

## 1.3 The Looting of Judaica: Museum Collections, Community Collections and Private Collections – An Overview

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The *Descriptive Catalogue of Looted Judaica*<sup>121</sup>, originally produced in 2009 by the Claims Conference and the World Jewish Restitution Organization (WJRO) and updated in 2016, provides information on 70 countries, including data – if available – on looted Judaica collections, research projects to identify them, and in some cases information on successful restitutions. For some countries the information is extensive, based on years of research and state-financed projects. For other countries, however – mostly states that were only marginally affected by the Holocaust and its aftermath, as well as some countries of the former eastern Bloc – the information is sparser. In a report entitled *Holocaust-Era Looted Art: A Current World-Wide Overview*<sup>122</sup> published by the Claims Conference and WJRO at the end of 2014, fifty countries were reviewed in terms of their progress in conducting provenance research on looted art and subsequent restitutions (or the existence of governmental sanctioned art restitution measures). Generally speaking, provenance research on looted Judaica has only been conducted in countries that were or are involved in research on looted art. Thus the above mentioned overview and especially its finding that only four (4) countries can be labeled as having made major progress towards implementing the Washington Conference principles and the Terezin Declaration,<sup>123</sup> indicates that substantial provenance research and research projects on looted Judaica are for the most part still lacking.

The current overview is separated into three parts: while the first and main section focuses on countries that have been quite active in their research on looted Judaica (and therefore will be described in more detail), the second part focuses on countries that have marginally researched their Judaica collections. The third and last part concentrates on Judaica collections (including vanished collections) in countries that thus far have not conducted any (or insufficient) research. It is important to note that looted Judaica is often not country specific, since the re-distribution of looted Judaica during the Nazi regime and its further dispersal after the war, especially by the Soviet trophy brigades in the East and Jewish Restitution Successor Organization/Jewish Cultural Reconstruction in the west, was not necessarily bound by country borders.

Obviously the situations faced by countries vary greatly. Perhaps the most obvious divide is between countries on whose territory the killings and robbery of the Holocaust took place and those countries that may have been involved in the history of the Holocaust and its aftermath but were not sites of the genocide as such. Whether perpetrator or victim nations, countries where the local Jewish population was robbed face greater complications and generally larger quantities of looted

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<sup>121</sup> The compilation, updated in 2016, is based on information from existing published and unpublished literature and archives, as well as information obtained from experts in various countries. (Online available at: <http://art.claimscon.org/our-work/judaica/descriptive-catalogue-of-looted-judaica/>).

<sup>122</sup> Wesley Fisher, Ruth Weinberger, *Holocaust-Era Looted Art: A Current World-Wide Overview*. Paper presented at the ICOM Museum & Politics Conference, St. Petersburg, September 2014. Online at: <http://art.claimscon.org/our-work/looted-art-report/>.

<sup>123</sup> More information on the 1998 Washington Conference and the 2009 Terezin Declaration can be found at: <http://art.claimscon.org/resources/additional-resources-2/>.

cultural property in their museums than do countries that were simply the recipients of looted art and Judaica. Thus the challenges facing countries such as Germany and Ukraine are far greater than those facing countries such as Portugal and Canada.

### **Researched Looted Judaica Collections – Countries Mentioned in the Worldwide Overview**

The already mentioned *Worldwide Overview* singled out four countries that made major progress in researching and documenting looted artifacts and implementing the Principles of the 1998 Washington Conference on Holocaust-Era Assets<sup>124</sup> as well as the Terezin Declaration of 2009<sup>125</sup>: Austria, the Czech Republic, Germany and the Netherlands.

#### ***Austria:***

Austria's role during the Holocaust and its active participation in the looting and eventual murder of its Jewish community has been thoroughly documented and researched.<sup>126</sup> The organization mainly responsible for the looting of Austria's Jews was the Vugesta (*Verwertungsstelle für jüdisches Umzugsgut der Gestapo*; Gestapo Office for the Disposal of the Property of Jewish Emigrants). Between Vugesta's creation in early autumn 1940 until the end of the war, the organization was responsible for the looting of 5,000 – 6,000 apartments, including artworks and Judaica.<sup>127</sup> However, Adolf Eichmann's *Zentralstelle für Jüdische Auswanderung* (Central Office for Jewish Emigration), established in August 1938 to supervise the emigration and expulsion of Austria's Jews, equally played a significant role.<sup>128</sup>

The Viennese Jewish Community Library, once one of Europe's largest, had about 33,800 volumes in 1938. The collection included numerous very valuable books, among them 41 incunabula and 625 manuscripts, of which 300 were of high monetary value. After Austria's annexation (*Anschluss*) the library was confiscated by the RSHA (*Reichssicherheitshauptamt*) and eventually brought to the RSHA depot in Berlin.<sup>129</sup> As was the case with most libraries that were confiscated by the RSHA, the library of Vienna's Jewish community did not remain intact as a whole. It was partly transferred for

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<sup>124</sup> Links to the texts of these and related documents may be found at <http://art.claimscon.org/resources/additional-resources-2/>

<sup>125</sup> <http://www.holocausteraassets.eu/en/news-archive/detail/terezin-declaration/>; see also above.

<sup>126</sup> See for example the published reports by Austria's Historical Commission. All 49 volumes are searchable online: <http://www.boehrlau-verlag.com/histkom/>; In particular see: Clemens Jabloner, Brigitte Bailer-Galanda, Eva Blimlinger, Georg Graf, Robert Knight, Lorenz Mikoletzky, Bertrand Perz, Roman Sandgruber, Karl Stuhlpfarrer, and Alice Teichova (eds), *Schlussbericht der Historikerkommission der Republik Österreich. Vermögensentzug während der NS-Zeit sowie Rückstellungen und Entschädigungen seit 1945 in Österreich. Zusammenfassungen und Einschätzungen*, Wien 2004.

<sup>127</sup> For more information on the Vugesta, see: Sabine Loitfellner, "Die Rolle der Verwaltungsstelle für jüdisches Umzugsgut der Geheimen Staatspolizei (Vugesta) im NS-Kunstraub," Gabriele Anderl, Alexandra Caruso (eds), *NS-Kunstraub in Österreich und die Folgen*. Innsbruck 2005.

<sup>128</sup> See also: Gabriele Anderl, Dirk Rupnow and Alexandra-Eileen Wenck, *Die Zentralstelle für Jüdische Auswanderung als Beraubungsinstitution*, Wien/München 2004.

<sup>129</sup> According to forced laborer Ernst Grumach, RSHA's central library was initially in Berlin's Emser Strasse and later moved to Eisenacherstrasse 12 (see: CAHJP, p. 205-17, Grumach, Bericht, p. 3). Schidorsky states that it still later was moved to "a synagogue in Schöneberg", Münchener Strasse 37, without giving details (see: Dov Schidorsky, "Das Schicksal jüdischer Bibliotheken im Dritten Reich", Peter Vodosek and Manfred Komorowski (ed), *Bibliotheken während des Nationalsozialismus*, Teil II, Wiesbaden 1992, p. 194). The Münchener Strasse depot was given to RSHA after 1941 (see: Jörg Rudolph, "'Sämtliche Sendungen sind zu richten an...'. Das RSHA-Amt VII ‚Weltanschauliche Forschung und Auswertung‘ als Sammelstelle erbeuteter Archive und Bibliotheken," Michel Wildt (ed.), *Nachrichtendienst, politische Elite, Mordeinheit. Der Sicherheitsdienst des Reichsführers SS*, Hamburg 2003, p. 215).

safekeeping to Silesia and Northern Bohemia in 1943, specifically to the Niemes castle near Reichenberg, now Liberec. Other parts that remained at the RSHA's quarters located in Berlin probably burned down when the building was hit by a bomb. After the war, an attempt was made to reconstitute the library: accordingly, parts were brought back from the Niemes castle, while other book collections were restituted from the Offenbach Archival Depot as well as from the Synagogue Community of Düsseldorf. Yet other books, mostly manuscripts and incunabula, found their way into Warsaw's *Zydowski Instytut Historyczny* (Jewish Historical Institute).<sup>130</sup>

Vienna's old Jewish Museum, founded in 1895, shut down immediately after the *Anschluss* in March 1938. In 1939, the museum's objects were sent to the Museum of Ethnology.<sup>131</sup> Some objects were also sent to other museums, such as the Museum of Natural History or to Austria's National Library.<sup>132</sup> With the reestablishment of a new Jewish Museum<sup>133</sup> by the city of Vienna in 1990, the new museum eventually received from the IKG (*Israelitische Kultusgemeinde*; Austria's Jewish Community) on permanent loan holdings from Viennese synagogues or prayer houses that were destroyed during the pogrom of November 1938 and the restituted remnants of the prewar Jewish Museum. Since their postwar fate was not always straightforward, with objects being placed on the market or otherwise being lost, the prewar collection is far from complete.<sup>134</sup>

Unlike Germany, where the Jewish Restitution Successor Organization (JRSO) was assigned to deal with heirless Jewish property beginning in 1948, Austria's Second Restitution Claims Act,<sup>135</sup> enacted in February 1947, regulated all legal successions.<sup>136</sup> Consequently, the IKG became the legal successor to all Jewish institutions, associations, libraries and the like throughout Austria. However, the IKG's role during the Holocaust was also that of a repository for Jewish artifacts by individuals prior to their deportation. As a result of the Second Restitution Claims Act, the remainder collection of the old Jewish Museum became the legal property of the IKG. The old Jewish Museum at the time of the *Anschluss* was not only holding cultural assets that had belonged to the prewar Jewish Viennese community, and items that were on loan at the time were as much restituted to the IKG through the Second Restitution Claims Act as were objects that legally had belonged to the museum.<sup>137</sup>

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<sup>130</sup> Werner Hanak-Lettner, "Phantombibliothek und Bücherasyl. Ein Ausstellungskonzept als Einblick in die Bibliothek des Jüdischen Museums Wien," Stephan Alker, Christina Köstner and Markus Stumpf (eds.), *Bibliotheken in der NS-Zeit. Provenienzforschung und Bibliotheksgeschichte*, Göttingen 2008, p. 202; Patricia Kennedy Grimsted, "From Nazi Plunder to Russian Restitution", Patricia Kennedy Grimsted (ed.), *Returned from Russia: Nazi Archival Plunder in Western Europe and Recent Restitution Issues*, United Kingdom 2007, p. 53.

<sup>131</sup> Birgit Johler, Barbara Staudinger (eds.), *Von Dreideln, Mazżes und Beschneidungsmessern. Jüdische Dinge im Museum (= Objekte im Fokus, 1)*. Exhibition catalogue, Vienna, 2011. (In 2012 the Museum of Ethnology carried out a research project to explore its Judaica collection).

<sup>132</sup> Felicitas Heimann-Jelinek, "Fragments of Remembrance: Viennese Judaica Collections and More," Julie-Marthe Cohen, Felicitas Heimann-Jelinek (eds.), *Neglected Witnesses. The Fate of Ceremonial Objects During the Second World War and After*, Crickadarn 2011, p. 75.

<sup>133</sup> For more information on the Jewish Museum's provenance research, see: <http://www.jmw.at/en/provenance-research-restitution>.

<sup>134</sup> Heimann-Jelinek, *Fragments of Remembrance*, p. 71.

<sup>135</sup> The text of the second Restitution Claims Act can be found at: <http://www.provenienzforschung.gv.at/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/ZweitesRueckstellungsgesetz.pdf>.

<sup>136</sup> Heimann-Jelinek, p. 71.

<sup>137</sup> Idem.

In 1998 Austria passed its Art Restitution Act (*Bundesgesetz über die Rückgabe von Kunstgegenständen aus den Österreichischen Bundesmuseen und Sammlungen*).<sup>138</sup> Austria's Provenance Research Commission (Kommission für Provenienzforschung),<sup>139</sup> also founded in 1998, and the Restitution Committee (Kunstrückgabebeirat)<sup>140</sup> have dealt with a number of cases.<sup>141</sup> While Judaica objects are by no means a central focus, some Judaica has already been restituted.<sup>142</sup> However, extensive research into looted and vanished Judaica collections seems to be still lacking, in part since Austria's Historical Commission did not deal with the topic. Research that has been done on Judaica thus far has largely focused on looted books: spoliated books reached many libraries throughout Austria during World War II, having been collected by the Nazis for the so-called *Hobe Schule*, while others were acquired by the *Abnenerbe*.<sup>143</sup> Some of these objects can still be found in libraries throughout Austria, including the Jewish Museum in Vienna.<sup>144</sup> However it should be noted that numerous restitutions have already taken place, in particular by Austria's National Library<sup>145</sup> as well as by university libraries.<sup>146</sup>

### **Czech Republic**

As in Austria, much research has been conducted on Czechoslovakia's role during World War II.<sup>147</sup> Less than a year after Czechoslovakia was forced to cede the Sudetenland, in March 1938 Hitler invaded Bohemia and Moravia and declared these territories Germany's "Protectorate". The *Zentralstelle für Jüdische Auswanderung in Böhmen und Mähren* (Central Office for Jewish Emigration in Bohemia and Moravia),<sup>148</sup> set up on the Viennese model, served the purpose of accelerating the expulsion of both Czech and foreign Jews. The *Zentralstelle*, together with the Office of the Protectorate of the Reich (from 1943 onwards the German State Ministry for Bohemia and Moravia)

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<sup>138</sup> For more information, see: <http://www.provenienzforschung.gv.at/empfehlungen-des-beirats/gesetze/kunstruckgabegesetze/>

<sup>139</sup> See: <http://www.provenienzforschung.gv.at/>

<sup>140</sup> For more information, see: <http://www.provenienzforschung.gv.at/empfehlungen-des-beirats/>

<sup>141</sup> Successful restitutions are mentioned in the annual restitution reports. Online available at: <http://www.provenienzforschung.gv.at/empfehlungen-des-beirats/restitutionsbericht/>

<sup>142</sup> *Descriptive Catalogue*, pp. 83-84.

<sup>143</sup> The Ahnenerbe, founded in July 1935 by Heinrich Himmler, was a research institute with the aim to study the archaeological and cultural history of the Aryan race. For more information, see Michael Kater, *Das "Ahnenerbe" der SS 1935-1945: Ein Beitrag zur Kulturpolitik des Dritten Reichs*, Munich 2006.

<sup>144</sup> For more information, see: Felicitas Heimann-Jelinek, "Fragments of Remembrance: Viennese Judaica Collections and More," Julie-Marthe Cohen, Felicitas Heimann-Jelinek (eds.), *Neglected Witnesses. The Fate of Ceremonial Objects During the Second World War and After*, Crickadarn 2011; Richard Hacken, "The Jewish Community Library in Vienna: From Dispersion and Destruction to Partial Restoration," *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook*, 47 (2002), pp. 151-172; Werner Hanak-Lettner, "Phantombibliothek und Bücherysyl. Ein Ausstellungskonzept als Einblick in die Bibliothek des Jüdischen Museums Wien," Stephan Alker, Christina Köstner, Markus Stumpf (eds.), *Bibliotheken in der NS-Zeit. Provenienzforschung und Bibliotheksgeschichte*, Göttingen 2008.

<sup>145</sup> For an overview of provenance research being conducted by Austria's libraries and subsequent restitutions, in particular by Austria's National Library, see information provided by the *Descriptive Catalogue*, pp. 83-92. See also: <http://www.onb.ac.at/about/provenienzforschung.htm>, as well as: Murray Hall, Christina Köstner, ... *Allerlei für die Nationalbibliothek zu ergattern ...: eine österreichische Institution in der NS-Zeit*, Wien 2006.

<sup>146</sup> See: <http://bibliothek.univie.ac.at/provenienzforschung.html>

<sup>147</sup> Livia Rothkirchen, *The Jews of Bohemia and Moravia: Facing the Holocaust*, Lincoln/Jerusalem 2006; Thomas Sniegón, *Vanished History. The Holocaust in Czech and Slovak Historical Culture*, New York/Oxford 2014.

<sup>148</sup> The *Zentralstelle für jüdische Auswanderung*, the Central Bureau for Jewish Emigration, was set up on 26 July 1939. After 20 August 1942, it was renamed into the *Zentralamt zur Regelung der Judenfrage in Böhmen und Mähren*, the Central Bureau for the Regulation of the Jewish Question in Bohemia and Moravia. The bureau functioned as the Prague branch of Adolf Eichmann's Bureau IV B4 within the *Reichssicherheitshauptamt* (RSHA), the Reich's Main Security Office. See: Dirk Rupnow, "Jewish Museums in Europe. From Final Depository to Memorial. The History and Significance of the Jewish Museum in Prague," *European Judaism*, Vol. 37, No.1, Spring 2004, p. 144.

and the *Treubandstelle* (founded in fall of 1941), which was a department of the *Kultusgemeinde* (the Jewish Community), were the main institutions for the looting of Jewish property, with the *Treubandstelle* managing the assets of Czechoslovakia's Jews deported to ghettos and concentration camps.<sup>149</sup>

Large numbers of Jewish ritual objects, books and other individual and communal Jewish property resulting from Nazi looting policies in the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia found their way into what is now the Czech Republic.<sup>150</sup> Provenance research and restitutions have taken place, including Judaica objects. At the forefront is the Jewish Museum in Prague, which has been conducting provenance research on most of its holdings, including its library collection.<sup>151</sup> The Jewish Museum in Prague itself played a unique role during the Holocaust: it remained open after the outbreak of the war in 1939, despite the fact that the Museum Association had been disbanded in 1939 and the collection had since been overseen by the Jewish Religious Community in Prague. Yet the Jewish Religious Community in Prague had been taken over by the above mentioned *Zentralsstelle*. Two years later, the Jewish Museum started to function as a repository for liturgical items from dissolved Jewish synagogues, all managed by the *Treubandsstelle*. In December 1941 the Museum was kept closed until the spring of 1942, during which time all liturgical items from Prague's synagogues were shipped from the Museum to the Pinkas Synagogue.<sup>152</sup> Subsequently the Jewish Museum was reopened (as of August 1942), was renamed the Central Jewish Museum, and served as a repository for the assets of all Jewish communities in the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia until the end of the war. It is due to the efforts of the Central Jewish Museum staff that the collection of the pre-war Jewish museum survived, together with objects from all Jewish communities in the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia (with the exception of the Sudeten border areas).<sup>153</sup>

In 1998, the Czech Republic formed a Joint Working Commission aimed to mitigate property injustices inflicted on Holocaust victims. Two years later, in 2000, the Parliament passed Restitution Act No. 212/2000, which stipulates the responsibility of the director of a contacted state cultural institution to return art objects if they were looted. A year after the restitution law was passed the Documentation Centre for Property Transfers of Cultural Assets of WW II Victims was founded.<sup>154</sup> Initially the Documentation Centre was set up by the government and under the auspices of the

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<sup>149</sup> Pavel Jirasek, "Partnership for Restitution of Jewish Cultural Property in the Czech Republic: Principle and Reality," *Museum International*, no. 224, Vol. 56, No. 4, 2004, p. 48.

<sup>150</sup> Patricia Grimsted Kennedy, *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*. Prepared for publication in the conference proceedings based on a shorter presentation at the international conference in Liberec organized by the Documentation Centre of Property Transfers of Cultural Assets of WW II. Victims, 24–26 October 2007.

<sup>151</sup> Magda Veselská, "Jewish Museum in the Former Czechoslovakia," Julie-Marthe Cohen, Felicitas Heimann-Jelinek (eds.), *Neglected Witnesses. The Fate of Ceremonial Objects During the Second World War and After*, Crickadarn 2011; Magda Veselská, "The Selling Off of Items from the Collections of the Jewish Museum in Prague after the Second World War, with Particular Focus on the Sale of Torah Scrolls in 1963-1964," *Judaica Bohemiae*, 42, 2006; Andrea Braunová, "Origin of the Book Collection of the Library of the Jewish Museum in Prague," *Judaica Bohemiae*, 36, 2000 [2001]; Michal Bušek, "Identifying Owners of Books Held by the Jewish Museum in Prague," *Vitalizing Memory. International Perspectives on Provenance Research*. Washington: American Association of Museums, 2005, pp.138-142; Michal Bušek, *Identifying Owners of Books Held by the Jewish Museum in Prague. The Future of the Lost Cultural Heritage: the documentation, identification and restitution of the cultural assets of WWII victims*. Proceedings of the international academic conference in Český Krumlov (22.-24.11.2005), pp. 104–12;

<sup>152</sup> Veselka, *Jewish Museums*, p. 119.

<sup>153</sup> Idem, pp. 121-124.

<sup>154</sup> For more information, see: <http://www.cdmp.cz/en/>.

Czech Academy of Sciences. In 2011, governmental resolution no. 683 transformed the Centre's status to that of a public benefit organization of the Ministry of Culture. The Centre conducts provenance research and provides information on objects with provenance gaps in its online listing: "The Database of Works of Art".<sup>155</sup> The database holds approximately 1,370 looted objects with a number of Judaica items, including ceremonial objects. The vast majority of objects are simply labeled as having been "Jewish property", while other objects, mostly books, are identified as having belonged to the Jewish Communities Munich, Vienna or Olomouc as well as one object identified as originally from Vienna's Jewish Museum. (The database also lists some specific pre-war owners.) In 2009, the Czech Republic was host to the Holocaust Era Assets Conference in Prague<sup>156</sup> which concluded with the Terezin Declaration. As a follow-up to the Terezin Declaration, in 2010 the European Shoah Legacy Institute,<sup>157</sup> situated in Prague, was founded by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

### **Germany**

Germany's role during the Holocaust and Hitler's path to succession has been widely researched and documented, as is the case with Germany's post-war role, specifically in its role distributing reparations and individual compensation.<sup>158</sup>

Germany held not only Judaica looted from its own Jewish communities, but also much of the looted artifacts, including Judaica, collected outside the Reich by Nazi organizations such as the ERR (*Einsatzstab Reichsleiter Rosenberg*) for its Frankfurt based *Institut zur Erforschung der Judenfrage* (Institute for Research on the Jewish Question)<sup>159</sup> and the RSHA (*Reichssicherheitshauptamt*). When the U.S. Army arrived in Frankfurt, Rosenberg's institute held about 130,000 books as well as looted archives and ritual objects from all over Europe. Outside of Frankfurt, also the town of Hungen was the repository of much loot collected by Rosenberg. It was in Hungen where the Americans found eight storage rooms containing looted objects, including some 3 million books, 3,000 crates containing books and files, and hundreds of ritual objects such as Torah scrolls or Torah mantels.<sup>160</sup> Most of these objects were later transferred to the Offenbach Archival Depot (OAD). Nonetheless, Germany was also a recipient country of 'heirless' Jewish property sent by Jewish Cultural Reconstruction (JCR)<sup>161</sup> after the war, including 11,814 books and an additional 31 museum as well as 89 synagogue pieces.<sup>162</sup>

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<sup>155</sup> See: <http://www.cdmp.cz/db/?lang=en>.

<sup>156</sup> See: <http://www.holocausteraassets.eu/>.

<sup>157</sup> See: <http://shoahlegacy.org/>; Specific information regarding the Institute's focus on Judaica can be found at: <http://shoahlegacy.org/category/what-we-do/projects/judaica-and-jewish-cultural-property/>. The Institute is closing as of the end of August 2017.

<sup>158</sup> For an overview of Germany's restitution laws and its recent developments in regard to the identification and possible restitution of looted property, see: *World-Wide Overview*, pp. 22-25. (Or, see: <http://art.claimscon.org/resources/national-organizations/#germany>).

<sup>159</sup> The Institute was founded in 1941 in order to study and portray Judaism and Jewish history. See for example: Dieter Schiefelbein, "Das Institut zur Erforschung der Judenfrage in Frankfurt am Main: Vorgeschichte und Gründung 1935-1939," *Materialien des Fritz Bauer Instituts*. Vol. 9, Frankfurt am Main, Dezernat für Kultur und Freizeit, p. 42.

<sup>160</sup> Katharina Rauschenberger, "The Judaica Collection of Frankfurt's Museum Jüdischer Altertümer and Its Worldwide Dispersion After 1945," Julie-Marthe Cohen, Felicitas Heimann-Jelinek (eds.), *Neglected Witnesses. The Fate of Ceremonial Objects During the Second World War and After*, Crickadarn 2011, p. 89.

<sup>161</sup> For more information on the JCR, see chapter "1.4 The Dispersion of Jewish Ceremonial Objects after 1945: Jewish Cultural Reconstruction, Inc."

<sup>162</sup> For more information on the OAD, see for example: Elisabeth Gallas, *Das Leichenhaus der Bücher. Kulturrestitution und Jüdisches Geschichtsdanken nach 1945*, Schriften des Simon-Dubnow-Instituts, Vol. 19, Göttingen 2013.

While Jewish private and institutional property was systematically ransacked starting with 1938, unlike many other countries occupied by the Nazis, Jewish archives were not deliberately destroyed in Germany itself. In November 1938, the Gestapo ordered the seizure of Jewish archives throughout the Reich. Accordingly, most Jewish archives were deposited into non-Jewish archives. Some of these archives have not changed location since then.<sup>163</sup>

An interesting sample case is Frankfurt's Jewish Museum. Frankfurt's Jewish Museum (*Museum Jüdischer Altertümer*, Museum of Jewish Antiquities) was originally one of three independent museums of Jewish art and history established in Germany before 1933. Prior to the Holocaust, the Museum held a vast collection of Jewish artifacts which included parts of the Rothschild collection and loans from the Frankfurt Historical Museum. After 1933, the collection was further enhanced by donations or objects deposited for safekeeping by rural Jewish communities throughout Germany. Today only remnants of this collection are on view at the new Jewish Museum run by the municipality of Frankfurt and established in 1988. The majority of objects that survived the war were distributed by the JCR under the assumption that Jewish cultural and religious life had – for the most part – ceased to exist in Europe. Judaica was therefore sent to centers of Jewish life: consequently objects from Frankfurt's former Jewish Museum reached the Israel Museum, totaling 172 objects, as well as 103 objects that were distributed among congregations throughout Israel. 127 pieces went to museums and synagogues in the United States, while Frankfurt's Jewish Community kept only 89 objects from its original Jewish Museum. Frankfurt's newly constituted Jewish Community tried to assert its right as the legal successor to the destroyed Jewish Community in Frankfurt and thereby wanted to limit the influence of the Jewish successor organizations such as the JRSO and the JCR.<sup>164</sup> Then again, Frankfurt was not alone in its wish to curb the JRSO's influence. While thirteen out of seventeen bigger Jewish Communities in Germany signed an agreement with the JRSO, stipulating that the JRSO is the legal successor to the properties of former Jewish communities, Nuremberg, Fürth, Augsburg as well as Frankfurt did not sign the contractual agreement. Between 1950 and 1953 this conflict culminated in a court battle between the Augsburg Jewish communities and the JRSO.<sup>165</sup> In order to avoid the Augsburg crisis, the Jewish Community in Frankfurt and the JRSO settled out of court on the distribution of land, buildings, but also ceremonial objects. The contract, signed in April 1954, and mediated by Rabbi Leo Baeck, stipulated that – among other things – the community was allowed to keep those objects that were already in its possession and were being used.<sup>166</sup>

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<sup>163</sup> Yoram Mayorek, "The Fate of Jewish Archives During and After the Holocaust," Jean-Claude Kuperminc, Rafaële Arditti (eds.), *Preserving Jewish Archives as Part of the European Cultural Heritage: Proceedings of the Conference on Judaica Archives in Europe for Archivists and Librarians*. Potsdam, 1999, 11-13 July, Paris: Éditions du Nadir de l'Alliance israélite universelle, 2001, pp. 33-38.

<sup>164</sup> Georg Heuberger, "Zur Rolle der 'Jewish Cultural Reconstruction' nach 1945," Felicitas Heimann-Jelinek (ed.), *Was übrig blieb. Das Museum jüdischer Altertümer in Frankfurt 1922 – 1938*, Frankfurt am Main 1988, p. 102.

<sup>165</sup> For more information on the legal conflict see: Ayaka Tekei, "The Gemeinde Problem: The Jewish Restitution Successor Organization and the Postwar Jewish Communities in Germany," *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, 16, 2, 2002.

<sup>166</sup> For more information see: Georg Heuberger, *Jewish Cultural Reconstruction*, pp. 97–103; *Plunder and Restitution: The U.S. and Holocaust Victims' Assets: Findings and Recommendations of the Presidential Advisory Commission on Holocaust Assets in the U.S. and Staff Report*. Chapter VI. Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2000; Katharina Rauschenberger, "The Judaica Collection of Frankfurt's Museum Jüdischer Altertümer and Its Worldwide Dispersion After 1945," Julie-Marthe Cohen, Felicitas Heimann-Jelinek (eds.), *Neglected Witnesses. The Fate of Ceremonial Objects During the Second World War and After*, Crickadarn 2011; Georg Heuberger (ed.), *Die Pracht der Gebote. Die Judaica-Sammlung des Jüdischen Museums Frankfurt am Main*, Cologne 2006. (The catalogue offers an overview of the Judaica collection of Frankfurt's Jewish Museum.); Grace Grossman, *Jewish Museums of the World*, Westport: 2003.

Numerous provenance research projects have taken place already in Germany, but the vast majority of them have not dealt with specifically Judaica holdings. Yet there are exceptions such as, for example, the Municipal Library of Nuremberg which is researching its collection entitled *Sammlung Israelitische Kultusgemeinde* (Jewish Community Collection), formerly known as the *Stürmer-Bibliothek*.<sup>167</sup> Another example is a project conducted by the Stiftung Preussischer Kulturbesitz entitled “*Beschlagnahmte Bücher: Reichstauschstelle und Preussische Staatsbibliothek zwischen 1933 und 1945. Aspekte der Literaturversorgung unter der Herrschaft des Nationalsozialismus*”. (Confiscated Books: the Reichs-Exchange-Center and Prussia’s State Library between 1933 and 1945. The Supply of Literature under National Socialism).<sup>168</sup> Additional provenance research projects with a focus on Judaica holdings are carried out by a few other German cultural institutions,<sup>169</sup> with most researched objects listed on [www.lostart.de](http://www.lostart.de).

### ***Netherlands:***

Jewish property in the Netherlands was – as in most European countries – either stolen or destroyed. The systematic theft of Jewish property began in 1941 when the *Reichskommissar für die besetzten niederländischen Gebiete* (Reich Commissar for the Occupied Netherlands), headed by Arthur Seiss-Inquart, set up Lippmann, Rosenthal & Co. (LIRO), a bank specifically for Jewish assets.<sup>170</sup> However, the theft of cultural and religious items, including Judaica, was carried out by the *Einsatzstab Reichsleiter Rosenberg* (ERR) which set up an office in Amsterdam.<sup>171</sup> The Netherlands enacted a number of restitution laws after the war ended, but more than 4,000 artworks remained in the state’s possession and became known as the NK-collection, or *Nederlands Kunstbezit-collectie*.<sup>172</sup> During the last several years, the Netherlands has initiated more research, such as the 2013 report published by the Netherlands Museum Association entitled “Museum Acquisitions from 1933 Onwards” which details provenance research in Dutch museums.<sup>173</sup>

During the Holocaust, Dutch Museums sometimes functioned as a safekeeping place for Jewish property feared to be otherwise destroyed or misappropriated. Those objects were treated as temporary gifts or purchases to prevent art (and in some cases Judaica) belonging to Jews from being confiscated by the Nazis. In addition, research has revealed that the Ministry of Education, Culture, Education and Science purchased several collections from Jewish owners in 1943 and 1944 with the

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<sup>167</sup> See: <https://www.nuernberg.de/internet/stadtbibliothek/sammlungikg.html>

<sup>168</sup> See: <http://staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/die-staatsbibliothek/abteilungen/historische-drucke/aufgaben-profil/projekte/projekt-reichstauschstelle/>

<sup>169</sup> See: <http://www.kulturgutverluste.de/de/projektinformationen/projekte>

<sup>170</sup> Julie-Marthe Cohen, “Theft and Restitution of Judaica in the Netherlands During and After the Second World War,” Julie-Marthe Cohen, Felicitas Heimann-Jelinek (eds.), *Neglected Witnesses. The Fate of Ceremonial Objects During the Second World War and After*, Crickadarn 2011, p. 199.

<sup>171</sup> For an overview of ERR’s archival records regarding the Netherlands see: Patricia Kennedy Grimsted, *Reconstructing the Record of Nazi Cultural Plunder: A Guide to the Dispersed Archives of the Einsatzstab Reichsleiter Rosenberg (ERR) and the Postwar Retrieval of ERR Loot*, August 2015; online at: [http://errproject.org/guide/ERR\\_Netherlands\\_12.18.2015.pdf](http://errproject.org/guide/ERR_Netherlands_12.18.2015.pdf).

<sup>172</sup> The online database “Origins Unknown Database” (<http://www.herkomstgezocht.nl/eng>) lists among other objects four Judaica pieces in the NK collection. Partly as a result of the restitution of an eighteenth-century tin Maccabee lamp, an exhibition was launched entitled “Geroofd, maar van wie?” (Looted, But From Whom?) in Amsterdam’s Hollandsche Schouwburg (Dutch Theatre) in 2007. For more information see: <http://www.hollandscheschouwburg.nl/actueel/presentatie/archief/geroofd,-maar-van-wie>.

<sup>173</sup> The Netherlands Museum Association provides access to an online database of objects with provenance gaps in Dutch museums. The online listing also includes thirteen (13) Jewish ritual objects: <http://www.musealeververvingen.nl/1508/objecten/joodse-rituele-objecten/>.



aim of keeping these artworks in the Netherlands. In almost all cases the artworks were returned. The Netherlands was also the recipient country of 1,813 books from the JCR after World War II<sup>174</sup>

Similar to Vienna's, Prague's or Frankfurt's Jewish museums, the Jewish Historical Museum (JHM) of Amsterdam should be mentioned. Today the museum plays an instrumental role in researching not only its own history, but also in having completed an inventory of those Jewish ritual objects in the Netherlands that existed prior to World War II.<sup>175</sup> During the Holocaust, 610 out of the 940 objects in the Museum's pre-war collection were looted by the ERR in 1943 and brought to the *Institut zur Erforschung der Judenfrage* in Frankfurt. In December 1943 alone, a shipment of more than 680 boxes and packages holding Hebraica, Torah scrolls, textiles, and other objects, was sent to Rosenberg's institute. Of the looted museum objects, approximately 200 were returned in 1946, in addition to some valuable objects held in the Offenbach Depot that were from the Amsterdam Portuguese Sephardic and Ashkenazi communities.<sup>176</sup> Some items sent to the JHM turned out to be erroneous restitutions, while other objects with clear Dutch provenance went elsewhere – for example, a 1763 Torah mantle which was loaned to the JHM in 1936 by the Leiden Jewish community was erroneously turned over to the JCR which in turn sent it to what is now the Israel Museum.<sup>177</sup>

### **Looted Judaica Collections that have Marginally been Researched – Countries Mentioned in the World-Wide Overview as Having Taken Some Steps**

The *World-Wide Overview* identified five countries in which the Holocaust took place - Belgium, France, Luxembourg, Norway, Slovakia<sup>178</sup> – as having taken some steps toward the identification of looted art, including Judaica. An additional six countries were mentioned - Canada, Israel, Liechtenstein, Switzerland, United Kingdom, United States – as equally having taken some steps. However, the latter group was not directly involved in the Holocaust, was rather affected by its aftermath.

Overall research into looted Judaica holdings was and is not at the forefront in any of the five countries in which the Holocaust took place. While Belgium conducted some research and ultimately

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<sup>174</sup> JCR, Inc. World Distribution of Books 1 July 1949-31 January 1952, July 1952, Geneva. IV/32/1B, Archives, Jerusalem. Cited after Dana Herman, *Hasbevat Avedab: A History of Jewish Cultural Reconstruction, Inc.*, PhD diss., McGill University, 2008, pp. 225-26.

<sup>175</sup> Julie-Marthe Cohen, "Relics of the Second World War: Dealing with Missing and Misplaced Objects in the Jewish Historical Museum Collection," Naomi Feuchtwanger-Sarig, Mark Irvin and Emile Schrijver, *Jewish Art in Context. The Role and Meaning of Artifacts and Visual Images, Studia Rosenthaliana*, Vol. 45 (2014), p. 57-74; [see also Appendix 3.A – "Jewish Art in Context: The Role and Meaning of Artifacts and Visual Images"] Julie-Marthe Cohen, "Relics of the Second World War: Dealing with Missing and Misplaced Objects in Jewish Museum collections." Paper presented at the 43<sup>rd</sup> Annual AJL Convention, Cleveland Marriott East, Cleveland, Ohio. June 22-25, 2008 and read in the session on 'Dutch Jewish Library Collections since WW II: The Recuperation And Reconstruction Of Dutch Jewish Collections In Post War Europe', June 24 2008. Presentation given by Julie-Marthe Cohen at the Meetings of the Association of European Jewish Museums in Amsterdam, November 22-26, 2008.

<sup>176</sup> Julie-Marthe Cohen, "Theft and Restitution of Judaica in the Netherlands During and After the Second World War," Julie-Marthe Cohen, Felicitas Heimann-Jelinek (eds.), *Neglected Witnesses*, pp. 201- 221.

<sup>177</sup> These objects are noted in the museum's database which can be accessed at: <http://www.jhm.nl/collection/wwii-looted-judaica/search>.

<sup>178</sup> As for Slovakia see the catalogues: Švantnerová, Jana, et al., *The Shadow of the Past*. Bratislava: [editor] 2013; Borský, Maroš, *Heritage Rediscovered*. Bratislava 2016.

“sold” 656 Hebrew books assumed to have been looted to the Central Jewish Consistory in 1948,<sup>179</sup> as well as undertook some research following the country’s Historical Commission, in-depth research is still outstanding.

France’s research has thus far concentrated on looted artworks, mainly the so-called MNR collection.<sup>180</sup> Nonetheless, some restitutions of religious objects, mostly books, were made in France shortly after World War II ended. It should be noted that unlike in other countries, in France there was no particular plan by the German occupation forces to loot Jewish ceremonial objects, which is why most synagogues survived the war untouched. Exceptions were the synagogues in Alsace and Lorraine, where the main synagogue in Strasbourg was destroyed. Also in Alsace and Moselle looting of Jewish ritual objects did take place.

The one major exception to the above was Paris, where the ERR (*Einsatzstab Reichsleiter Rosenberg*) was looting Jewish cultural and ritual objects. Among the many Jewish institutions the ERR targeted were Jewish libraries, such as that of the *Alliance Israélite*. In addition, Rosenberg’s *Möbelaktion* (M-Aktion, furniture action) can be blamed for the looting of Judaica from Jewish households. ERR activities in France were largely supported by Hermann Göring and enabled a larger scale of looting than in some other Western countries. By the end of Germany’s occupation of France in the summer of 1944, approximately 27,788 cultural objects from about 203 Jewish collections in Paris had been “aryanized.”<sup>181</sup> The database, “Cultural Plunder by the Einsatzstab Reichsleiter Rosenberg: Database of Art Objects at the Jeu de Paume,” which brings together the remaining registration cards and photographs produced by the ERR of art objects taken from Jews in German-occupied France and, to a lesser extent, in Belgium, now lists more than 30,000 objects, of which some were specifically categorized by the Germans as Judaica objects.<sup>182</sup>

The only exception to these five countries seems to be Slovakia, which has initiated more initial research. Specifically the Jewish Community Museum in Bratislava, as well as smaller museums and small Jewish communities throughout Slovakia recently inventoried and partially researched their Judaica holdings with the hope of identifying looted objects.<sup>183</sup>

A number of the countries, with the exception of Norway, Slovakia, Liechtenstein and Luxembourg, received objects from the JCR after the war,<sup>184</sup> with Belgium receiving 824 books, and France receiving 8,193 books, 125 museum and 219 synagogue pieces from the JCR after World War II.

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<sup>179</sup> Michel Vermote, Jacques Lust, “Belgium: Papieren Bitte! The Confiscation and Restitution of Belgian Archives and Libraries (1940-2003),” Patricia Kennedy Grimsted (ed.), *Returned from Russia. Nazi Archival Plunder in Western Europe and Recent Restitution Issues*, United Kingdom 2007, pp. 191-240.

<sup>180</sup> See: <http://www.culture.gouv.fr/documentation/mnr/pres.htm>.

<sup>181</sup> For more information see *Descriptive Catalogue*, pp. 126-127; also: Séan Hand, Steven T. Katz (eds.), *Post-Holocaust France and the Jews, 1945-1955*, New York 2015.

<sup>182</sup> French Jewish and a number of Belgian Jewish collections from 1940 to 1944 were brought to the Jeu de Paume building in the Tuileries Gardens in Paris for processing by the ERR *Sonderstab Bildende Kunst* or “Special Staff for Pictorial Art”. The database, online accessible at <http://www.errproject.org/jeudepaume/>, is a joint project of the Claims Conference and the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, with the cooperation of the Bundesarchiv (The German Federal Archives), Archives Diplomatiques / France Diplomatie: Diplomatic Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Development of the Republic of France, The United States National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), and the Commission for Art Recovery.

<sup>183</sup> See: <http://www.synagogue.sk/>; Maroš Borský, “Inside the Museum: When Orthodox synagogue meets museum: the New Jewish Community Museum in Bratislava,” *East European Jewish Affairs*, 2015, Vol. 45, Nos. 2–3, 261–26; Jana Švantnerová, „Here in the Holy Community ... Bratislava Synagogue Textiles,” Maroš Borský, Jana Švantnerová, *Heritage Rediscovered*, Bratislava 2016, pp. 13-33.

<sup>184</sup> See: Dana Herman, *Hashanat Avedab: A History of Jewish Cultural Reconstruction, Inc.* PhD thesis, Department of History, McGill University, Montreal, October 2008.

Specifically, the *Musée d'art et d'histoire du Judaïsme* in France, the successor museum to the *Musée d'art juif* in Paris, established in 1948 by a private association in order to pay homage to a culture that had been destroyed by the Holocaust, received Judaica objects from the JCR, and the *Centre de Documentation Juive Contemporaine* received books. Switzerland received 7,843 books from the JCR after World War II, including part of the Breslau collection that had been stored in the Wiesbaden collecting point and which was deposited into the Geneva, Zurich and Basel libraries.<sup>185</sup>

More objects distributed by the JCR were received in the early 1950s by Canada: 2,031 books and 151 museum and synagogue pieces. At that time the Canadian Jewish Congress was tasked with distributing the books and ceremonial objects to synagogues throughout Canada. Most of the objects distributed were silver chanukiot, Torah ornaments, as well as old books, including prayer books. A few years ago, the Canadian Jewish Congress, encouraged by the 2001 Conference “A Matter of Justice – Canadian Symposium on Holocaust-era Cultural Property,” attempted to locate original heirs following the few leads available. However, none of the heirs were found.<sup>186</sup> Similarly, the United Kingdom received 19,082 books, 245 museum pieces, 66 synagogue pieces and 12 Torah scrolls from the JCR after World War II. In 1952, the Jewish Museum in London, the Jewish Historical Society, the Wiener Library and the Society for Jewish Studies, among other institutions, received 19,000 volumes and over 300 ceremonial objects. The Wiener Library alone received six hundred volumes from the library that had belonged to the Central Union of Jews in Germany, the *Jüdischer Zentralverein*.<sup>187</sup>

The biggest portion of the JCR distribution was received by the United States and Israel: The United States alone received 160,886 books, 1,326 museum pieces, 1,824 synagogue pieces and 110 Torah scrolls (of which an unknown number had to be buried) from the JCR after World War II.<sup>188</sup> Objects distributed by the JCR entered more than 400 recipient institutions, including university and other libraries, archives, museums, and synagogues.<sup>189</sup> Similar to most recipient countries, the current location of these objects is often not only under-researched, but simply unknown.<sup>190</sup> Overall it can be said that while the JCR planned on accompanying each shipment of ceremonial objects with an

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<sup>185</sup> Zsolt Keller, “Jüdische Bücher und der Schweizerische Israelitische Gemeindebund (1930-1950),” *Bulletin der Schweizerischen Gesellschaft für Judaistische Forschung* (Beiheft zur Judaica) 14 (2005), p. 20-34; Gallas, *Das Leichenhaus der Bücher*, p. 53.

<sup>186</sup> In January 1951 the *Congress Bulletin* reported that “A number of ceremonial objects, formerly the property of European Jews, have been received by the Canadian Jewish Congress and will be kept by the Congress as a memorial... among the articles are the appurtenances of a sefer torah, chanukah lamps, Passover seder plates, havdalah incense boxes and silver ornamentation for Taleissim ... the Congress states that the collection will be kept intact in the headquarters of the Congress in Montreal...” Only a few years later, in May 1956, the *Bulletin* reported that “many of these objects have been placed on loan in various new synagogues and new community centers across the country... Congress made available some of these objects to the newly built congregations in Canada as a permanent link between these congregations and the Jewish communities in Europe which were destroyed.” See: *Descriptive Catalogue*, p. 107-108.

<sup>187</sup> Gallas, *Das Leichenhaus der Bücher*, p. 181; Herman, Dana. “‘A Band Plucked Out of the Fire’: The Distribution of Heirless Jewish Cultural Property by the Jewish Cultural Reconstruction, Inc. 1947-1952,” Julie-Marthe Cohen, Felicitas Heimann-Jelinek (eds.), *Neglected Witnesses. The Fate of Jewish Ceremonial Objects During the Second World War and After*, Crickadarn 2011, pp. 29-61.

<sup>188</sup> JCR, Inc., *World Distribution of Ceremonial Objects and Torah Scrolls, July 1, 1949 to January 31, 1952*, S35/88, CZA, Jerusalem. Cited after Herman, p. 226.

<sup>189</sup> For more information see Herman, *Hashavat Avedah*, pp. 261-263; *Descriptive Catalogue*, pp. 238-244. (The catalogue summarizes not only the relevant documents but presents an overview of the distribution of books and ceremonial objects in the United States).

<sup>190</sup> Research conducted by the Claims Conference in spring 2015 and documented in the *Descriptive Catalogue*, p. 240-244; see also: Grace Cohen Grossman, “The Scirball Museum JCR Research Project: Records and Recollections,” Julie-Marthe Cohen, Felicitas Heimann-Jelinek (eds.), *Neglected Witnesses. The Fate of Jewish Ceremonial Objects During the Second World War and After*, Crickadarn 2011, pp. 307-339.

itemized list, this did not always materialize, even less so with the JCR's book transfers. The same was true for receiving institutions: While they were 'obligated' to appropriately tag the object or mark books with a special bookplate, the step was not always taken. Sixty years after the fact the lack of lists or tags poses a great challenge on behalf of the receiving institutions to adequately identify ceremonial objects but even more so books received from the JCR and consequently to preserve them as such. An exception regarding ceremonial objects is a recent research carried out and published by the Illinois Holocaust and Education Center which holds as a loan the JCR Collection of the Hebrew Theological College, Skokie.<sup>191</sup> Moreover, JCR books often ended up in various library deposits within one receiving institution, including the rare book collection; yet some books were simply sent to the general stack of library books. Financial constraints on behalf of the receiving organizations additionally posed a challenge to handling some of the JCR objects. As a result, over the decades some objects were sold off or more often were not adequately preserved or maintained. Others are simply "lost".

Israel received 191,423 books, as well as 2,285 museum pieces, 976 synagogue pieces, 804 Torah scrolls and 87 Torah fragments (in addition to 127 of the scrolls that had to be buried) from the JCR after World War II.<sup>192</sup>

Israel was therefore the largest recipient of Judaica objects, but the distribution itself was mostly conducted outside of the JCR's control. The Ministry of Religious Affairs, which assumed responsibility, was subsequently put in charge of the distribution of religious objects to various synagogues, yeshivas, and other organizations. Among those institutions that profited from this influx of objects were libraries and museums, most notably the Hebrew University, which received, for example, the *Berlin Gemeinde* Library, part of the Breslau collection (totaling up to 4,500 books), and part of the valuable Frankfurt collection. After the war the Breslau collection was stored at the Wiesbaden Collecting Point and is a remnant of the original library of the *Jüdisches Theologisches Institut*. However, the Hebrew University itself transferred about 7,000 books to the Ministry of Education for further distribution. Some of these objects were subsequently given to yeshivot. Among those museums that received objects was the Tel Aviv Museum which presumably holds part of the Frankfurt Jewish Museum collection in addition to Judaica objects that had belonged to synagogues in Frankfurt before World War II.<sup>193</sup> Today, a number of JCR objects can be found at the Israel Museum.<sup>194</sup>

Provenance research is almost non-existent in Israel.<sup>195</sup>

### **Looted Judaica Collections that Have Not Yet Been Researched or Are Undocumented (Countries Mentioned in the World-Wide Overview as Having Taken Some Steps or Having Made No Progress in Researching Looted Objects)**

Countries such as Croatia, Denmark, Greece, Lithuania, Russian Federation – countries in which the Holocaust took place – were identified in the World-Wide Overview as having taken some steps

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<sup>191</sup> Grace Cohen Grossman, Arielle Weininger (eds), *Rescue & Renewal: The Jewish Cultural Reconstruction Collection of the Hebrew Theological College*, Skokie 2015.

<sup>192</sup> For an overview, see *Descriptive Catalogue*, pp. 154-159.

<sup>193</sup> Herman, *Hashavat Avedah*, p. 268.

<sup>194</sup> "World War II Provenance Research Online". The Israel Museum, Jerusalem; <http://www.imj.org.il/Imagine/irso/judaica.asp>; David Brinn, "The Art of Restitution," *The Jerusalem Post*, 14 February 2008.

<sup>195</sup> Schidorsky, *Salvaging of Jewish Books*, p. 209; Schidorsky, *Shunamis Suche*, pp. 339-40.

toward researching and restituting looted Judaica,<sup>196</sup> while countries such as Belarus, Bosnia, Bulgaria, Estonia, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Macedonia, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Slovenia, Ukraine – in all of which the Holocaust took place and had a significant impact on their Jewish communities – made little or no progress towards the identification of looted objects, including Judaica.<sup>197</sup> While not all countries that have yet to conduct sufficient or any research on looted Judaica are assumed to have large amounts of it, some do, such as Belarus, the Russian Federation, Poland, and Ukraine. Initial steps were taken by countries such as Lithuania, Latvia, or Estonia by establishing Historical Commissions that not only examined the countries’ roles during the Holocaust but subsequent crimes that were carried out by the Communist regime. Yet other countries, such as Poland or Belarus, with presumably large quantities of Nazi looted Judaica are still falling behind, and large-scale research has yet to take place.<sup>198</sup>

Belarus was the recipient of much looted Judaica after the war. It is not clear how many books and religious objects – including Torah scrolls – actually reached the libraries, museums and archives of Belarus and their precise locations.<sup>199</sup>

The pillaging of Judaica from private and communal centers in Poland was enormous: In January 1940, Hans Frank, Governor-General of occupied Poland, issued a decree clearly stating that cultural looting was also to include libraries, in particular rare manuscripts and archival holdings. At the end of the war, it was estimated that Jewish collections as a whole suffered about 70% losses, though some libraries - especially those in private schools and religious libraries - were completely destroyed. While ceremonial objects of Judaica were often destroyed, they were preserved if the objects were deemed precious or antique and of high value, inasmuch as they could be sold or otherwise used. Judaica found in ghettos was equally destroyed. In March 1941, before the ghetto in Krakow was sealed off, the Jewish Community successfully bribed Nazi officials at the Trustee Office to transfer some synagogue furniture (including Torah arks), prayer books, and about 150 Torah scrolls to the *Judenrat's* building in the ghetto. In terms of the Torah scrolls, it was ultimately decided to wall them into the building used for funeral services at the Plaszow Jewish cemetery. There they were later discovered by Amon Göth, the commander of the Plaszow concentration

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<sup>196</sup> Countries such as Australia, Finland and Ireland, have equally been identified as having taken some steps. For more information on these three countries, see the *World-Wide Overview* and the *Descriptive Catalogue*.

<sup>197</sup> Similarly, Argentina, Brazil, Holy See, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Turkey and Uruguay were mentioned, yet given that the Holocaust did not take place in these countries, they will equally only be mentioned here. For more information on these three countries, see the *World-Wide Overview* and the *Descriptive Catalogue*.

<sup>198</sup> Please note that more information, including information on additional countries, is available in chapter 1.5 Nationalizations in the East after World War II.

<sup>199</sup> There are two Torah scrolls in the State Historical Archive of Belarus, one Torah scroll is located in the Historical Museum of Mogilev, and one is located in the Historical Museum of Vitebsk. *Descriptive Catalogue*, p. 97. Many of the hundreds of thousands of books seized by the ERR from France were found by a Red Army trophy brigade in 1945 in warehouses near an abandoned ERR research and library center in Silesia. That trophy brigade also found many books in the same place that the ERR had seized from the Soviet Republic of Belorussia. In the fall of 1945 a Soviet convoy of 54 railroad freight cars carried an estimated 1.2 million books directly to Minsk. While perhaps two-thirds of the books were from libraries in Belorussia and the Soviet Baltic republics, a third or more of them were books from France and other countries of Europe. The largest number of the looted books of foreign provenance are still today held by the National Library of Belarus. See the discussion of ERR looting of French libraries at <https://www.errproject.org/looted-libraries-fr.php> and “French Autographs in the Holdings of the National Library of Belarus” at <https://www.errproject.org/looted-libraries-fr-belarus.php>

camp. While some scrolls were simply burned, others were shipped off.<sup>200</sup> Today, Judaica objects can be found in many Polish cultural institutions, including museums, archives and libraries. Very little research on these collections has thus far taken place.

In the Russian Federation (former Soviet Union), the country's State Historical Museum (GIM), for example, was handed 344 Torahs from the Special (*Osoby*) Archive, which is now part of the Russian State Military Archive (RGVA).<sup>201</sup> The Torahs are believed to have originated from foreign Jewish communities looted by various Nazi organizations and subsequently brought to the Soviet Union by its trophy brigades.<sup>202</sup> Additional Jewish holdings of the former *Osoby* Archive, now part of the RGVA, Moscow, include looted material such as a collection of historical archives of Jewish international organizations, of Jewish political organizations and parties as well as papers of Jewish intellectuals. Most material that was or is currently held in the Moscow archive was initially gathered for Rosenberg's Research Institute on the Jewish Question in Frankfurt and, to a lesser degree, for possible display in the projected *Führermuseum* in Linz.<sup>203</sup> And while these collections were first purged by the Nazis, they were subsequently taken by the Soviet trophy brigades and seen as just compensation for the many losses suffered by the Soviet Union.<sup>204</sup> Many of these objects were distributed to state museums like the State Museum of the History of Religion in St. Petersburg (formerly the State Museum of the History of Religion and Atheism) but also to various People's Republics' institutions such as the Vernadsky National Library of Ukraine and the Museum of Historical Treasures of Ukraine, both in Kiev; the Chernihiv Historical Museum named after V. Tarnovsky, the Local Lore Museum of the Cherkassy region, the Museum of Ethnography and Crafts at the Institute of Ethnology, the Museum of the History of Religions (formerly the Museum of Atheism), both in Lviv and to the Lviv Museum of History; as well as to the Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw. For the most part the provenance of these objects has not been researched. The respective holdings comprise Torah scrolls, partly with their staves, Torah ornaments, synagogue textiles and interiors, objects for use on Sabbath and festivals.

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<sup>200</sup> For more information, see: Marek Sroka, "The Destruction of Jewish Libraries and Archives in Krakow during World War II," *Libraries and Culture* 38.2 (2003), pp. 148-150; Nawojka Cieślińska-Lobkowicz, "The History of Judaica Collections in Poland Before, During and After the Second World War: An Overview," Julie-Marthe Cohen, Felicitas Heimann-Jelinek (eds.), *Neglected Witnesses. The Fate of Jewish Ceremonial Objects During the Second World War and After*, Crickadarn 2011; Jacqueline Borin, "Embers of the Soul: The Destruction of Jewish Books and Libraries in Poland during World War II," *Libraries & Culture*, Vol. 28, No. 4 (Fall 1993), pp. 445-460; David Shavit, "Jewish Libraries in the Polish Ghettos During the Nazi Era," *Library Quarterly*, Vol. 52., No. 2, April 1982.

<sup>201</sup> For more information on the *Osoby* Archive, see: David Fishman Mark Kupovetsky and Vladimir Kuzelenkov, editors, *Nazi-Looted Jewish Archives in Moscow: A Guide to Jewish Historical and Cultural Collections in the Russian State Military Archive*. Scranton, 2010.

<sup>202</sup> Konstantin Akinsha, Patricia Kennedy Grimsted, "The Sárospatak Case: Rare Books Return to Hungary," *Art and Antiquity and Law* Vol. XI, Issue 3, September 2006, p. 223; Patricia Kennedy 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." Prepared for publication in the conference proceedings based on a shorter presentation at the international conference in Liberec organized by the Documentation Centre of Property Transfers of Cultural Assets of WW II Victims, 24–26 October 2007.

<sup>203</sup> More detailed information can be found in: *Jewish Documentary Sources Among the Trophy Collections of the Russian State Military Archives: A Guide* (in Russian), edited by David Fishman, Mark Kupovetsky and Vladimir Kuzelenkov (RSUH), 2005; Patricia Kennedy Grimsted (ed), *Returned from Russia. Nazi Archival Plunder in Western Europe and Recent Restitution Issues*, United Kingdom 2007;

<sup>204</sup> See for example: Konstantin Akinsha, Grigorii Kozlow, *Beautiful Loot. The Soviet Plunder of Europe's Art Treasures*, New York 1995.

Overall the Nazis had looted 3-4 million books alone from the entire USSR (in particular Belarus and Ukraine) and destroyed many more.<sup>205</sup> In contrast to that, between 1945 and 1946, it is estimated that 10 million trophy books, including Judaica and Hebraica, were brought back to the USSR<sup>206</sup>. In-depth research, especially into Judaica holdings in the countries of the former Soviet Union, is therefore still lacking.<sup>207</sup>

*Please see also Appendices to Part 1, in particular “The Fate of Three Museum Collections that Illustrate the Impact of the Second World War and the Holocaust on Judaica Collections in Europe,” as well as “Lviv 1944 – 2009: Jewish Cultural Objects and Property. Some Cases and Tendencies.”*

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<sup>205</sup> Hill, pp. 29-31.

<sup>206</sup> Grimsted, *The Road to Minsk*, p. 354.

<sup>207</sup> In regard to Belarus some important first steps into the identification of looted books were taken in late 2016. For more information see the following articles: *Return of Belarus’ Lost Values*, 7 September 2016 (<http://nn.by/?c=ar&i=176764>); *International Seminar: Lost and Displaced Cultural Values: The Belorussian Context*, National Institute of Higher Education 7 September 2016 (<http://www.nihe.bsu.by/index.php/ru/novosti-instituta/1259-mezhdunarodnyj-nauchno-prakticheskij-seminar-utrachennye-i-peremeshchennye-kulturnye-tsennosti-belorusskij-kontekst-5-7-sentyabrya-2016-goda>); as well as *Lost and displaced cultural values: the Belorussian context*, Presidential Library of the Republic of Belarus, 7 September 2016 (<http://www.preslib.org.by/news/type1/utrachennye-i-peremeshchennye-kulturnye-tsennosti-belorusskij-kontekst>) See also the references given above in footnote 191.