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**ARCHIVE RESEARCH ON THE ISSUE OF LOST WORKS
OF ART IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC**

I work at the Centre for the Documentation of the Transfer of Property and Items of Cultural Value from WW II Victims, which conducts thorough research in Czech and foreign archives. As regards our work methods, based on good cooperation with archive institutions, we are allowed to photocopy or digitally photograph relevant documents. At our workplace, the photocopies are then expertly stored in a computer database, in which all basic data for each individual document is listed – the archive, the call number, reference number, links with other archive documents, people and institutions figuring in the document, as well as the document's basic annotation. We are simultaneously working with a second "Works of Art" database, into which we enter data from the copied documents on specific works of art that are found in archive sources. Each item has its own record file, which contains all the data from the archive source. Unfortunately, we often encounter a problem in that only very basic data can be found about the item in the source (the artist, the title and the dimensions of the work). With the aid of computer databases, we then try to ascertain whether the item is also mentioned in other archive sources from which we could obtain further information about it. Having a computer database of archive records enables us to search in our documentation for all photocopies that pertain to a certain person or institution.

I would like to emphasize that searching archive sources on this topic in the Czech Republic is, for the most part, a complicated

activity. Our foreign colleagues probably have similar experiences. Working with inventories in archives represents a basic problem. A number of archive collections have inventories from an earlier date, which specifically means that they are not in documentary form on the archives' websites. Consequently, it is actually necessary to examine inventories directly at the archives. This is complicated further by the fact that inventories often only contain the basic characteristics such as call numbers or cartons in individual collections. Thus, it is not always possible to discern from such characteristics whether any sources on works of art are located there. Consequently, if we only find basic characteristics in an inventory (e.g., the confiscation of Jewish assets), we have to study these materials even though we might subsequently discover that they merely contain a small number of archive sources (or no sources at all) on stolen works of art. Thus, a situation often arises in which it is necessary to sort through a number of archive records, which nonetheless end up being irrelevant to our research. Naturally, this prolongs the period of study of individual collections. Nevertheless, our experiences show that it is necessary to conduct a genuinely extensive examination of archive collections. It is only possible to seek answers to various questions concerning the given issue by comparing many sources. If we come across a specific case, we must put together data from different archive sources as though we were assembling a mosaic.

It is obvious that archive research has already been underway for a long time; it is necessary to continue thoroughly examining archives for many years to come. The National Archives in Prague are understandably crucial in this respect. With regard to the given topic, it is important to conduct a detailed survey of collections concerning the activity of the Reichsprotektor's Office, which arranged the German administration of occupied territory at the time of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia. These

collections contain documents that pertain to the persecution of the Jewish population, the Aryanisation of Jewish assets (i.e., Aryanisation orders, the activity of the Assets Authority (*Majetkový úřad*), individual cases of Aryanisation, and the appointment of fiduciaries (*Treuhänder*)). Furthermore, there are also documents that illustrate the movement of cultural assets (the activity of *Ein-satzstab I* and *II*, which made inventories of plundered works of art; the activity of the Andree firm, which was involved in the sale of these items; correspondence concerning the Protectorate's chateaus, museums and galleries; and an inventory of the Prague Castle and Černínský Palace collections). It is important to compare the results of domestic and foreign research. For example, we have inventories of the Prague Castle and Černínský Palace collections at our disposal from the National Archives, which we can compare with inventories of the same buildings that we studied in the *Bundesarchiv* in Berlin and in the Russian State Military Archive in the so-called "trophy" collections. We do not just deal with Jewish assets, but generally attend to the assets of people who were persecuted on the territory of the Protectorate.

The collections of individual ministries are also stored in the National Archives. These collections usually begin as far back as the era of the First Czechoslovak Republic. They contain documents from the post-Munich Second Republic and from the era of the Protectorate. It is important that the collections also deal with the postwar period. I would particularly like to draw attention to certain collections. The first of these is the collection of the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare (*Ministerstvo práce a sociální péče*), which contains postwar applications for the restitution of movable chattels (including works of art) and real estate. In the documents, applicants specify the items whose return they are seeking. At the same time, the collection also contains notifications from the Ministry on whether restitutions were granted or not.

I would also like to mention the collection of the Ministry of Education and National Enlightenment (*Ministerstvo školství a národní osvěty*), which holds documents concerning the Ministry's correspondence with the National Gallery (after being renamed the Bohemian and Moravian Federal Gallery – *Českomoravská zemská galerie*) from 1939 to 1945, dealing with purchase committee reports, loans of items, individual collections, and the organization of the National Gallery. An important part of the collection also comprises applications for the export of works of art, including during the years 1938–1939, when an export permit was sometimes contingent on the owner of the collection having to leave the most precious items in Czechoslovakia (later the Protectorate). In this instance, I would like to draw attention to the publication by my colleagues Helena Krejčová and Mario Vlček entitled *Lives for Ransom (Výkupné za život)*, which deals with the export and enforced donations of works of art during the emigration of Jews from Bohemia and Moravia. It documents this issue using the example of the Museum of Decorative Arts (*Uměleckoprůmyslové museum*) in Prague and items in its collections that came from enforced donations.

A third collection that I would like to mention in this context is the one kept by the State Administration of Cultural Heritage (*Státní památková správa*), which includes applications for the postwar export of works of art. This collection contains documents concerning chateaus that were confiscated during the time of the Protectorate. Documents about the depositing of items from German confiscations in individual museum and gallery institutions are also another important source of information. There are also very substantial archive sources stored in the collection of the National Property Administration (*Národní správa majetkových podstat*), i.e., the institution that, from 1945

to 1950, administered assets that were forfeited during the occupation by their original owners under the coercion of national, political and racial persecution.

The Archive of the National Gallery in Prague (*Archiv Národní galerie*) is an important resource with regard to the subject of stolen works of art. It contains documents relating to the activity of the National Gallery (later the Bohemian and Moravian Federal Gallery) during the time of the Protectorate (e.g. minutes of purchase committee meetings, correspondence concerning exports of works of art, and the receipt of donated artifacts). This depository allows us to study archive sources from the postwar years (on the securing of works of art from German confiscations, applications for restitution, and the exportation of works of art).

I would also like to mention the Archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (*Archiv Ministerstva zahraničních věcí*) in Prague. This ministry handled restitution and reparation duties after the Second World War. Studies in the archive concern papers that document the course of international negotiations, agreements, and treaties between states. Of particular importance with regard to the actual subject of artistic artifacts are papers from the Reparation and Restitution (*Reparace a restituce*) collection and the collection of the Central Reparation and Restitution Committee (*Ústřední reparační a restituční komise*), insofar as they concern works of art and other cultural assets. This archive contains individual applications/requests for searches for specific items in individual occupation zones and documents on negotiations in specific restitution cases and their subsequent outcomes. In evaluating these materials, we also carry out comparisons with documents from foreign archives, specifically the *Bundesarchiv* in Koblenz and the National Archives in London.

It is also possible to study archive materials that are useful in terms of plundered art in the Security Forces Archive (*Archiv bezpečnostních složek*) in Prague. In Collection 325 – State Security Investigation Directorate (*Správa vyšetřování Státní bezpečnosti*) – there are documents that were created in connection with the collation of data for the Commission for the Prosecution of War Criminals (*Komise pro stíhání válečných zločinců*). It is possible to obtain information from this collection on individual people who participated in the persecution of the Jewish population, including the confiscation of assets. The records of names of this archive allows us to find personal data and basic information about specific people that can be added to our investigations in a number of cases or, in some instances, to find references to documents that are today stored in other archives.

It is also necessary to conduct research in archives outside of Prague, which are also very important in terms of stolen works of arts. Another of this panel's contributions will deal with the Moravian Regional Archives (*Moravský zemský archiv*) in Brno. In another panel, my colleague Mečislav Borák will talk about the Regional Archives (*Zemský archiv*) in Opava and the State Regional Archives (*Státní oblastní archiv*) in Litoměřice. Naturally, these are only some of the archives outside of Prague. Of course, in order to thoroughly map this subject, it would be necessary to conduct heuristic research in a number of archives. It is obvious that regional research at the level of individual districts (the activity of individual administrative authorities, regional museums, and galleries) also represents an extensive field for research on works of art.

In my paper, I have tried to present basic information on the possibilities for archive studies in the Czech Republic in connection with the subject of works of art stolen during the Second World War. As

I have said, searching archive sources is immensely complicated. It is often very hard to find a number of archive sources in the given archives. Because a lot of the information is missing, however, we have to consider the possibility that it will not be possible to find it at all, because this data has not been preserved.

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**FRENCH ARCHIVAL SOURCES AND RESEARCH
ABOUT JEWISH CULTURAL PROPERTY SPOILED
BY THE NAZIS BEFORE 1945**

**French Archival Sources and Research
About Jewish Cultural Property
Spoliated by the Nazis Before 1945**

I would like to thank the Conference organizers and the leaders of the “Looted Art” working group, especially on behalf of the French group, i.e., Ms. Isabelle Lemasne de Chermont, the Chief Curator of the Libraries and the author of numerous studies on the issue, and Mr. Guy Broc, Special Advisor to the Ambassador in Charge of the International Dimension of the Holocaust. I would also like to thank Ms. Caroline Piketty, curator at the National Archives, member of the Mattéoli Mission and private researcher on spoliated musical instruments, who has shared with me her extensive experience on the subject.

The spoliation of works of art in France by the Germans has been the subject of numerous studies and reports for almost 20 years. In his speech at the 53rd anniversary of the Vélodrome d’Hiver roundup on

July 16, 1995, the French President Jacques Chirac admitted for the first time the responsibility of the French State for the persecution of the Jews and its indefeasible debt towards the Jewish community. Follow-up at the national level consisted of the establishment of a mission doing research in the archives of the spoliations. In 1998, the Washington Conference was held. The reunification of Germany finally provided powerful tools to search the archives with the goal of providing refunds and compensation to the beneficiaries of the families who had been victims of spoliation.

Research in the French archives thus enabled us to establish, within several years, the extent of the spoliation, to identify the entities responsible for the spoliation and for the restitutions, the looting process, the list of the relevant owners, their addresses, their properties, their destinies and, in the best case scenario, their location; these investigations involved demanding memory work but resulted in hundreds of assets being returned to the beneficiaries.

First, I will mention the key axes of scientific research in France in the last 20 years or so; second, I will describe the restitution process as it was re-launched in our country in the late 1990s; and third, I will talk about the outlook for research in the years to come. There are many institutions in France that deal with these issues; if the department I represent is more specifically involved in them, that is due to the fact we keep the archives and due to the contributions of the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs (MFA) to the negotiations on the return of the works of art.

Archive-Based Research

The most important set of archives is the collection improperly called the “Rose Valland Archives;” more precisely, the “Archives