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On the Trail of Looted Books from the Second World War, Too Many Still Far from Home

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On the Trail of Looted Books from the Second World War, Too Many Still Far from Home

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Given the grossly inadequate attention to restitution of looted libraries in many countries represented here today, I complement our library sponsors in the City of Light, who host this conference seeking identity and location of victimized books – while posing the still divisive question of restitution – appropriately in the same city where in June 1940, the Einsatzstab Reichsleiter Rosenberg (ERR) was first organized specifically for library seizures within wartime occupation 77 years ago.

I address the conference title question from a pan-European perspective of what still appears a ‘Divided Continent’ – especially over restitution, 72 years after the end of the war. The cultural catastrophe of the most brutal war in history fought simultaneously on two Fronts left the Continent more divided than ever before in terms of cultural heritage. Too many victimized books, by virtue of their location at the end of the war, today remain prisoners of war and lost memory for owners or heirs far from their prewar homes, many still unidentified. While displaced archives won the attention of European leadership in the early 1990s (with some still unresolved today),¹ and art restitution still retains front page, interest in looted books has lagged far behind.

I apologize to friends and colleagues, if I repeat themes that many have heard from me before in a requested opening overview and all too little time.² I start once more by emphasizing the sharp contrast in Nazi library looting in Western Europe and on the Eastern Front. And then, which Nazi agency seized the library, where books ended the war, and who found them afterwards – my focal points again today, as we shall see, determined their postwar fate.

¹ As a reminder of remaining problems, see the volume launched in London simultaneously with the opening of this conference, 23 March, *Displaced Archives*, edited by James Lowry, with a preface by Eric Ketelaar (London: Routledge, 2017), with my own article– Grimsted “Pan-European Displaced Archives in the Russian Federation: Still Prisoners of War on the 70th Anniversary of V-E Day.”

² See the initial bibliographic note above.

Major Villains of Library Seizure: The Einsatzstab Rosenberg (ERR) and the RSHA.

A year after Adolf Hitler came to power in 1933, he appointed Estonian-born Alfred Rosenberg his ideological officer as the Führer's Commissioner for Supervision of the Entire Spiritual and Ideological Training of the Nazi Party (DBFU).³ When interrogated 12 years later, before his trial as one of the major war criminals in Nuremberg, Rosenberg was asked,

“Why were occupied countries of the West treated differently from occupied countries of the East?”

Rosenberg replied:

“Because those whom we considered our enemies in terms of our conception of the world are different in the West from those in the East. In the West there were Jewish organizations and Masonic lodges, and in the East there was only the Communist Party.”⁴

Rosenberg's ideological conception of the “Judaic-Masonic-Bolshevik Conspiracy,” helps clarify the contrasting priorities for library looting for his own ERR as well as his rivals of the Reich Security Main Office (Reichssicherheitshauptamt – RSHA), the two villains in focus here.

ERR Initial Destinations. While in war the Nazis sought to rid Europe of those three ‘enemies of the regime’, on the ideological front, Rosenberg and his colleagues prioritized seizure of their books and archives to study, believing the Nazi elite needed to better understand their enemies. Rosenberg's own N-S Party looting agency, the ERR, as an operative adjunct to his DBFU office, took advantage of war and occupation to seize enemy books on both fronts for the Hohe Schule, his planned postwar training center for the Nazi elite, as approved by his Führer.

The Central Library of the Hoch Schule (Zentralbibliothek der Hohen Schule der NSDAP, ZBHS) was already operating in Berlin by early 1939. By war's end over 600,000 choice books gathered from all over Europe were housed in the isolated mountain-top monastery of Tanzenberg, in Austrian Carinthia. Among the volumes from those three enemies, were the rare books and incunabulae from French collections of the Rothschilds, and the German banker Hans Fürstenberg, forced to flee Germany, who tried to save his collection by gifting part to the Bibliothèque Nationale.

³ Or in *German*, Beauftragter des Führers für die Überwachung der gesamten geistigen und weltanschaulichen Schulung und Erziehung der NSDAP).

⁴ “Testimony of Alfred Rosenberg, taken at Nurnberg, Germany” (29 Sep. 1945), “Reason for Harsh Treatment of Eastern Peoples,” in *Nazi Conspiracy and Aggression*, vol. 2, p. 1347.

Many major Jewish and Masonic priority library seizures in France, Belgium, and the Netherlands went to stock the Institute for the Study of the Jewish Question (IEJ) that Rosenberg inaugurated in Frankfurt am Main in March 1940. By 1943 the library had grown to half a million volumes. That year the IEJ started evacuating to Hungen, a quiet town 70 km northeast of Frankfurt, where they amassed over a million and a half volumes by 1945. Important Judaica from the Eastern Front came from Vilnius, Kyiv, and Minsk. Initially IEJ planned a Masonic department, but Himmler's SD units under the rival Reich Security Main Office (Reichssicherheitshauptamt – RSHA) won out for serious Masonic research, even in the height of war, and the ERR was forced to hand over many captured Masonic books and archives to the RSHA. Those the IEJ was able to retain from France and the Netherlands were evacuated to a hunting lodge in Hirzenheim, not far from Hungen.

The RSHA Amt VII Library Loot. As the Main State Security Office, combining the SD, the Gestapo, SiPO, and eventually the Abwehr, the RSHA indeed rivalled the ERR in its collected library resources and research programs on the 'enemies of the regime.' Already in 1934, even before the major Jewish book burnings and foreign looting, the Gestapo took over two of the largest Masonic lodges in Berlin as their Headquarters. The special Seventh Office (**Amt VII**) started in 1939 for "Ideological Research and Evaluation" (*Weltanschauliche Forschung und Auswertung*) was a state counterpart to Rosenberg's Party Hohe Schule institutes, also drawing heavily on Masonic and Jewish sources, especially from within Germany itself and areas incorporated into the Reich such as Austria and parts of Poland. The basements, reinforced as bomb shelters, became storage centers for their looted books and archives. By the end of the war, with Himmler's special interest in **Freemasonry**, the RSHA Amt VII amassed the largest Masonic collections archives ever assembled.⁵

RSHA Jewish holdings started with books gathered from fleeing Jews. Substantial growth came with the ravages of Kristallnacht in 1938, encompassing many key collections from areas such as Breslau and others newly annexed to the Reich. Surviving lists of collections shipped to their Jewish

⁵ See more details in Grimsted, "Twice Plundered or 'Twice Saved'?: Russia's 'Trophy' Archives and the Loot of the Reichssicherheitshauptamt," *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 15(2) (Fall 2001), pp. 191–244; and Grimsted, "Archival Loot of the Security Services (RSHA)," in *Returned from Russia: Nazi Archival Plunder in Western Europe and Recent Restitution Issues*, edited by P.K. Grimsted, F.J. Hoogewoud, and Eric Ketelaar (UK: Institute of Art and Law, 2007; paper edn with updated 'Afterword', 2013), pp. 33–64.

Library in Berlin in the late 1930s give statistics and often short titles of books from major Jewish collections in Eastern Europe, including Austria; many remain among RSHA records in the Bundesarchiv in Berlin, with a few more in Moscow.⁶ Other than those from the late 1930s, I've found only a few scattered SD seizure reports, but none of the type of ERR retrospective cumulative seizure lists that we are now posting in the new 'Looted Library' section of our ERR Project website.

Contrasting Seizures East and West. While ERR library looting was primarily limited to occupied countries, as the Wehrmacht extended German occupation throughout the Continent, RSHA units of the SD and Gestapo also encroached on major collections. Bitter turf wars ensued over Jewish and Masonic collections in Greece, as well as Masonic and socialist collections in Belgium and the Netherlands. Even in occupied Soviet lands, where Rosenberg took charge as Reich Minister in July 1941, when the ERR arrived in Smolensk, they found the SD already working in the Communist Party Archive the Soviets failed to evacuate. Its capture eventually fell to the ERR for their anti-Bolshevik research first in Vilnius and then in Silesia.⁷

The East-West contrast in library seizures, important to emphasize, extended to ownership patterns of victimized libraries. In Nazi-occupied countries in Western and Southern Europe, both the ERR and the RSHA looted books from private Masonic lodges and Jewish community institutions and private Jewish individuals. In [pre-1939] Soviet lands, where private property was long abolished, by contrast, Nazi book-looting targets were major state collections. The Masons had long been outlawed in the Soviet Union, their libraries confiscated. Sizeable private Jewish community collections were also nationalized, and many most valuable Hebrew holdings were sold off abroad in the late 1920s and early 1930s. But the ERR found important Jewish collections in the Baltic countries and Ukraine, and when they won out over SD rivals, those were rushed to Frankfurt for the IEJ.

Silesian Crossroads for Europe's Displaced Books.

⁶ See especially Grimsted, "Archival Loot of the Security Services (RSHA)," in *Returned from Russia*, pp. 47–55.

⁷ Grimsted, *The Odyssey of the Smolensk Archive: Plundered Communist Records for the Service of Anti-Communism*, *Carl Beck Papers in Russian and East European Studies*, no. 1201 (Pittsburg: REES, 1995), especially pp. 24–43.

With my emphasis on the Continental Divide, I in turn focus on Silesia and the Sudetenland. Both had been incorporated into the German Reich by the start of the Western Front. Both nonetheless became major crossroads for Europe's displaced books, providing remote storage and research sites for both ERR and RSHA library loot, when N-S evacuation orders for Berlin in 1943 followed intensified British bombing.⁸

The ERR Anti-Bolshevik Centre in Ratibor. Major ERR research and library operations, including the Book Control Office – Buchleitsstelle, together with unsorted books amassed from East and West were transferred in the summer of 1943, to the relatively isolated city of Ratibor (*postwar Polish Racibórz*), 70 km SW of Kattowitz (*now Polish Katowice*) in Silesia. Today, not even the director of the local museum or friars of the Franciscan Monastery, where the ERR established its headquarters, when I last visited, knew about the ERR operations there or the estimated over 2 million books the ERR had collected in well-disguised locations.

In Paris, a year before the invasion of the Soviet Union, the ERR had targeted the rich East European émigré libraries – the Turgenev Russian Library and the Petliura Ukrainian Library – whose books could serve their research aims on their ‘Bolshevik Enemy.’ Most of those books, when they arrived in Berlin, were allocated to its *Ostbücherei*, the special “Eastern Library,” an integral part of ERR anti-Bolshevik research and propaganda operations. Those two Paris émigré libraries both appear in a 1944 report from Ratibor in the Lagerplatz Synagogue (burnt out in Kristallnacht), one of the many buildings housing ERR operations. Socialist components from Paris, Brussels, and Amsterdam included the papers of Boris Souveraine, Fedor Dan, and Frederick Adler; part of the archives of the Second International and the Paris Branch of the International Institute of Social History. Books from the Eastern Front included at least 200,000 volumes assembled in Riga for the Ostbücherei.

Gerd Wunder, earlier in charge of ERR book seizures in Paris, headed a major research program on Bolshevism. In June 1943, following brutal defeat at Stalingrad and reversal on the Eastern Front, Rosenberg still justified his anti-Bolshevik Research Centre in Ratibor. As explained in a circular to his high command, “After two years of war in the East...,” it was more

⁸ See Grimsted, “Silesian Crossroads for Europe’s Displaced Books: Compensation or Prisoners of War?” in *The Future of the Lost Cultural Heritage: The documentation, identification and restitution of the cultural assets of WW II victims. Proceedings of the international academic conference in Český Krumlov (22.–24.11. 2005)*, ed. Mečislav Borák (Prague 2006), pp. 133–69; online at: <http://socialhistory.org/sites/default/files/docs/silesian.pdf>.

apparent than ever that “the Germans need to know more about Bolshevism to fight against it.” Besides, “Even after winning the war, the Germans have to be able to deal with the consequences of Bolshevism for many decades to come.”⁹ The Communist Party Archive from Dnepropetrovsk was transported to Ratibor with a major shipment from Ukraine in the fall of 1943. The Party Archive from Smolensk first went to a study center in Vilnius, but with German retreat from Soviet lands, was moved to the elegant castle of Pless (*now Polish Pszczyna*), a major Ratibor satellite facility. By the time of German retreat, the ERR had an estimated two to three million books in the Ratibor area, including large collections from Kharkiv, Minsk, and Kyiv. Looted books from the Balkans also came to Ratibor and a series of storage sites in the vicinity.

The RSHA Masonic Centre in Schliesersee. Before mid-1943, the RSHA concentrated virtually all of its captured books and archives, as well as its research operations, in the Reich capital. Starting in 1943, many were moved to Silesia. The only major **RSHA Amt VII** research operation continuing until January 1945 was the Masonic center in Himmler’s favorite lakeside castle on the Schliesersee (*now Polish Slawa*), 30 km NW of Glogau (*now Polish Glogów*).

Amt VII looted Masonic archives were housed in a former brewery in Wölfelsdorf (*now Polish Wilkanów*), further southeast, where the village castle and other buildings housed all of the captured Jewish and socialist archives the SD had collected in Western Europe.¹⁰

Sudenten Components: RSHA Jewish Masonic, and Occult Literature – Sudeten Castles and Terezín. Meanwhile RSHA library operations were established in four castles in the Sudetenland in the vicinity of Böhmisch-Leipa (*now Czech Česká Lípa*) to which the RSHA evacuated an estimated over a million looted books from Berlin. They were joined by at least one major shipment of Jewish collections from Kraków. The Castle of Niemes (Schloss Niemes, *now Czech Mimoň*) served as library headquarters. In the Bundesarchiv in Berlin I pieced together segments of a 400-page catalogue of books on occult disciplines from collections all over the Continent, prepared in Niemes in 1944. The castles of Hauska (*now Czech Houska*) and Neu-Pürstein (*now Czech Nový Berstejn*) were used for library storage, including Jewish collections

⁹ Will to Utikal, 21 June 1943, TsDAVO, 3676/1/22, fols. 79–81. As explained further in Grimsted, *The Odyssey of the Smolensk Archive: Plundered Communist Records for the Service of Anti-Communism*, “Carl Beck Papers in Russian and East European Studies,” no. 1201 (Pittsburg: REES, 1995), especially pp. 14–44.

¹⁰ See more details in Grimsted, in *Returned from Russia*, especially pp. 53–58.

from Poland, while a special top-secret occult research project continued in Schloss Neufalkenburg (*now Czech* Nový Falkenburk).¹¹

The RSHA left over half a million volumes of its Jewish and other holdings in bomb shelters of Gestapo Headquarters in Berlin. Major uncatalogued portions of the RSHA Jewish Library, with considerable Hebraica, was sent for cataloguing to the concentration camp of Teriesenstadt (*now Czech* Terezín), where leading incarcerated Jewish scholars were coerced to form the famous Talmud Brigade.

The ‘Continental Divide’ in Postwar Restitution: 1. Restitution Patterns in the West

Having described major concentrations of plundered books at the end of the war, as I continue to stress, who found them usually determined their sharply contrasting postwar fate. Eastern and Western armies may have shaken hands across the Elbe in the spring of 1945, but there were no handshakes across the Continental Divide for library restitution, only further displacement of Europe’s library heritage. The Western Allies, craving recuperation and dedicated to return of stolen cultural loot, organized systematic book restitution (repatriation) programs. Although in many cases of ‘heirless’ for Jewish losses, they agreed to ‘redistribution’ of lost heritage to in response to the catastrophic population loss in the Holocaust and resettlement beyond the Continent.

Library restitution patterns in the West have been well studied, but as lesser-known examples, I’d like to mention some major book collections of Soviet provenance that went home from the West, but with no reciprocity for the books the Red Army captured in Silesia.

British Library Repatriation: Tanzenberg (Austria). The major concentration the ERR had gathered for Rosenberg’s Central Library of the Hohe Schule (ZBHS) ended the war in the monastery of **Tanzenberg**, that fell in the British Occupation Zone in Austria. The British captured some of the ERR staff and kept them under house arrest to prepare the over 600,000 volumes amassed there for restitution. Even 35,000 rare books that the Künsberg Commandos had captured from the former Russian imperial library in suburban Leningrad were among the 67,000

¹¹ See Grimsted, “Sudeten Crossroads for Europe’s Displaced Books: The ‘Mysterious Twilight’ of the RSHA Amt VII Library and the Fate of a Million Victims of War”, in *Restitution of Confiscated Works—Wish or Reality? Documentation, identification and restitution of Cultural property of the victims of World War II. Proceedings of the international academic conference held in Liberec, 24-26 October 2007* (Prague, 2008), pp. 123–80.

volumes that went back to the USSR across the Continental Divide, along with others from Voronezh, Novgorod, and Kyiv. Although Soviet authorities never admitted their receipt, I have traced a few titles back to the Palace Library in Tsarskoe Selo.¹² Other books returned to the USSR never made it back to their home libraries, given the postwar Soviet crisis situation, some even listed in recent Russian ‘lost book’ registers.¹³

Most of the books that couldn’t be returned from Tanzenberg went to the University Library in Vienna, where over the past ten years librarians have been carefully identifying their remaining “Tanzenberg Collection.”¹⁴ “Heirless” books of Jewish provenance from Tanzenberg mostly went to Jerusalem.¹⁵

U.S. Library Repatriation from the Offenbach Archival Depot (OAD). The Offenbach Archival Depot, housed in a building within the I.G. Farben complex just outside of Frankfurt, has often been called “the Antithesis to the ERR” in that it returned over three million books to the countries from which the ERR had looted them. To be sure the U.S. Army MFA&A brought in almost two million volumes from the IEJ evacuation center in Hungen, and the Masonic archives from Herzenheim, as well as the books that could be saved from rot among the hundreds of thousands that IEJ had left in Frankfurt bomb shelters. OAD also received the few books the ERR had brought with them from Ratibor and from surviving Berlin units to their evacuation retreat in Schloss Banz and nearby Stäffelstein in Bavaria. Actually the U.S. Army had shipped hundreds of thousands of books the RSHA had left in Berlin to OAD for processing, among those brought in seized by other Nazi agencies.

As a Cold War example, for half a century, the Russians claimed no books were ever returned from the West. It wasn’t until my participation in a 2005 library conference in Saint Petersburg that I succeeded in convincing Russian librarians to believe my documentation about U.S. restitution to the USSR in 1948 from OAD of 230,000 volumes in eight freight cars that I

¹² Grimsted, “Knigi iz Tsarskogo Sela vozvrashchaiutsia domoi s voyny,” in *Kniga. Issledovaniia i materialy/ Book. Researches and Materials, Sbornik 84* (Moscow: Nauka, 2005), pp. 72–94.

¹³ Grimsted, “Rare Books from Voronezh in Tartu and Tanzenberg: From Nazi Plunder and British Restitution to Russian ‘Lost Book Treasures’,” *Solanus* 18 (2004), pp. 72–107.

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traced back to Moscow.¹⁶ A recent U.S. library mapping project shows book markings from the Eastern Front linked to albums prepared for sorting books at OAD.¹⁷

To be fair, I should also mention a few examples of American non-restitution from OAD, such as the famous 500+ files of the Smolensk CP Archive the MFA&A found in Bavaria and sent to Offenbach; later removed by U.S. Army intelligence officers and flown to Arlington—in an early Cold War example! Those 500+ files ended up in the U.S. National Archives until their return to Moscow in 2002!¹⁸

The ‘Heirless’ Legacy and Jewish Redistribution (JCR and JRSO). Also to be mentioned is the issue of the half million books of Jewish individual and community provenance declared ‘heirless’ at OAD, that went to JSRO and JCR for redistribution to Jewish communities throughout the world, and especially to Jerusalem. And there were the six crates of rare books and manuscripts stolen from OAD and shipped to Jerusalem against high U.S. Army orders.

It should also be mentioned that despite extensive Western Allied repatriation to countries of seizure, recent researchers have been finding examples in several countries where inadequate efforts were made for restitution to individual and institutional victims; instead books were sold or, in some cases, turned over to state libraries.

The ‘Continental Divide’ in Postwar Restitution: 2: Non-Restitution from the Eastern Front. Meanwhile, for the triumphal dictator on the Eastern Front, reparations were more important than restitution in the cultural sphere. Stalin and his Soviet Trophy Brigades paid no heed to the postwar Four-power Allied agreements, which never included cultural reparations or ‘restitution in kind’, and had no respect for international law. Estimates run as high as 12 million volumes

¹⁶ The National Library of Russia (RNB) published my documented article in 2006: “Pokhishchennye natsistami knigi vozvrashchaiutsia s voiny: zabytaia istoriia britanskoi i amerikanskoi bibliotechnoi restitutsii v SSSR,” in *Istoriia bibliotek. Sbornik nauchnykh trudov* 6 (St. Petersburg: Rossiiskaia natsional’naia biblioteka, 2006), pp. 242–93. Originally presented as a paper at the Russian Library Association, Section for the History of the Book, St. Petersburg conference (May 2005). Includes images and facsimiles of Russian documents regarding postwar American and British library restitution, which earlier had been denied in Russian/Soviet accounts.

¹⁷ See

https://www.flickr.com/photos/36988361@N08/sets/72157637913299945/map?&fLat=52.4024&fLon=42.2753&zl=4&order_by=recent

¹⁸ See Grimsted and related accounts in *Vozvrashchenie “Smolenskogo arkhiva”/ The Return of the “Smolensk Archive,”* Bilingual edn, edited by Marianna Tax Choldin, K.A. Dritrieva, E. Iu. Genieva, and P.K. Grimsted (Moscow: ROSSPEN, 2005).

that were among the countless echelons of cultural trophies from East Germany to the Soviet Union to celebrate Soviet Victory and avenge the brutal losses and devastation.¹⁹ Only a small percentage were wartime looted books, because most were major German library collections, even including the bibliophile treasures of the Leipzig Museum of the Book, along with two Guttenberg Bibles.

From Silesia to Minsk and Beyond. For the estimated two to three million volumes that the ERR had collected from East and West in Ratibor, like the books and archives the RSHA were forced to abandon, there was only one-way traffic on postwar Silesian crossroads. Those from the West, with few exceptions, became lost memory of the personal and private institutional libraries represented. The roads bringing millions of books from occupied Soviet lands that converged in Silesia with those brought from the West determined the postwar fate of too many Western libraries. As the Germans retreated from Silesia, they moved one or perhaps two million books to warehouses near **Kattowitz** (*now Polish Katowice*). In a final report Germans expressed the hope they could return to use those books again, but feared, “the books would be captured by the Bolsheviks.”²⁰

On the way to Berlin in March the Red Army found an abandoned German echelon of wagons in the railroad junction near Pless. Four and a half railroad wagons containing records from the Smolensk Party Archive were routed home to Smolensk by May. 580 crates from the Academy of Sciences Library of the Belorussian SSR retrieved from Pless arrived in Minsk in April; another report suggested 100,000 books and 80,000 volumes of serials.²¹

Later in May 1945, a Red Army Trophy Brigade discovered the two warehouses near Kattowitz where the ERR had left an estimated 1.5 million volumes, or between 4,000–5,000 German crates. The Soviets used that site as a collecting point for additional library materials found in the Silesian vicinity. The large number of books identified from Belorussian and Baltic libraries was the pretext for a major echelon to Minsk of 54 wagons in October 1945, with an estimated 1.2 million books. While over half the books were coming home to Soviet Belorussian

¹⁹ Given the still-classified records of military trophy missions and transports, and recent reclassified of other related archives in Russia has increased the difficulties of accurate appraisal.

²⁰ Utikal, “Aktenvermerk für den Reichsleiter – Dienstgut in Oberschlesien,” 25 January 1945, BArch Berlin-Lichterfelde, NS 8/261.

²¹ Grimsted, *Odyssey of the Smolensk Archive*, pp. 44–48.

and Baltic libraries, most of the estimated half a million were privately owned books from Western Europe, with some from the Balkans. I first reported about the “Road to Minsk for Western Trophy Books” at a library conference in Minsk in 2003, and was able to stay on for more intensive research and consultations.²²

Since 1992 independence Belarus specialists have done considerable provenance research, as revealed in the extensive card catalogues with provenance data in the Rare Book Division of the National Library. Now many of the looted books can be searched in online Internet catalogues, although not all (or their provenance data) appear there. Following a 2014 colloquium in Paris organized by Sophie Coeuré and sponsored by the Turgenev Russian Library (BRT), our ENSSIB conference hosts’ journal *BBF* last November published two of the reports, including Belarusian historian Anatolii Steburaka’s discussion of French Masonic manuscripts and other French manuscript treasures he has identified in Minsk.²³

Last September (2016) Anatolii Steburaka was a most welcoming host for a week-long seminar in Minsk for several of us here today, with Martine Poulain, Michel Vermote (Belgium), and Claims Conference Research Director, Wesley Fisher. We all had to agree it was purely a library research visit with no discussion of restitution or any legal issues. We have yet to publish a full report on our visits and findings in three major libraries.²⁴ I further verified the victims’ names on our French and Belgian ERR library seizure lists and chart (being prepared for the Internet) with NBB card catalogues, identifying well over 100 names of ERR victimized French individual and institutional libraries from which books are now in Minsk.²⁵ Michel Vermote checked more from Belgium. Wesley Fisher has since arranged permission for our ERR Project website to include the CD ROM with images of 65 title pages with famous French autographs, published in

²² Grimsted, “The Road to Minsk for Western ‘Trophy’ Books: Twice Plundered but Not Yet Home from the War,” *Libraries & Culture*, 39, no. 4 (Fall 2004), pp. 351–404; at: <http://socialhistory.org/sites/default/files/docs/libcult.pdf>.

²³ See also, Anatole Steburaka, “De quelques livres et archives des Reinach spoliés sous l’Occupation et retrouvés à Minsk (Belarus),” Séance du 3 juillet, at <http://www.aibl.fr/seances-et-manifestations/les-seances-du-vendredi/seances-2015/juillet-2015/article/seance-du-3-juillet?lang=fr>. See also Grimsted, “Livres et archives pillés en France par l’Einsatzstab Reichsleiter Rosenberg (ERR): La Bibliothèque Tourguéniev et les fonds français déplacés à Minsk,” *Bulletin des bibliothèques de France*, no. 10 (November 2016); **Online version** (lacking images), at http://bbf.enssib.fr/matieres-a-penser/livres-et-archives-pilles-en-france-par-l-einsatzstab-reichsleiter-rosenberg-err_67074.

²⁴ We are all very grateful to Anatolii Steburaka for arranging the seminar in Minsk and to the various libraries that received us so openly.

²⁵ At http://www.cfaj.fr/publicat/listes_ERR_France.html. An English version is available at www.errproject.org/libraries.php.

2011 by the National Library (NBB); he has translated into English the fascinating introduction about the books and the relations of their owners by retired Belarus Professor Makarov. Many more books from the victimized libraries of the individuals to whom those books are dedicated remain among the hundreds of thousands of Western books still in Minsk, virtually all looted by the ERR.²⁶

To be sure Belarus libraries are proud to have so many valuable and culturally significant French books, with autographs by such famous French writers and statesmen as Marcel Proust, Louise Weiss, Georges Clemenceau, Léon Blum, and numerous members of the Rothschild clan, even if most were under raps and some purged during the Soviet period. As but one example, I was saddened in the NBB Manuscript Department to examine an elegantly leather-bound memorial volume with collected necrologies of the prominent French banker and bibliophile, James-Edouard, Baron de Rothschild (1844–1881), son of the founding father of the French Rothschild clan. When I was the first to sign the accompanying blank readers' list last September, I couldn't help thinking that manuscript should be with the Rothschild heirs in Paris, if not on exhibit in the Rothschild Archive in London.²⁷ One manuscript volume of his father's famous library catalogue is also there, another volume was returned to Paris from Tanzenberg after the war.²⁸

RSHA Loot in Poland and Roads to Moscow and Kyiv. Meanwhile more books that the RSHA had evacuated from Berlin to Silesia, along with parts of the ERR Western loot the Red Army left behind, ended up in Polish hands. Hence even today, for example, we find close to 100,000 Masonic books from the Schliesersee Masonic Centre in a branch of Poznan University Library in the palace of Ciążeń; the largest remaining portion is from German Masonic lodges.

Meanwhile, a good number of books were intermixed in the RSHA Amt VII Masonic and Jewish archival collections that ended the war in the RSHA archival evacuation center in

²⁶ *Frantsuzskie avtografy v fonde Natsional'noi biblioteki Belarusi*, comp. S.G. Pakhomenkova and A.N. Steburaka; edited with an introduction by V.V. Makarov; CD Rom edn (Minsk: Natsionalnaia biblioteka Belarusi, 2011); see the English version at www.errproject.org/libraries.php.

²⁷ "En souvenir du Baron James-Edouard de Rothschild, Né 28 Octobre 1844, Mort le 25 Octobre 1881," NBB, MS Department; see also "Catalogue des collections artistiques du B^{on} Adolphe de Rothschild," NBB, MS.

²⁸ "Extrait du Catalogue général des livres de M. le baron James de Rothschild" (NBB, MS ca.1860). See the published catalogue covering 3,382 volumes: James, Baron de Rothschild, *Catalogue de livres composant la bibliothèque de feu M. le baron James de Rothschild*, ed. Emile Picot, 5 vols. (Paris, D. Morgand, 1884–1920; reprinted: New York: B. Franklin, [1967]). Also in NBB is an elegant leather-bound 70-volume special edition of the works of Voltaire (Paris, 1785–1801), with engravings by J. M. Moreau, bearing his *ex libris*.

Wolfelsdorf (*now Polish Wilkanów*), all of which Stalin's security chief Leonid Beria ordered to Moscow in September 1945. After deposit in the famous Special – or in Russian Osobyi – Archive in Moscow. most of those books were separated from the archives; despite recent archival returns to Western Europe, as far as I know, the books remain on back shelves in RGVA.

Belgian colleagues, when searching for more missing Belgian archives in the early 1990s, identified many books in Warsaw, most with owners' library markings removed. Several important German music collections evacuated to Poland during the war ended up in various Polish collections, while the many books and manuscripts that were not transferred to Kyiv with the Sing-Akademie music archive – returned to Berlin in 2001 – have been spotted in Moscow.²⁹

Ukrainian reports on the major batch of ERR archives arriving in Kyiv suggest many books came with them. A young Ukrainian historian is still keeping me posted on her search for their traces. She identified about 50 in the Central Library of the Ukrainian Archival Administration (Dezhkomarkhiv), many with various ERR stamps.

Soviet scouts also found some choice books the RSHA had left in Berlin Gestapo Headquarters, according to a Moscow report, including part of Artur Rubinstein's library from Paris, before he fled to the States, with some important music scores bearing autograph dedications. And some returns were made locally before the much larger U.S. shipment to OAD. Some of the half-million books the RSHA left in the Berlin bomb shelters of the Masonic buildings on Eisenachstrasse and Emmserstrasse, were distributed locally after the war, before the Americans moved a large portion to Offenbach. But even before the Americans, I found a, that at least on choice segment was carted off to Moscow by the Soviets.

RSHA Loot from Sudeten Castles and Terezín. A contrasting fate awaited the estimated million books looted by the RSHA that ended the war in four Sudeten castles and the Terezin concentration camp. Although the Red Army liberated Czechoslovakia in 1945, no evidence suggests any of those RSHA-looted books were transported to the Soviet Union. After the Sudetenland was again part of Czechoslovakia, there was some appraisal of the books found in the castles. Already in 1945, the Poles sent several freight-cars to Mimoň to bring books home,

²⁹ Grimsted, "Bach Is Back in Berlin: The Return of the Sing-Akademie Archive from Ukraine in the Context of Displaced Cultural Treasures and Restitution Politics," *Spoils of War: International Newsletter*, no. 8 (May 2003), pp. 67–104.

including many Jewish treasures from the Warsaw Great Synagogue. Before the Communist regime clamped down in 1948, books were returned to other countries including France, the Netherlands, and Germany. Other books were widely distributed to Czech libraries. Many hundreds of the Jewish books and Hebraica from Terezin transported to Prague after the war had to be destroyed, because of infectious mold with no treatment facilities available. There was limited distribution to individual families. An estimated 70,000 books were sent to the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. As we will hear from our Prague colleague, the Jewish books that survived are now being well catalogued with detailed provenance data in the Jewish Museum in Prague.³⁰

Less fortunate were the estimated several hundred thousand books from the castles that were later relegated to a warehouse depository under the National Library in the chemical center of Neratovice not far from Prague. During the next half century, they became intermixed with books confiscated by the Communist Regime. Starting in 2015, the Czech National Library undertook a project to catalogue the estimated million books still there with EU-and mostly Norwegian funding. The aim was for preliminary cataloguing of as many books as possible.³¹ But in sharp contrast to the sophisticated database with provenance markings in the Jewish Museum a few blocks away, the last I heard the Klementinum project director never answered offers of assistance from our colleague here today from the Raubgut Project in Berlin, and has yet to recommend full catalogue disclosure of provenance data or eventual repatriation plans.

Conclusion: A Still Lost Library in Rome.

Just as I was formulating my conclusion, I received an e-mail from a colleague in Rome, who has been urging me to prepare an evaluation of the earlier Italian “Tedeschi Presidential Commission Report” about the still-lost library of the Jewish Community of Rome. We know that the ERR reportedly shipped the library to Frankfurt in December 1943, but whereas many books from another major Jewish library returned to Rome from OAD, no books have surfaced since from the exceptionally valuable Community Library. I could assure her in reply that I have still found no

³⁰ See Grimsted, “Sudeten Crossroads,” pp. 164–79; at: http://socialhistory.org/sites/default/files/docs/pkg-sudeten_crossroads.pdf. I am grateful to Michal Busek for his several publications and for past visits to his project. Several here today were with me for my last memorable visit in October 2015.

³¹ I am grateful to Czech hosts at the National Library for arranging a workshop about the project during my October 2015 visit for the Prague conference, and for taking me out to Neratovice and showing us some of the books in their processing center in a Prague suburb.

traces in the course of my research. The ‘still lost’ status and the anxiety of Italian colleagues for further investigation makes it regrettable our Italian colleague could not be with us today.

I also pointed out to my Italian colleague the latest and perhaps helpful publicity: that lost Jewish library in Rome has merited a separate chapter in Anders Rydell’s *The Book Thieves*, recently released this year in English.³² I strongly recommend that book to all of you as a most readable journalistic account to accompany my overview. In France Rydell focuses on the victimized library of the Alliance Israélite Universelle, as an example of the most important Jewish library seized, and the Turgenev Russian Library as the most important Russian émigré collection. Rydell’s broad sweep stretches from Berlin to Vilnius and Thessalonica, to Prague and Amsterdam, providing documented examples for my more general remarks in an appropriate pan-European context. His concluding emphasis on the emotional importance of a symbolic return of a long lost book to an individual heir near Birmingham merits attention, especially to confront those who might want to say it’s too late and prefer to halt funding for more discovery and restitution efforts, even 70 years after the tragic loss and dispersal of library heritage from so many European countries.

³² Anders Rydell, *The Book Thieves: The Nazi Looting of Europe’s Libraries and the Race to Return a Literary Inheritance*, translated by Henning Koch (New York: Viking, 2017); originally published in Swedish as *Boktjavarna. Jakten på de försvunna biblioteken* (Stockholm: Norstedts, 2016).