

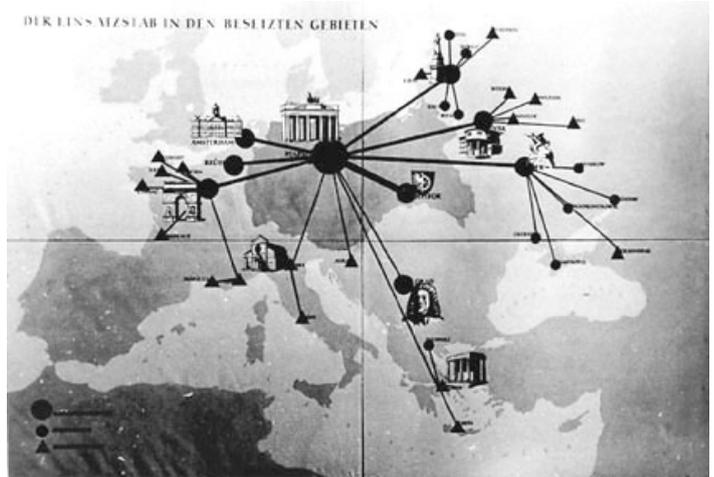
RETURNED FROM RUSSIA: Nazi Archival Plunder in Western Europe and Recent Restitution Issues

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During the Second World War, various Nazi agencies competed for the plunder of occupied Europe's archival heritage – from key documentation of military intelligence (such as French Deuxième Bureau) and government security agencies to trade-union records, files of Masonic lodges and Jewish Communities, and personal papers of prominent individuals.

At war's end, the victorious Red Army found some of the most important Nazi hideouts. Many of Europe's captured archives were seized a second time and rushed to Moscow on Beria's orders, where they remained in secret for almost half a century. When the Russian Federation was admitted to the Council of Europe in 1996 it promised to expedite "the return of property claimed by Council of Europe member States, in particular the archives transferred to Moscow in 1945." Since then only five instances of archival returns have been finalised on the basis of the new Russian law – four handled diplomatically to France, Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg, and a fifth, the Rothschild family papers from Vienna, as the first instance of a private family arrangement. This volume brings together for the first time reports by key individuals who took part in the negotiations for the return of those twice-plundered archives.



Plunder of books and archives by the Einsatzstab Reichsleiter Rosenberg (ERR), one of the several Nazi agencies involved.



German inventories of captured Western European military records held in the top-secret Heeresarchiv branch archival facility in Berlin-Wannsee. Many of the records have recently returned home, but these inventories remain in Moscow.

In the first half of the volume, American historian and archival specialist Patricia Kennedy Grimsted reveals her veritable detective story of the seizure and dramatic fate of those records in Nazi and Soviet hands and the post-1991 political battle within Russia over their restitution.

Patricia Kennedy Grimsted (pictured right) at the remote Sudeten castle of Horní Libchava (Oberleibich) in Northern Bohemia, where she discovered (in 1990) that the RSHA ran a top-secret counter-intelligence centre with captured French intelligence and security archives. Found by Soviet counter-intelligence (SMERSH, literally 'death to spies') in May 1945, they were transported to Moscow in 28 freight wagons in July 1945.



