayor's long-hoped-for moment

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of glory had coincided with some of history's most dramatic weeks: Hitler's takeover of the Sudetenland, and the Munich Conference.³³

Meanwhile, the confiscated collections were being stacked up at the Hofburg and the Kunsthistorisches Museum. Seyss-Inquart urged Hitler to distribute them quickly, as the accumulation of such valuables was inciting "various desires."³⁴ The attraction of this treasure trove was tremendous. According to several sources, "a consortium of three Jews" representing Lord Duveen, possibly sent at the behest of the exiles themselves, had contacted Mühlmann in the summer of 1938 and offered £1 million for the Alphonse Rothschild and Gutmann collections. Others were also interested, so much so that the new director of the Kunsthistorisches could not be sure if it was "a competition between Duveen, Fischer of Lucerne and German dealers, or an alliance between them."³⁵

These overtures were rejected by Goering, who was negotiating the takeover of the Rothschild industries, and who had his own eye on the works of art. In early 1939 Karl Haberstock too appeared in Vienna claiming to be Hitler's "commissioner for Jewish collections." Mühlmann, closer to Goering than to Hitler, and hoping to keep the collections under his own control, "showed him the door" and told Martin Bormann that he and all the staff involved in cataloguing the confiscated works would resign if Haberstock were given control. Bormann replied that the Führer would come to Vienna and see the collections for himself before deciding their fate. In the meantime, Mühlmann was to draw up a plan for dividing them; when Hitler viewed the repositories in June 1939 Mühlmann presented a plan which would keep the whole lot in Austria. A short time later he was fired for being too pro-Austrian. Quite another fate awaited the now "ownerless" objects.³⁶

Hitler by now had his own dream. For years he had done little sketches for new buildings for the town of Linz. His visit there en route to Vienna had confirmed his determination to turn the city into a "German Budapest," and much had happened since then to focus his vague ideas. In May 1938 he visited Mussolini in Rome, one of his first forays outside the Germanic world. The artistic and architectural glories of the Eternal City made Berlin seem inadequate to the Führer, though he must have felt some satisfaction at the thought that his architects were already at work on plans which would transform Berlin into a city of such monumentality that it might eventually eclipse the Italian capital.

His tour of smaller-scale Florence, where he was welcomed by cheering crowds lining the decorated streets, made him feel much better. He was the

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Rome: Hitler and Mussolini, accompanied by Goebbels and Himmler, tour the Borghese Gallery (Photo by Heinrich Hoffmann)

more deceived: rumor had it that the city fathers had used most of the money sent from Rome for the ceremonies to improve the sewer system.³⁷ Hitler exhausted his Italian host by spending four hours in the Uffizi. Mussolini, trailing behind, was heard to murmur in exasperation, "*Tutti questi quadri . . .* [All these pictures . . .]." Their guide, the anti-Nazi director of the German Art Institute, Dr. Friedrich Kriegsbaum, tried to keep the Führer moving along, fearing that Mussolini might give Hitler something he particularly admired, such as Cranach's famous *Adam or Eve*.³⁸ This trip made abundantly clear to Hitler that Germany's existing public collections would not suffice to adorn the multiple new museums being planned for Berlin and Linz.

The confiscated Austrian collections instantly came to mind. In addition to these, large quantities of objects were becoming available in Germany itself. In the months following the Anschluss, perhaps as a result of events in the Ostmark, pressure on the Jews of Germany greatly increased. On April 26, 1938, a decree was issued requiring them to report their assets, but this did not yet include personal property. Arrests and anti-Semitic violence in the streets increased all during the summer and fall, culminating

in the hideous and carefully orchestrated events known as Kristallnacht, which took place in the dark hours between November 9 and 10. Now the personal possessions and businesses of the Jews were fair game.

Confiscation of private property was openly organized. In Munich, Gauleiter Wagner called together the directors of the state collections "for a conference about the safekeeping of works of art belonging to Jews." The museum officials were told that teams of Gestapo officers and art experts, dealers, or curators were to carry out the confiscations. The hall of the study building of the Bavarian National Museum was requisitioned for storage; only the Gestapo had the key. Large objects were to be left in the houses; coins and jewelry would be taken over by the Gestapo itself. The victims would graciously be allowed to keep family portraits. "Protocols" were to be typed in the presence of the proprietors, who could make notes but would not receive a copy or a receipt. Hundreds of these documents survive in the National Archives of the United States. They make sad reading:

25 November 1938. Protocol, recorded in the residence of the Jew Albert Eichengrun, Pilotystr. 11/1, presently in protective custody. The housekeeper, Maria Hertlein, b. 21/10/1885, in Wilpolteried, BV., Kempten, was present. Dr. Kreisel, Director, Residenzmuseum, and Criminal Investigators Huber and Planer officiated.³⁹

From this house five nineteenth-century German paintings were sent to the depot, where another museum official signed a receipt. On the same day, at the "residence of the Jew Moses Blum, his wife Frieda Moses being present," fifteen paintings were registered, and picked up the next morning by a local moving company. Some were luckier: three faience platters taken from Dr. Ernst Darmstadter on January 18 were returned as being of "no cultural value." A series of laws passed *ex post facto* over the next few years would "legalize" these procedures and change the status of the objects from "safeguarded" to "confiscated." To speed emigration of the still reluctant, an organization based on Eichmann's successful example in Austria was set up under the equally infamous Reinhard Heydrich. All sorts of ingenious schemes were devised to hide, sell, or export possessions, but by now, for most, it was much too late.

And there was more: just one year after the Austrian windfall, the inventory of objects was increased by the taking of the rest of Czechoslovakia. Here the confiscations were not necessarily limited to the non-Aryan. The Czechs were not fellow Germans, but Slavs. Insufficiently Germanic private and public collections could be taken to benefit the master race. The library of Prague University, the Czech National Mu-

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seum, the palaces of the "decadent" Hapsburg Archduke Franz Ferdinand, Count Colloredo, and Prince Schwarzenberg, and the Lobkowitz collections of armor, coins, and paintings (including Breughel's famous *Hay Harvest*) were all eventually raided, and the Bohemian crown jewels joined the Holy Roman regalia in exile. In an attempt to legitimize this expropriation, the jewels were handed over by President Hacha of Czechoslovakia in an elaborate ceremony staged by the Nazis. But an official photograph tells all: the tiny, frail President stands sadly before the dazzling display, flanked by the newly named Reichsprotektor of his country and other Nazi officials, who tower over him, splendid in their dashing uniforms.

By the early summer of 1939 the Führer had realized that the burgeoning storerooms of confiscated art and the greedy dealers and officials hovering about them must be dealt with in an organized fashion. On June 26, 1939, from Obersalzberg, Hitler authorized Hans Posse, only recently back in control of the museum in Dresden, to "build up the new art museum for Linz Donau."⁴⁰ From this moment on, there ceased to be any distinction between Hitler's personal possessions and those destined for Linz.

Posse was an excellent choice for this job, a totally professional art historian and an aggressive acquirer. Not interested in politics but without any doubts as to the greatness of Germany, he threw himself into the already monumental job of sorting out the available works. He was backed by a large staff, and had access to the highest levels of the government and to virtually unlimited funds. The first appropriation for Linz in 1939 was RM 10 million; by December 1944 the total had reached 70 million.⁴¹

All during its existence, the Linz organization remained under Hitler's direct control. Until he died in 1942, Posse corresponded almost daily, in minute detail, with Martin Bormann. A great percentage of the letters are marked in Bormann's writing: "shown to the Führer." On July 24, 1939, Bormann informed Reichskommissar Buerckel and other authorities that all confiscated collections in the newly conquered areas were now to be kept intact so that Hitler himself, or his curator, could choose what they wanted for Linz.⁴² A bit later, just to avoid loopholes, he wrote again to say that "safeguarded" as well as "confiscated" collections were included in this order. The resulting mass of objects was henceforth known as the Führervorbehalt (Führer Reserve).

It took a little time for this arrangement to sink in. As late as November 1939 Goering's secretary was forced to write several times to the Viennese administrators of confiscated goods, to make clear that her chief "upon orders of the Führer . . . will have to desist from the purchase of secured art

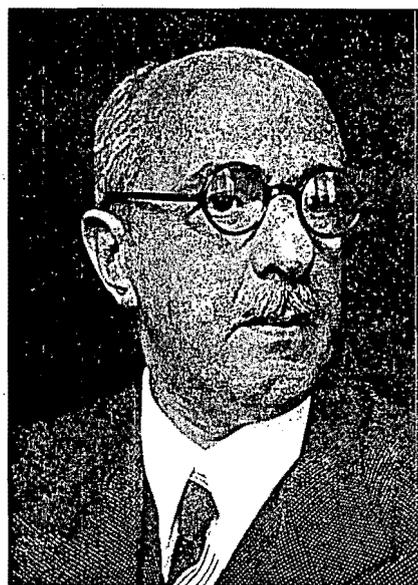
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objects.”⁴³ Bormann had also immediately written to a Munich official to tell him to look for “several very large spaces in which the art treasures for the new Linz galleries can be stored, as a large number of paintings—four to five hundred—would soon be arriving from Vienna.” Hitler himself wondered if a suitable schloss could be found in which the pictures would not be crowded together, as they now were at the Führerbau, but might be arranged “more like a gallery.”

So varied were the works already assembled by 1939 that subordinate curators had to be appointed for armor, coins, and books. The plans for Linz soon expanded exponentially, from one museum for nineteenth-century German art to a complex with separate buildings for each discipline. By late October, Posse had won a few bureaucratic battles. With the backing of his colleague Fritz Dworschak, director of the Kunsthistorisches Institut in Vienna, he had managed to get the Führer to authorize the separation of the Rothschilds’ art collections from the rest of their assets and their inclusion in the Führervorbehalt. He had also looked through all the Vienna pictures and chosen 182 for Linz and 43 for other provincial Austrian museums. Forty-four more were designated for the Kunsthistorisches, a proposal later rejected by Hitler, who stated that Vienna, which he had always hated, “already has enough works of art, and it is right to make use of these art objects for Linz, or as a foundation for other collections.”⁴⁴

Posse also now had to deal with the objects which had been confiscated in Germany itself. In Bavaria, those gathered by the Gestapo teams had already been sorted out according to medium and quality. The best pictures were put on exhibition at the Munich Association of Artists, in the former premises of the well-known Jewish firm of Bernheimer, much of whose stock was included. Hitler and Posse both visited the gallery, and made their choices for Linz. It was then opened up to representatives of the German museums, who were allowed to keep their choices as “loans from the State.” What remained was made available to dealers or sold at auction.



Hans Posse: Hitler's grand acquirer

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After this first show, the museums were obliged to buy what they wanted from the confiscated stocks, using money from their regular acquisition funds, special grants from the Ministry of Culture, or cash raised by selling off lesser museum holdings. The proceeds went, for the time being, into a special Gestapo account.⁴⁵

Keeping control of all the confiscated objects at home was not easy. The SS, Gestapo, Finance Ministry, Reich Chamber of Culture, local Nazi organizations, museums, and others were all happily carting things away, or making plans and claims for them. The temptation to do a little dealing was overwhelming. Posse, who hated the idea that anything might escape him, wrote anxiously to Bormann in May 1940 to say that in various provinces of the Reich, officials were disposing of confiscated objects on their own. The valuable collection of the "expatriate" Dr. Fritz Thyssen, an early supporter of Hitler who had seen the light and fled abroad, was about to be divided up by the Rhenish museums, he complained, and the Goldschmidt-Rothschild collection had reportedly been sold to a private collector. Posse implored Bormann to ask Hitler to reserve the same exclusive rights to all confiscated collections in Germany for himself, as he had in the occupied areas.⁴⁶ This was not done until much later—but of course things got to be rather busy at the Reichschancellery in the spring of 1940.

Meanwhile, the energetic Posse had sifted through all the works in the Führervorbehalt and made his choices. For Linz it was nothing but the best. By July 1940, 324 paintings had been selected from the hundreds presented for his inspection, and 150 more chosen as a reserve. These included most of the pictures previously acquired on the market by Hitler. Although there were some impressive items, the collection was not yet in the class of those of the great museums and was top-heavy in the genre paintings that Hitler loved. To remedy this, Posse had already started to buy from dealers and collectors in Austria and Germany. He snapped up the drawings collection of the late Prince Johann Georg of Saxony in Leipzig, found a Waldmüller portrait of young Prince Esterhazy for "the exceptionally low price of RM 10,000," and bought 37 more works by Rubens, Hals, Lorenzo Lotto, and Guardi.⁴⁷ But he was hoping for much, much more.

In a report cleverly designed to fuel Hitler's competitive collecting instincts and lead him beyond his limited tastes, Posse set out his plans for Linz. Even with the vast funds at his disposal, he sadly recognized that it would be impossible to gather together an in-depth collection ranging from the prehistoric to the modern. The early German period would have

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to be limited to a "small but elegant" collection, an attitude which may have reflected Posse's reluctance to tangle with Himmler, whose specialty this was. The Romanesque and Gothic periods, however, should be greatly increased "from the holdings of the monasteries of the Ostmark," which could also supply objects for the German Renaissance galleries. For this reason "removal of works from the monasteries should be carefully monitored in future." Posse had in mind, among other things, the great altarpiece by Altdorfer at the Monastery of St. Florian. He wrote that they could hardly hope to get works by Dürer, Holbein, or Grünewald, but that there were plenty of Cranachs available. The seventeenth-century Dutch school was already strongly represented, but major works by Rubens, Rembrandt, and Vermeer, plus some sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Italians, were needed to "round off the collection." There was one bright spot: they could do a nice French gallery with the paintings, furniture, and tapestries already at hand, supplied almost entirely by the Austrian Rothschilds. To flatter Hitler, Posse hastened to conclude with the promise that the *Hauptabteilung*, or central collection, of the museum would, of course, be the "valuable collection already assembled in Munich," i.e., Hitler's favorite nineteenth-century Germans.⁴⁸

Posse knew exactly which pictures he wanted and where they were. He and his chief would stop at nothing to get them. The Vermeer Gap was the first to be filled. Negotiations for this prize went on for nearly a year and Posse almost lost it to Goering. The picture, which represented an artist in his studio, belonged to two brothers, Eugen and Jaromir Czernin, and had been exhibited to the Viennese public for years in a gallery belonging to the family. Previous offers from such majors as Duveen and Andrew Mellon, said to range from \$500,000 to \$6 million, had been blocked by the refusal of the Austrian courts to allow the picture to leave the country. Now that the Anschluss had made Germany and Austria one, this barrier no longer seemed a problem, at least to the rulers of the Reich.

In December 1939 Count Jaromir Czernin, who was the majority (60 percent) owner of the picture, received a new offer of RM 1.8 million from Philip Reemtsma, the German cigarette mogul who had been supporting Goering's Art Fund so generously. This supposedly private offer was accompanied by a telegram from Goering authorizing the transaction. The director of the Austrian Monuments Office, Dr. Plattner, was not pleased. He immediately appealed to Hitler to block the private sale of a work so beloved by Austrians and tourists alike, which had been officially reconfirmed as a national treasure subsequent to the Anschluss. In his letter he stated, as he must have regretted later, that the Vermeer should only be sold to a "state museum," clearly with the Kunsthistorisches in mind. He

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then made the mistake of saying that Vienna's cultural life should not be further diminished "so soon after the removal of the Holy Roman Regalia to Nuremberg."

Plattner had also expressed his opinion to Goering's chief of staff, who had retorted that Reemtsma, "who had already given the Reich a great deal, would surely offer the picture to a museum if given the opportunity." Before any action could be taken Plattner was furiously denounced by Gauleiter Buerckel, who said that he could not permit anyone in his service to interfere in the business of Marshal Goering. He then ordered Plattner to release the painting and send it to Reemtsma in Hamburg. In the meantime, Hitler's staff had consulted the German Ministry of Culture, which backed Plattner, noting that the Vermeer was mentioned in the Baedeker, and that without it the Czernin Gallery would be worthless. Buerckel was advised by telegram that the Führer wished the picture to stay in the Czernin Gallery and not be moved without his personal permission. To save some dignity, Goering also wired Buerckel to say that he had had no idea that it was for sale and that his chief of staff had "mistakenly sent off the telegram before I saw it." The wire thanked the Gauleiter for his loyalty. The Vermeer would have been a nice present for Goering's birthday, which was only a few weeks off.

A month later, stimulated by this success, Plattner wrote to the Reichschancellery again, proposing in a rather flowery letter that the painting be bought for the Kunsthistorisches, which, although it was a great museum, had not one Vermeer. He suggested that the Czernins might lower the price if they were forgiven certain taxes or were paid with land in Czechoslovakia. Cash could be raised by selling the confiscated collection of the Czech Jew Oscar Bondy, worth over RM 1 million. Plattner felt that Count Jaromir Czernin would be pleased by the "state" purchase. The only trouble was that Plattner had the wrong museum. Hitler wanted the picture for Linz, not Vienna, though he did not say so.

Plattner was ordered to ask for an exact price, which he put at RM 1.75 million. In late April 1940 he asked for a subsidy of RM 750,000 from the Führer so that he could close the deal and "enter the picture in the Kunsthistorisches's inventories." By July, not only had no funds arrived from Berlin, but the Bondy collection, instead of being sold, as Plattner had hoped, had been made part of the Führervorbehalt. Hitler would have to come up with the whole price, which he considered high. He now had the Czernins investigated for outstanding tax liability, to see if they could be forced to auction the Vermeer, but could find none. There was another problem: Eugen Czernin did not wish to sell, and a special envoy had to spend three days convincing him that resistance was useless. It was not

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until September that Hitler authorized Posse to buy the picture. The contract was signed on October 4. There was no mention of Linz in any of the documents. Indeed, on October 7 Reichschancellery assistant Hans Lammer wrote that the "question of whether or not the work will be assigned to Vienna is still open." It was not very open. The painting was secretly taken to the Führerbau in Munich by Dworschak on October 12, where it was immediately given Linz No. 1096 by registrar Hans Reger. The financial details were not settled until more than a month later. Once the money was in the bank Count Jaromir Czernin wrote a gushing acknowledgment on his elegant blue notepaper with its little seal and crown. For him there seemed to be no mystery about the destination of the Vermeer. His deepest thanks were augmented by the "wish that the Picture may, My Führer, always bring you joy."⁴⁹

Posse would soon be able to begin buying all over Europe at this level. The powers he held would be the dream of any museum director whose acquisitions are limited, in the normal course of events, by lack of funds, reluctance of owners to sell, and the need to convince boards of trustees or Ministries of Culture of the need for a particular item. Posse had none of these problems: there was no end to the money, and pressure of an unpleasant nature could be applied to reluctant sellers.

It is rare for a museum to acquire more than two or three major works in a year, unless it happens to get a whole collection. Washington's National Gallery of Art opened in 1941, just as Linz was getting started, with 497 paintings. Fifty years later, the vastly expanded museum has about 3,000. Amsterdam's Rijksmuseum has 5,000. Posse's total of 475 paintings for his first year was, therefore, impressive. By 1945 it would be an incredible 8,000, not counting those acquired by other Nazi agencies, which he and his successor could call in at any time.

Despite their determination to maintain business as usual, those responsible for Europe's museums were very aware of the imminence of war and could not ignore the happenings in the nations annexed by the Reich. They did not always have an easy time convincing their governments that precautionary measures were necessary. Uppermost in their thoughts were the increasing dangers of long-range artillery barrages and aerial bombs, which had been the principal causes of damage in World War I. As early as 1929 the Dutch Minister of Education had requested a study of plans to protect his national collections, and a British committee had begun discussions of air-raid precautions in 1933. There was still no sense of urgency. But events in Madrid in the fall of 1936 dramatically focused curatorial thinking.

were given virtually no notice of what was to happen. Families were rudely awakened in the middle of the night, often separated, and sent off to the Generalgouvernement in freezing cattle cars, leaving all their possessions behind. After November 15 the SS put the entire rail system at the disposal of the resettlement program. The Nazis had hoped to achieve this initial "cleaning out" within a month. It took nearly six, still impressive considering that more than a million people were displaced. In the following years of the occupation, further tens of thousands were shipped to Germany and various sites in Poland to be used as slave labor.

In all areas the Church was reduced to almost nothing. Hundreds of priests were murdered, and no services, confessions, or hymns were allowed in Polish. Inscriptions on tombs were erased and rewritten in German. All but a minimum of regalia and treasure were removed and the churches themselves were converted to dance halls, hay barns, garages, and store-rooms. Roadside shrines were sadistically desecrated. Synagogues were simply burnt or otherwise destroyed, their holy books and scrolls often thrown onto bonfires, and the headstones of Jewish cemeteries were used as paving stones.

The "extermination of the nobility" was not such a simple matter. Many of the great families of Poland were related to those of Germany. They could not, therefore, exactly be considered "*Untermenschen*." The SS and Gestapo constantly watched and interrogated them, punishing the slightest suspicion of resistance with imprisonment, but many in the upper echelons of the more aristocratic Wehrmacht often simply ignored Hitler's harangues. This was particularly true in the Generalgouvernement, where Frank managed to keep Himmler at bay. As had been the custom in past wars, the Germans billeted themselves in the best apartments in Poland's castles, forcing the occupants into lesser quarters or throwing them out altogether. Occasionally they could be helpful: officers taking over Rodka, the house of Jadwiga Potocki—who had returned triumphant from Warsaw with her mother-in-law's jewels—warned her that the Russians would soon arrive, and urged the family to leave. In two horsedrawn carts the Potockis fled to Cracow, taking with them the jewels and numerous bundles which, they were horrified to find later, contained no other valuables: the servants, ordered to "pack up everything," had brought only the children's clothes, assuming that it would be a trip like any other. In Cracow they moved into the top floor of a family town house, the lower floors having been requisitioned as offices for the administration of the Generalgouvernement. Thomas Potocki, a small boy at the time, remembers spitting down on the helmets of the Nazi guards outside. There they existed, selling a bit of jewelry from time to time.

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from its prehistoric Germanism, as part of the new Europa, which would form a buttress against the terrible cultures of the East.³³ By June 20 Himmler had already ordered an Ahnenerbe representative to be sent to The Hague to make contact with Dutch intellectuals and promote "Nordic Indo-Germanism" by getting rid of the Church, Bolshevism, Freemasonry, and Jewry. When a surprising animosity on the part of the Dutch to these reforms became clear, Himmler sadly attributed it to a too close association in the public mind of the Ahnenerbe with the definitely nonintellectual activities of other branches of the SS. The project, always underfunded by Hitler, was not a success.³⁴ Indeed, the antipathy of the Dutch people for the Germans was so intense that Goebbels would be moved to call them "the most insolent and obstreperous people in the entire West."³⁵

Himmler's fellow theorist Alfred Rosenberg was not far behind. A letter from Supreme Commander Keitel notified the Army on July 5 that Rosenberg's minions, known as the Einsatzstab Reichsleiter Rosenberg, or ERR, would soon be searching libraries and archives for documents "which are valuable to Germany." They would also search for "political archives which are directed against us" and have the material in question confiscated in cooperation with the SS. The resulting accumulations of books and documents would be sent off to Rosenberg's *Hoheschule* to be used in the training of future generations of purifiers.³⁶ By September 1940 they were busily at work. The leader of this confiscation group was so proud of his achievements that he concluded a progress report with the comment that his men had been "working overtime for weeks now, and also, as is done on the battlefield, on Sundays."³⁷

But weeks before these gentlemen had come on the scene in Holland, another familiar figure, Kajetan Mühlmann, was in full action, having arrived as an advance man for Reichskommissar Seyss-Inquart. As always he was a great help to his superior, finding him a suitable residence in a vacant villa just outside The Hague, occupation of the Dutch Royal residences having been rejected as tactless. Before Seyss-Inquart arrived Mühlmann also called upon the chief for museums of the Dutch Ministry of Culture, J. K. van der Haagen, to inquire about the location of certain collections and repositories. Van der Haagen assumed he represented the military authorities, and only later would come to understand his true intentions.³⁸

By the end of May, Mühlmann and several assistants had set up an office at Sophialaan 11, in the center of The Hague, and were busy making lists of "enemy" property and opening bank accounts: one for purchases for Goering, Hitler, and other high officials, which would be funded from

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makes use of the similar thinking of certain elements of the Vichy regime: By conquering France, the German Army had liberated it from the influence of international Jewry. The armistice made with the French people was not made with the Jews, who could not be considered the equals of French citizens, as they formed a state within a state and were permanent enemies of the Reich. The Jews, by their amassing of riches, had prevented the German people from "having their proper share of the economic and cultural goods of the Universe." Since most of the Jews in France had come originally from Germany, the "safeguarding" of their works of art should be considered "a small indemnity for the great sacrifices of the Reich made for the people of Europe in their fight against Jewry." The rules of war allowed use of the same methods "which the adversary has first used." Stretching it a bit, Utikal argued that since in the Talmud it was stated that non-Jews should be regarded as "cattle" and deprived of their rights, they themselves should now be treated in the same way. The Reich had done the French a favor by not confiscating real estate and furniture along with the rest, and the French people should be grateful for the objects they had obtained through the good offices of the German armies. As for The Hague Convention, the Jew and his assets were outside all law, since for centuries the Jews themselves had considered non-Jews as outside their own laws.⁴⁸

Needless to say, this ludicrous document did not prevent further protests from the "ungrateful French." Six months later, on orders of Goering, the ERR felt constrained to produce another justification, this time written by the less confident Dr. Bunjes. Much longer than the Utikal response, it used most of the same arguments, ornamented with childish additions which reflected the deep frustration the more brainwashed Nazis felt at their rejection by the conquered peoples they ruled. More ominous were its frequent references to "the dreaded German demands for the return of art stolen by French troops in Germany." Blame for the complaints of the French government was placed squarely at the door of Musées director Jaujard and his staff. The closing sentence tells us all we need to know, as if there had ever been any doubt: "Only . . . when the Führer has made the final decision as to disposition of the safeguarded art treasures, can the French Government receive a final answer."⁴⁹

Careful reading of the Bunjes report reveals no references to the "furniture" which the Germans, according to Utikal, had so kindly left untouched. This was for the very good reason that only a few weeks before the report was written, the ERR had started a new project: the seizure of furniture from the houses of Jews who "have fled or are about to flee, in



Paris: M-Aktion loot ready for shipment to the Reich, 1944

Paris and throughout the occupied Western territories." The furniture would be used by the occupation administrations of the East, which after the attack on the Soviet Union had come under Rosenberg's aegis, and where, Rosenberg lamented, "living conditions were frightful and the possibilities of procurement so limited that practically nothing more can be purchased." Hitler thought this was a fine idea, and all commands were informed of the coming action in January 1942.⁵⁰ In Paris the odious von Behr was put in charge of this operation, which was code-named the M-Aktion (Möbel, or furniture, Project). Indeed, according to his co-workers, the whole thing was his idea.

The M-Aktion marks a true low, even in the history of looting. Once again the ERR teams set out, but this time to search for soap dishes and armoires. The secret orders which initiated the process noted that "art treasures, precious rugs, and similar items are not suitable for use in the East under conditions prevailing there. They will be safeguarded in France. Next came a message from the High Command: the confiscations were to be carried out "with as little publicity as possible. No [public] ordinance is necessary . . . as these measures must be represented as much as possible as requisitions or sanctions."⁵¹

A house-by-house check of the entire city of Paris was begun; in ca

some fleeing Jews or other undesirables had not been accounted for. Some thirty-eight thousand dwellings were sealed. It was pretty complicated work: only unoccupied homes were involved, and, after consultations with the embassy, confiscation officials exempted absent Jews of many nations as well as those "who work for German firms and in forestry and agriculture, or who are prisoners of war."⁵² Food discovered on the premises was sent to the Wehrmacht; beds, linens, sofas, lamps, clothes, etc., were checked off on specially printed forms. A French organization, the Comité Organisation Déménagement, was set up and made responsible for measuring doorways, talking with concierges, packing, transporting, and finding railcars for the loot. The Union of Parisian Movers was forced to supply some 150 trucks and 1,200 workers a day for the operation.

The Germans were responsible for deciding what *not* to take, such as "objets d'art, books, wood, coal, wine and alcohol, empty bottles, etc." They were also supposed to supervise the French railroads so the process would not be obstructed through "inertia and ill-will."⁵³ Everything except art, which was sent to the Jeu de Paume, was first taken to a huge collecting area for sorting. Due to increasing acts of sabotage by the French workers, the camps were fenced off and seven hundred Jews "supplied by the SD" were interned therein, divided into groups of cabinetmakers, furriers, electricians, and so forth, and set to work processing and repairing the incoming goods, which passed by them on a conveyor belt.

Later, all storage and moving companies, including American Express, were required to send in lists of customers, as their Dutch colleagues had already been forced to do. Victims who protested could, by proving they were Aryan and obtaining a "*Certificat de non-appartenance à la race juive*," often reclaim their belongings. The files of the endless and desperate correspondence involved in these efforts survives. A certain Mme Seligman, the Aryan widow of a Jew, was exempted, but only after she had proved that her husband had been taken hostage and shot by the Gestapo.⁵⁴ Another man had to produce the birth data of his great-grandparents before the ERR gave up. The lists of what was taken survive too, infinitely more touching than lists of Rembrandts in their revelation of just how the smallest lives were affected: "5 ladies' nightgowns, 2 children's coats, 1 platter, 2 liqueur glasses, 1 man's coat. . . ."

By August 8, 1944, when they really had to stop, the Allies being by then just outside Le Mans, the ERR had raided 71,619 dwellings, and shipped off more than 1,079,373 cubic meters of goods in 29,436 railroad cars. By this time victims of bombings in Germany proper—of which a suspiciously high percentage were classified as "Police, SS Division, and private orders"—had also been made eligible to share the take. Some of

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the thinking on the use of confiscated items was quite creative: special crates containing everything that was necessary for a "full kitchen for four bombing victims" were put together, including the sink. Alas, the final M-Aktion report complains, despite the sharpest controls, much of their hard work was sabotaged by French, Belgian, and Dutch railroad workers. Still, overall the project was, for the Nazis, a huge success.⁵⁵

Parallel to this low-level looting was the more industrial attack on the statues and church bells of France and the Low Countries which were to be melted down for the factories of the Reich. In France the removal order was issued by Pétain. The process was billed in one magazine as a solution to the "constant problem of statuomania . . . more than ninety-two statues chosen from the most ugly and ridiculous have been taken down." The writer suggests that they should be replaced by statues from the Louvre, "which after all were conceived for the open."⁵⁶ Needless to say, the choice of which statues were to be sacrificed, which was left to the French at first, was hotly discussed in hopes of delaying the fatal moment. In the end, in addition to the more obvious politicians and generals, Voltaire and even La Fontaine were dragged off along with crocodiles, centaurs, Tritons, and Victor Hugo, whose empty pedestal was declared by one wit to look better than the statue had. Only a few, among them Joan of Arc and Louis XIV, were spared.⁵⁷

Although they had never seen the Kümmel Report, the French museum authorities had few illusions that their occupiers would limit themselves to

which could direct available expertise to the most useful areas. Similar organizations sprang up at other centers of learning.

They would soon be set to work: the Selective Service Act was passed on September 16, 1940, and the War Department was faced with the preparation of millions of recruits for duty in undreamed-of places. They started from zero, but within weeks lectures and seminars were being prepared and delivered by American Defense volunteers. Later, the famous Office of Strategic Services (OSS) would include a large complement of these academics among its analysts.¹²

American art historians were no less eager than anyone else to join the growing effort, but they did not at first think of working through such groups as American Defense Harvard. Once the safety of the museums was assured, George Stout and W. G. Constable, in late September 1942, wrote to the Committee on the Conservation of Cultural Resources, still regarded as the proper forum for art matters, suggesting that a subcommittee be formed to study the physical conservation of endangered works of art in both the United States and Europe, in order to "give a lead to the world when peace comes."¹³ Off the record, Constable specifically recommended against any museum directors being on the subcommittee, as they "had neither the experience nor particular interest necessary." He and Stout had in mind a technical group, which would analyze the frightening problems Stout's European friends had so vividly described. The response was bland and polite—the committee would study the matter.

Despite Constable's feelings about museum directors, they too had be-



Francis Henry Taylor, director of the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

come interested in the project. Taylor, director of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, had the idea of a committee on preservation of the National Gallery. They envisaged a group of experts, including George Stout and W. G. Constable, and Lehman of New York. In late September 1942, Taylor met with Stout and Constable on a long train ride to Washington to discuss his ideas further. The committee, which, in the continued absence of the War Relocation Authority, was the primary conservation of Cultural Resources, was the primary lobbying organization in Washington, then as now, the National Gallery included the National Gallery of Art, the Treasury, and its administrative department officer, had, since then, undertaken delicate missions at the post-war period.

Taylor was immediately contacted by Justice Harlan Stone, who in late October, a few days later, William Dinsmore, a member of the War Relocation Authority, and another recruit to the project. The matter was formally discussed on November 24; David Finley, a member of the War Relocation Authority, that Stone would accept Taylor's proposal. Archibald MacLeish, Librarian of Congress, also presented to the President; John J. McCloy expressed enthusiasm.

Full of optimism after the meeting on December 4, 1942: "I do not intend to decide to organize this, but I am relying upon for professional service. Personally have offered my services to the War Relocation Authority, and their actions, Taylor and Dinsmore, in their presentation to the President, have been very helpful with the matter of protecting the National Gallery of Art, the Army and Navy." As for the War Relocation Authority's memo somewhat undiplomatic in its reference to the over-British possession of the bronze horses of Saint Mark's Basilica in Venice.

come interested in the protection of Europe's treasures. Francis Henry Taylor, director of the Metropolitan Museum, had already discussed the idea of a committee on protection with David Bruce, then president of the board of the National Gallery and soon to head OSS operations in London. They envisaged a group which might work under the United Nations Refugee and Rehabilitation Agency (UNRRA) being formed by Governor Lehman of New York. In November 1942, after conversations in Cambridge with Stout and Paul Sachs of the Fogg Museum, Taylor took the long train ride to Washington through the blacked-out autumn countryside to discuss his ideas further with "the people at the National Gallery," which, in the continued absence of action by the Committee on the Conservation of Cultural Resources, had now become the museum community's lobbying organization. This was no frivolous choice. In Washington, then as now, access was everything. The board of the National Gallery included the Chief Justice and the Secretaries of State and the Treasury, and its administrator, Harry McBride, a former State Department officer, had, since the outbreak of war, performed a number of delicate missions at the personal request of Secretary of State Cordell Hull.

Taylor was immediately ushered in to present his proposals to Chief Justice Harlan Stone, who promised to discuss the matter with FDR. A few days later, William Dinsmoor, president of the Archaeological Institute of America and another recruit to the cause, also met with the Chief Justice. The matter was formally discussed by the board of the National Gallery on November 24; David Finley was able to inform Taylor the very next day that Stone would accept chairmanship of a national committee. Archibald MacLeish, Librarian of Congress, would take Stone's nomination to the President; John J. McCloy, Assistant Secretary of War, also expressed enthusiasm.

Full of optimism after this high-level response, Taylor wrote Sachs on December 4, 1942: "I do not know yet how the Federal Government will decide to organize this, but one thing is crystal clear: that we will be called upon for professional service, either in civilian or military capacity. I personally have offered my services, and am ready for either."¹⁴ To reinforce their actions, Taylor and Dinsmoor had both written a memorandum for presentation to the President, recommending "a corps of specialists to deal with the matter of protecting monuments and works of art in liaison with the Army and Navy." As flamboyant as the man himself, Taylor's long memo somewhat undiplomatically referred to the centuries-long dispute over British possession of the Elgin marbles, and to Napoleon's removal of the bronze horses of Saint Mark's in Venice, in the same paragraph as

the confiscations by the Nazis.¹⁵ (Dinsmoor, clearly feeling otherwise about Napoleon, suggested that the specialist corps actually be modelled on the art historians who had accompanied the Emperor to Egypt during the campaign of 1808.¹⁶) Taylor felt that an expert committee, under his leadership, should immediately be sent to Spain, England, Sweden, and Russia to study the situation and report back to the President. How this was to be accomplished, given the recent invasion of North Africa, the deadly situation at Stalingrad, and the continued bombing of Britain, was not addressed.

The Chief Justice, as good as his word, sent his recommendations to the White House on December 8, set forth in a no-nonsense memo from which all historical references had been removed and replaced by the proposal that the British and Soviet governments be requested to form similar groups. During invasions, it suggested, the committees would furnish trained personnel, many of whom were already serving in the armed forces, to the General Staffs "so that, so far as is consistent with military necessity, works of cultural value may be protected." The committee should also compile lists of looted works. At the time of the "Armistice," it should urge that the terms include the restitution of public property, and if such property were lost or destroyed, that "restitution in kind" be made by the Axis powers from a list of "equivalent works of art . . . which should be transferred to the invaded countries from Axis museums, or from the private collections of Axis leaders."¹⁷ Three weeks later the President replied in favorable terms to the Chief Justice. The "interesting proposal," he said, had been referred to the "appropriate agencies of the Government for study." Then there was silence.

What the stymied museum men could not know was that a tremendous struggle had been going on for nearly two years in the bosom of the government over the whole concept of the control of the areas soon to be in the hands of the Allies.¹⁸ Traditionally this had been the Army's job, but long-term occupation was a problem the military establishment had never before faced on such a scale. President Roosevelt and the Army itself favored civilian control as soon as possible. And indeed, as soon as war had been declared, civilian agencies of every stripe, government and private, of which the Harvard and museum groups were but two, began making plans, forming committees, and clamoring for attention. Uneasy at the thought of losing all control to a plethora of civilians untrained in military ways, the Army, in June 1942, set up a small Military Government Division in the office of the Provost Marshal General, and a school of military government in Charlottesville, Virginia. American Defense Harvard and the museum men, having joined forces, immediately proposed that in-

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For a while this arrangement seemed sufficient, and when General Dwight D. Eisenhower requested a civil administration section for the staff planning the invasion of North Africa, several of the newly trained Charlottesville officers plus a State Department contingent were quickly sent off. This group was to deal mainly with issues of local government. Economic problems, such as food supplies for the local populace, were rather vaguely assigned to the "appropriate civil departments of the United States and the United Kingdom." Eisenhower could hardly wait to be rid of all this and concentrate on fighting the war: "Sometimes I think I live ten years each week, of which at least nine are absorbed in political and economic matters," he commented to General Marshall.¹⁹

All these plans were fine on paper, but not practical in a theater of war. The civilian agencies, top-heavy with executives and planners, had few operatives on the scene, and were utterly dependent on the Army for such amenities as intelligence, shipping space, and ground transportation. But the feeling seemed to be that when things did not work, the addition of another committee would help. The War Department was not represented on any of these committees, though it was essentially the conduit through which they all had to function. The solution to this was often to send VIPs to the theater to deal directly with headquarters, as Francis Henry Taylor had in mind, a process which consumed Eisenhower's precious time and would later make him reluctant to have any nonmilitary functionaries at all in his theater.

Roosevelt and Churchill met in Casablanca in the third week of January 1943. There they decided, not without some friction, that Sicily rather than northern France would be the next Allied objective. The invasion was set for July. This would be the first time that British and American forces would jointly occupy an enemy nation. War Department officials concerned with civil affairs saw immediately that their efforts of liaison and planning would have to be greatly improved if they were to deal with expansion into another theater. All such activities were quickly centralized in a new Civil Affairs Division (CAD) under the Secretary of War, which officially came into being on March 1, 1943.

Only days after the heads of state had left Casablanca, planning was begun for Sicily. Officers were sent off to study the British occupation already set up in Tripolitania, where they would find an informal monuments protection program already in place. The resulting proposal called for the then staggering number of four hundred officers for all Civil Affairs functions. By April a training facility had been set up near Algiers,

and by May 1 the top secret plan for HUSKY, as the Sicilian invasion was code-named, was virtually complete. The idea of civilian participation was still accepted as part of the immediate postcombat occupation by both nations; the only trouble was that the total secrecy surrounding HUSKY prevented any concrete civilian planning.

If progress toward an official government body to ensure the safety of works of art had been slow in the United States, in London, where the British and various Allied governments-in-exile planned their return to the Continent, it was positively snail-like. This was in great part due to the European attitude that civilians could and should not interfere with the workings of armies in combat. George Stout and W. G. Constable in their early 1943 campaigns had written colleagues such as Kenneth Clark and Eric Maclagan, director of the Victoria and Albert, to inform them of their efforts to establish an official protection committee and ask if any similar action was contemplated in England. Both gentlemen seemed surprised at the very idea. "I find it hard to believe that any machinery could be set up which would carry out the suggestions contained in your petition; e.g., even supposing it were possible for an archaeologist to accompany each invading force, I cannot help feeling that he would have great difficulty in restraining a commanding officer from shelling an important military objective simply because it contained some fine historical monuments," wrote Clark.²⁰

Maclagan agreed and was, if anything, even less encouraging: "In violent fighting damage will happen anyway . . . I do not think it would be the faintest use to have an official archaeologist at GHQ."²¹ As for looting, he was not worried: "Now that there is no market outside Europe . . . only the internal looting subsists," about which nothing could be done until the "time of the Peace Treaty." Both correspondents felt that British and American troops would not damage anything on purpose, and that the admonitions to them contained in the field manuals would suffice.

There were some other signs of interest, but these concentrated almost entirely on the recovery of looted objects after the war. A Conference of Allied Ministers of Education had been formed in October 1942 to plan the cultural rehabilitation of the Continent and by midsummer 1943 was studying the thorny problem of restitution. The representatives of the occupied countries, who dominated the organization, were naturally more interested in this than the British; by far the most active of them was Karol Estreicher, the Polish representative, whose reports and letters to Francis Henry Taylor had greatly encouraged the latter's efforts.

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the General in the area," respectively¹⁴), there was markedly less enthusiasm for moving the cache at Siegen. The Eighth Division still proudly guarded the premises, which had become a military tourist attraction of sorts. Signs all over Aachen directed the curious to the mine. Soldiers were shown around and allowed to try on what they believed was Charlemagne's crown, but was in fact a reproduction. The contents of the mine were suffering terribly in the dampness, which could not be controlled without electric power; but there seemed to be no other place to take them.

Things came to a head when trucks, rare as hen's teeth, suddenly became available. Taking matters into his own hands, Walker Hancock loaded the convoy with items from Cologne and the Charlemagne relics from Aachen and sent them off to the vaults of the cathedrals of those two cities, virtually the only buildings left standing. Labor to load and unload was miraculously produced by the resourceful Kovalyak from local prisons and DP camps. This shipment violated every Army rule: no clearances for movement between different commands were obtained, and the objects were returned to the Germans. The trucks going to Aachen, surprisingly, had French drivers, reputed to be reckless. Hancock told them that they were transporting "Charlemagne himself . . . the robe of the Blessed Virgin, the swaddling clothes of the Infant Jesus, the shroud of John the Baptist, and the bones of several other saints." Thus imbued with the fear of divine retribution, the Frenchmen drove the trucks with infinite care.¹⁵

The rest of the contents of Siegen did not fare so well. Struggling with famished laborers and ever more difficult transportation problems, Lamont Moore and Stout did not get the objects out until the first week of June. At the Stadtsarchiv in Marburg the Siegen treasures joined the Bernerode paintings. The delay and waves made at various headquarters had not been all bad. On May 20 word finally came from SHAEF that in order to carry out earlier directives, commanders should "with the advice of MFAA specialist officers reserve and properly equip for use as collecting depots for works of art . . . buildings suitable for the purpose."¹⁶ Marburg thus became the first official American "Collecting Point" operating in Germany. *Faute de mieux* the Army had become, as the Roberts Commission planners and John Nicholas Brown had foreseen, responsible for a staggering horde. And it was about to increase a hundredfold.

Just after the middle of April the American Third and Seventh Armies, joined by the French First Army, now all well within Germany, had turned southeast toward Bavaria and Austria. They reached Neuschwanstein on the twenty-eighth, Munich on the thirtieth, Berchtesgaden on May 4, and Alt Aussee on May 8. Rorimer, armed with Rose Valland's information



Siegen, 1945: Eighth Infantry Division in the museum business

arrived at Neuschwanstein just a week later. On the way there the accuracy of her information had been confirmed at the Monastery of Buxheim, also on her list, where Rorimer got a foretaste of what was to come: here were seventy-two boxes marked "D-W"—for David-Weill—still bearing the French shipping labels. Rorimer's reception was not friendly. The custodian had at first refused to open the doors. Inside, the corridors were stacked with beautiful furniture of all periods and nations, from French to Russian, and the chapel floor was covered with layers of rugs and tapestries a foot deep. In adjoining rooms he found a dormitory for a hundred evacuated children.¹⁷

Leaving this "minor" deposit under guard, Rorimer went on to the incredible castle at Füssen. Neuschwanstein was intact and well guarded, though it was clear from gaps in certain rooms that the ERR had made great efforts to remove what they could at the last minute. Rorimer was amazed to find more than thirteen hundred paintings from the Bavarian museums mixed in with the confiscated French works. In a vault behind a hidden steel door were boxes containing the Rothschild jewels, other precious goldsmith's work, and more than a thousand pieces of silver from the David-Weill collections. Best of all was a room containing all the meticulously kept ERR records: well over twenty thousand catalogue

cards, each representing a confiscated work or group of works, eight thousand negatives, shipping books, and even the rubber stamps with which the code names of the various collections had been marked on frames and boxes. Rorimer locked this chamber very carefully, and, using an antique Rothschild emblem, added wax seals to the door, which the guards were ordered to inspect regularly.

From the venerable custodian of the castle Rorimer learned that Bruno Lohse and a colleague were lodged in a nursing home in the town. The matron of the house, referring to the Nazis as "dogs and fiends," took Rorimer, who had brought along Counter Intelligence officers, in to see the two ERR operatives. Lohse gave Rorimer the names of the other ERR repositories, but pretended to know nothing more; to improve his memory he was arrested and locked up in the local jail.

The Neuschwanstein deposits were impressive, but no one yet knew the location of the most important items, those which had been supplied to Goering and Hitler. Following the trail, Rorimer, now accompanied by Calvin Hathaway, cautiously entered the newly conquered country to the southeast, passing the road to Schliersee, where Hans Frank would shortly be arrested, and going on to the beautiful Chiemsee with its twin islands. On one was an ancient Benedictine abbey and on the other another of Ludwig II's castles, Herrenchiemsee, an expensive reproduction of Versailles, which contained three hundred more crates of ERR loot, along with the furniture of the Residenz in Munich and a large number of sight-seeing GIs.

From there they went on to Berchtesgaden. Here all was chaos. French troops had blocked the roads into the town and up to the ruins of Hitler's Berghof so that American troops could not move in, and after raising the French flag over Hitler's house had proceeded with great enthusiasm to loot it and all the other residences in the famous Nazi resort. Empty picture frames were scattered everywhere; two della Robbia tondi lay on the ground outside one of the tunnels which linked the houses. French officers were seen carrying off rugs and other objects. Order was only gradually being established by the crack American 101st Airborne Division under the command of General Maxwell Taylor.

A preliminary search of the vicinity turned up no major repository. Puzzled, Rorimer, after alerting the 101st to be on the lookout for a large cache, returned to his headquarters. On the way back he inspected and secured as best he could the Nazi party buildings in Munich, which had been looted and vandalized by the local citizenry before the entry of American troops, who were now joining in.¹⁸

Goering was worried about his collections too. The Reichsmarschall

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unlike many of his associates, had not swallowed poison, but had been arrested in some style, riding in his fancy car with Frau Emmy and much luggage, to what he had hoped would be a meeting with General Eisenhower himself at Schloss Fischhorn near Salzburg. In this he was disappointed; he was taken instead to a detention center at Augsburg.

Rorimer requested that Goering be interrogated about the location of his collections; meanwhile, further conversation with a now more cooperative Lohse confirmed that the probable site was Berchtesgaden, and that Hofer would probably be found wherever the art was. On May 14 Captain Zoller, a French interrogator who had sat up all night drinking wine with Goering, told Rorimer that the Reichsmarschall had announced that he was after all a "Renaissance type," and had talked at length about his collection and his intention of leaving it all to the German people. He was therefore "anxious to have his things saved." He himself had last seen them on his trains in the tunnel at Unterstein. Unlike Lohse, he doubted that Hofer would still be around.¹⁹

Rorimer and Hathaway rushed back to Berchtesgaden, where they learned that the day after Rorimer's previous visit officers of the 101st had indeed found Hofer, who had told them about the train, and Goering's housekeeper, who said that she had heard that things had been hidden in the passages under the houses. After some persuasion a German maintenance engineer had taken the officers to the walled-up bunker room, from which the dripping contents were taken to a small house at Unterstein. Then the 101st had started to unload the train. The news of these discoveries had never reached the MFAA officers.

While Rorimer was discussing the finds with Captain Harry Anderson, the officer in charge, Hofer and his wife (who had once worked in New York) walked up as if nothing in the world had happened, presented themselves, and asked about mutual acquaintances in America. After these politesses, they all examined the pictures gathered so far and then went on to the Goering villa. The della Robbias were still there, smashed to bits, as the intelligence officer who had been instructed to put them in a safe place had disagreed with Met curator Rorimer's attribution and left them on the ground.

Later, back at the little house to which the contents of the train had been taken, from Hofer began to flow the provenances of Goering's acquisitions. Rorimer and Hathaway recognized one well-known collector or dealer's name after another as Hofer unabashedly worked through the stacks of pictures. Here, in total disorder, were the Louvre's fifteenth-century sculpture *La Belle Allemande*; a Rubens which had once belonged to Richelieu from the Koenigs collection; a Masolino bought from Contini

in Florence; and hundreds more. Inside and outside the train itself they found all Goering's art records, rifled and in terrible confusion. Hathaway worked through the night to put them in some order, after which the 101st, overreacting to their custodial responsibilities, refused to let him take them to MFAA headquarters for analysis. In the National Archives today, the muddy footprints of World War II boots still adorn these documents of greed.

Taking care of Goering's Berchtesgaden cache was a curator's nightmare. More than a thousand paintings and sculptures were scattered in at least six different structures, and it was most urgent to consolidate them in one place which could be guarded. The town was deluged with the curious. With great reluctance Rorimer agreed to let the 101st, which had put up a sign reading, "Hermann Goering's Art Collection Through the Courtesy of the 101st Airborne Division" over the door of the storage area, show a few items to the press. Hofer, who by now had been put under house arrest by Rorimer, but who was essential to the ordering of the collection, nearly stole the show, carelessly picking up and waving about Rembrandts and Rubens as he held forth to the media. When Rorimer warned him to be more careful, Hofer murmured, "If the Herr Leutnant will forgive me, I will be responsible for the Goering Treasures." Rorimer, who knew rather more than the reporters of the unsavory background of the collection, unceremoniously corrected Hofer's assumption. But the wily curator had had his little triumph. Marguerite Higgins of the *New York Herald Tribune* reported that Hofer, in showing off the \$500 million worth of paintings, had insisted that every one had been "legally paid for." He even boasted, she said, "with a twinkle in his eye," about outbidding Hitler's agent for a Rembrandt. There was no mention of confiscations.²⁰

The story, complete with many photographs, made *Life* and *Time* the next week. *Time's* correspondent had clearly talked a bit more to the MFAA men, for he did cast doubt on Hofer's statements on legality, which included the extraordinarily blatant one that "everything taken from the Rothschild collection (which he said was 'collected') was later appraised by French experts and a price paid to the French state which of course was considerably in debt to Germany." The reporter gave a number of details about forced and otherwise dubious sales, noting that "there is considerable mention of the 'Task Force Rosenberg,' which as far as I could figure out went around France, Holland and Belgium, confiscating art collections."²¹ None of the articles mentioned the MFAA officers at all.

Art professionals looked at the collection from a different perspective. National Gallery chief curator Walker, who inspected it on July 21, wrote that Goering "was obviously swindled during the years he was buying pic-

tures, but he had excellent advice when it was a matter of looting. Superb paintings from the Rothschild, Koenigs, Goudstikker, Paul Rosenberg, Wildenstein and other private collections and dealers. His famous Vermeer is a fake which must have been painted four years ago for him."²²

Hofer's performance was topped by that of his former boss, who in the first days of his incarceration sent his valet, with an American escort, to see Frau Emmy and bring some clean laundry and, to while away the prison hours, an accordion. He also told his man to bring him the tiny Memling *Madonna* from the Rothschild collection, which was part of his wife's "nest egg." Piously stating that it did not belong to him, but was "from the Louvre,"

he presented it to one of his American jailers. The valet later testified that Goering had told him that the intended recipient was "a German-born naturalized American citizen who had migrated to America in 1928 and that he was the son of a Prussian Security Police master musician." The issue of this rather unusually talented father spoke German fluently with a Berlin accent, and "Goering frequently visited this officer's billet, usually returning from these visits in the early morning hours and in a fairly intoxicated state." The Reichsmarschall had sadly misjudged the appeal both of the old country and bribery to his now thoroughly American captor. The painting, with a certain amount of fuss, was returned to the 101st Airborne, and Frau Emmy was relieved of her remaining insurance pictures.²³

In all these goings-on before the collection could be completely secured, two of the four little Memling *Angels* from the Goudstikker collection, which had also been taken from Frau Emmy and put with the rest, a Cranach, and two small van Goyen landscapes disappeared, as did a tiny painting of Madame de Pompadour attributed to Boucher. An American officer had found it lying somewhere in Berchtesgaden. On his next fur-



Walter Andreas Hofer meets the press at Berchtesgaden.

lough he took it to Paris and presented it, in a paper bag, to a lady friend serving in an American agency. She liked it, but thought nothing of it, and eventually brought it home. A few years later she married someone else, and hung it in a corner. It was not until much later that someone remarked that it looked like a good painting. Investigation revealed not only the attribution but that it had been confiscated from a branch of the French Rothschilds, who had long since collected their insurance and did not wish to revive old problems. The chance owners still have it, now rather more prominently displayed, in their drawing room.

After the first excitement, the tedious work of inventorying began. Lists had to be made of what was in American hands, and compared to other lists gleaned from interrogations and Goering's records. Only then would the officers know what was missing. An appeal to the good burghers of Berchtesgaden to turn in "found objects" did not get much response. Later their depredations would be more carefully investigated, but for now the MFAA had more than enough to handle: on May 8 Third Army had reached Alt Aussee, which by its sheer magnitude would eclipse every other find.

The arrival of the American presence had not been very dramatic. Commanded by Major Ralph Pearson, two jeeps and a truck full of soldiers of the Eightieth U.S. Infantry crept carefully up the steep roads to the mine head to check on the reputed repository. They were especially alert because they were entering the heart of the "Alpine Redoubt," which was supposed to be the last bastion of the fanatic core of the Nazi establishment, and they were not sure if word of Germany's surrender had reached this remote region, or that it would be honored even if it had. Not only was there no resistance: the machine-gun-toting guards sent by Eigruber surrendered like lambs, and Major Pearson was soon overwhelmed by helpful mine and cultural officials who fell all over themselves in their desire to claim credit for having saved the works of art.²⁴ The Americans were shown the famous bombs, and a folksy group photograph of mine workers, GIs, and art guardians was duly taken. (This image, which was widely distributed, identified the whole group as "Austrian Resistance Movement miners.") For the time being the Americans remained unaware of the exact roles of the Alt-Aussee personnel; they were more concerned with establishing order in the town and protecting the vast mine.

Posey and Kirstein, called to inspect, were delayed at the foot of the steep road up to Alt Aussee for hours by still fully armed but cheerful elements of the German Sixth Army and their camp followers, who were descending to the prisoner-of-war cages near Salzburg to surrender. Once at the minehead, it did not take architect Posey long to open an access

Monuments officers in Austria examine returned Holy Roman regalia. Left to right: unidentified officer, Andrew Ritchie, Perry Cott, Ernest De Wald



River at Ochsenfurt, and, turning lumberjack, managed to float them down to Würzburg. Later he was called upon to retrieve a barge full of medieval manuscripts which had been seen floating down the Rhine. This was found just downriver from Castle Rothenfels, which was being used to quarantine typhus cases. Giving the castle a wide berth, Skilton secured the barge. In it was the largest number of books he had ever seen in one place, which required two weeks of effort to bring to safety.³⁴

In general the Monuments officers in Germany had little time to become involved in such long-term projects. They travelled incessantly and usually alone. In the course of these peregrinations they gradually discovered more than two thousand caches in everything from castles to cowsheds, in which were hidden, often with great ingenuity, not only superb works of art but the records and artifacts of the maddest Nazi undertakings and most hideous experiments. The owners of the castles or the assigned guardians of the valuables greeted the Monuments men with attitudes ranging from

plated."⁵ It was no exaggeration: Brown's numbers were correct and ever-increasing.

The lines at which the Soviet and Allied forces had halted were not those agreed to as the boundaries of the final zones by the European Advisory Council during their long months of deliberation in London. Allied armies were more than a hundred miles into the proposed Soviet Zone of Germany along a four-hundred-mile front. On June 5 Stalin had refused to agree either to a summit meeting with Truman or to any convocation of the Allied Control Council if withdrawal to the agreed boundaries did not take place. With Eisenhower's approval Truman ordered this to begin in Germany on June 21. Stalin, still busy consolidating his hold on the east of Germany, moved the date forward to July 1. Nothing at all was decided about Austria, and Truman only suggested vaguely that arrangements there be "left to local commanders." The potential situation was frightening: British elements had been ordered out of Vienna by the Soviets, and no one knew if and when Stalin would make further demands.

Within the area of overlap, which included the salt-mine region of Thuringia, there were still hundreds of unevacuated repositories. Word of the withdrawal order reached the Roberts Commission through State Department channels. Fearing that the contents of the unevacuated caches would end up in Russian hands, a delegation rushed to see McCloy. After explaining that in their opinion "the American Army is at present in the position of Trustees who might be held accountable afterwards if it abandons the works of art now in its possession," they requested that "all works of art which had been looted by the Germans from any sources or were displaced and stored in the territory now occupied by our Army" be taken to the American Zone. McCloy immediately cabled Eisenhower to ask that the art be moved back along with Army materiel. The State Department endorsed this policy. Ten days later David Finley was called in on a Saturday afternoon by Civil Affairs director Hilldring to define more precisely what should be removed. The State Department had felt that collections in private or public collections indigenous to the region should not be included. The order, with this change, which Finley felt was not as clear as might be desired, was personally approved by President Truman and went out on June 18, 1945.⁶

The Army was told to comply with the instructions of the President "as fully as time permits."⁷ There was not much of that, as the withdrawal had been set for July 1. It is abundantly clear from Finley's memo that the RC knew that the Linz and Goering collections had been found, but had received no information as to their contents. Even less was known about the

objects which would now be added to those already in the American Zone. To remedy this unsatisfactory situation, preparations were immediately begun to dispatch John Walker to Germany to see exactly what the Army was holding; if there was to be any possibility of the United States receiving some of this booty, a matter that would presumably be settled by Pauley and Co. at the Reparations Conference in Moscow, which had convened on June 11, the RC wished to be prepared.

The diaries of all the Monuments men record sudden conferences, meetings, and changes of plan in the third week of June. Craig Smyth noted that Posey had suddenly gone to Frankfurt. "Reason for trip: order from War Department to hasten bringing in loot from areas that may be turned over to the Russians. Effort to get everything inside zone." On the twenty-first the Presidential directive was the subject of a major strategy session in Frankfurt that would be, until quite different motives brought them together later in the year, the only time so many representatives of the various Army groups and the SHAEF command would assemble in one place. (Indeed, so unusual was it for these officers to meet, and so militarized had they become, that when OSS operative James Plaut unexpectedly encountered Lincoln Kirstein, with whom he had been closely associated for years in efforts to launch what later became the Institute of Contemporary Art in Boston, they both came to attention and saluted.⁸)

It was clear to all that a great deal more storage space would be needed. On the following day, LaFarge and Rorimer went to Wiesbaden and managed to secure another large building, the Landesmuseum, the former bailiwick of Linz chief Voss, as their third Collecting Point.

Reception of the withdrawal directive accelerated the already feverish pace of the field operatives. George Stout, who had gone up to Alt Aussee on June 15 with his famous sheepskin coats to begin the six-week evacuation process, did not at first know of the Presidential directive. He managed to get off one convoy on June 16, but his whole careful plan was upset by the sudden removal of transport and the additional officers he had been promised. As there was still no telephone communication with Third Army, he went to Salzburg to phone Posey, and the reason for the schedule changes was soon explained.

Stout, who had been joined by his new assistant Thomas Carr Howe (director of the San Francisco Legion of Honor Museum) and Lamont Moore, was racing against time. On June 24 he "arranged to go on longer day 0400-2000." The logistics were exhausting. He was responsible not only for the moving and packing of the mass of objects but also for the care and feeding of the drivers, loaders, and guards; the organization of the convoys; and the rescue of trucks that broke down in remote places. Night



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