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OFFICE OF STRATEGIC SERVICES
ART LOOTING INVESTIGATION UNIT
APO 413
U.S. ARMY

DETAILED INTERROGATION REPORT NO. 1

1 July 1945

SUBJECT: HEINRICH HOFFMANN

Distribution

THEODORE ROUSSEAU, JR.
Lieutenant, USNR

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REFERENCES

1. Report: "The Miedl Case", 1 May 1945
2. Consolidated Interrogation Report No. 2, "The Goering Collection", 15 September 1945
3. Consolidated Interrogation Report No. 1, "Activity of the Einsatzstab Rosenberg in France", 15 August 1945

I. INTRODUCTION

HOFFMANN was interrogated at a special interrogation center at Alt Aussee, Austria, during the period 8-28 June 1945. He was placed by this unit in the custody of CIC, 3rd U.S. Army, Munich on 29 June 1945, for transfer first to 7th Army Intelligence Center, Augsburg, and then back to Munich in the custody of 1st Lt. Kern, M.F.A. & A., Regional Military Government, Munich.

At the time of his arrest a number of documents were taken from HOFFMANN; accounts, bank statements, personal papers, etc. These are to be found at Central Collecting Point (Verwaltungsbau) 3rd U.S. Army, Munich.

II. PERSONAL

(a) Career

Heinrich HOFFMANN was born 12 August 1885 in Furth, Bavaria, Germany. The family moved to Munich during his childhood. In World War I he was a private attached to one of the earliest aerial photography units. After the war he settled in Munich, working as an assistant in a small photographer's shop. It was at this time that he became a friend of Adolph HITLER. He joined the Nazi party in 1922 as #59, which entitled him to wear the party's golden insignia. From this time on he acted as HITLER's photographer, at first on a personal basis and later on an official one. He was present during all the early struggles of the Nazi Party and states that he began selling his photographs to American newspaper services as early as 1925. After the Nazi accession to power and during World War II he was a prominent political figure. His special and favorite sphere of activity was art. He played a leading role in the campaign against "degenerate art" and it was under his orders that an attempt was made to remove all traces of it from German museums. Later he became the official patron of the modern art which flourished in Germany with Nazi approval. The yearly exhibitions at the Haus der Deutschen Kunst in Munich were under his direction. Broadly speaking, HITLER placed him in charge of presenting art to the people of the Third Reich and of seeing that they got the right sort.

HOFFMANN is married and has two children by a previous marriage. His son is a business man in Vienna and his daughter is the wife of Baldur von SCHIRACH, Chief of the HITLER Jugend and later Reichstatthalter and Gauleiter of Vienna. HOFFMANN also has a personal connection with Frau Lola SCHMIDT (ZEH) in whose house he was found at the time of his arrest. His Munich residence was at Ebersberger Strasse 5.

(b) Business

It can be fairly said that HOFFMANN's chief interest in the Nazi movement came from the enormous amount of money which he made out of it. He had a virtual monopoly on all photographic reproductions in Germany and, in particular, on any pictures having to do with the activity of the party. The Verlag Heinrich HOFFMANN was famous throughout Europe and expanded with the advancing German armies. During the war, at the height of the Nazi successes, he had offices in Berlin, Vienna, Munich, Paris, Strasbourg, The Hague, and Riga.

HOFFMANN says that he had always been impressed by the fact that German art magazines were written far over the head of the average public. To remedy this situation he decided to start an art magazine for the people. He bought out a modest art weekly in Vienna and transformed it into the

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well-known Kunst dem Volk, which, he says was making millions for him within a few months. The subscription list was enormous. This may have been due partially, at least, to the fact that those who were approached as subscribers knew that the magazine came from HITLER's immediate entourage. As a sincere associate with his Directorship of the Haus der Deutschen Kunst exhibitions went the exclusive right to sell post cards of the pictures shown.

The combination in HOFFMANN of a considerable talent for making money and of the political influence which came from the knowledge that he could always speak directly to HITLER, placed him in an almost unique position in Germany. However, as was frequently the case with the Nazis, this seems to have been based largely on outward appearances. The man himself is almost illiterate and the details of his business appear to have been carried out by two old friends and faithful servants, Michael BAUER and Alphonse BRUEMMER, both of whom are surely much better acquainted with the details of their master's activity than HOFFMANN himself.

III. RELATIONSHIP WITH HITLER

(a) Personal

During the early period of the Fuehrer's career, HOFFMANN appears to have been one of his constant companions, particularly during the difficult times. That their relationship was a very personal one can be judged from the fact that it was HOFFMANN who introduced HITLER to Eva BRAUN, at the time a minor employee in his shop. Later, after the Nazis had come to power, HOFFMANN had his own place in the Fuehrer's headquarters. HITLER often came to his house to dine, and the HOFFMANN family were regular guests at Berchtesgaden and in the Fuehrer's other residences.

This intimate friendship slowly began to decline after the appearance of BORMANN in HITLER's surroundings. The gradual estrangement from his former friend may have been partly due to the fact that HOFFMANN's wife and, to a lesser degree, HOFFMANN himself, were known to be outspoken critics of certain phases of NAZI policy. However, ~~BORMANN soon to have been their principal enemy.~~ HOFFMANN says that in 1944, BORMANN deliberately invented the idea that he had paratyphus and should, therefore, not be allowed to approach the Fuehrer. As a result of this, HOFFMANN was put under state medical observation and was obliged to remain in Vienna undergoing tests during a period of nine months. He says that during the last period of the war he had lost all personal contact with HITLER, whose attitude toward him had completely changed. He attributes this partly to the Fuehrer's health and the injections which, he says, HITLER received daily in large number, and partly to the fact that Eva BRAUN and BORMANN saw to it that they were the only people whom HITLER ever saw alone.

(b) Adviser in Art Matters

During the early period of their friendship, HITLER and HOFFMANN used to collect pictures together in a modest way. HOFFMANN says that HITLER's interest in art came from the fact that he himself was a painter. The first picture which he recalls the Fuehrer buying was a sketch by BOECKLIN. It was at this time that HOFFMANN began to advise HITLER in art matters. This he continued to do later after the foundation of the Linz Museum. However, he is insistent in maintaining that it was always on a strictly personal basis. He never occupied an official position connected with Linz, and never, during his travels, did he hold a commissioning letter to show that he was buying for the Museum. He describes his role as that of a disinterested middleman. He says that he was often present at the Fuehrerbau exhibitions when HITLER chose pictures. He also received

many letters offering paintings and other objects for sale to the museum; and when he approved of these he would pass them on to the Fuehrer with his recommendation. He also introduced certain dealers to HITLER and helped them when they wanted to sell pictures. Sometimes, during one of his trips, if he saw a picture which he considered worthy of the Linz museum, he would suggest its purchase on his return. However, he positively denies ever having bought a picture expressly for HITLER or ever having presented a picture for sale himself. He never derived the slightest personal profit from any of this. In spite of these denials, the evidence shows that HOFFMANN not only bought works of art, representing himself as an official representative of the Fuehrer, but also sometimes did a little picture dealing on the side for his own profit.

Even in this non-political aspect of his relationship with HITLER, HOFFMANN's influence also declined. This certainly began when, in the Adler trial of 1938, he was shown to have purchased faked pictures by Spitzweg. However, HOFFMANN says again that it was due mainly to the enmity of Reichsleiter BORMANN. He cites the following story as an example of the pass to which things had come. During one of the last visits which he made with HITLER to the Fuehrerbau, on being asked his opinion of a certain picture, HOFFMANN answered that he considered it much too expensive and, in all probability, a fake. To his surprise and dismay, HITLER answered, "I'll buy it anyway."

IV. THE LINZ MUSEUM

(a) The Original Idea

HOFFMANN says that it was in 1938 that HITLER conceived the idea of a new German state art center at Linz. He denies that there was any connection with the fact that Linz was the birthplace of his mother. He says HITLER hated Vienna and wanted to make sure that the region in which he had spent his youth should be famous for its culture as well as for its industries. The new center was to have monumental buildings devoted to all the arts and the most important of these was to be the Fuehrer Museum. The collection was to contain all forms of European art and HITLER planned to build it up under his own direction with the assistance of the best German art historians and museum personnel.

As was customary with the Nazis, among the first sources of pictures for the Museum were the confiscated collections of German and Austrian Jews. HOFFMANN says that the first of these to be considered was the Alphonse ROTHSCHILD collection, which he visited in the company of HITLER and Gauleiter BURKEL in Vienna. He says that HITLER recognized the quality of the objects and instructed BURKEL to chose the best and send them to him for the Linz Museum. However, BURKEL, who was associated in some way with art dealer HABERSTOCK, did not send the best of the collection, but kept it for himself. As a result of the scandal which followed, HITLER decided that he would place the responsibility for such selections on one man, the Director of the Linz Museum.

After this time, HOFFMANN says, HITLER gave up all idea of a private collection. Everything that he bought was intended primarily for Linz, and if later the quality was not considered up to the required standard, he had a plan to distribute the leftovers to the provincial museums of greater Germany.

(b) Personnel

HOFFMANN says that he has no intimate knowledge of any of the personnel of the Linz museum. These were all under the direct influence of BORMANN, who did everything that he could to exclude HOFFMANN from the picture. He has given the following details on the more prominent people who held positions in the Museum staff.

Hans POSSE. Was appointed Director, partly as a result of the BURKEL affair. HOFFMANN says that HITLER was much impressed by him during a visit to the Dresden Museum and decided that the man who was in charge of such a famous museum as Dresden, was the only one for Linz. He also says that HABERSTOCK had something to do with the appointment. He took over the directorship in June 1939 and from that time on, HOFFMANN says with some bitterness, he passed on every picture that went into the Linz collection, including those which had been chosen by HOFFMANN. He hardly ever saw POSSE, and was additionally irritated by the fact that through his influence the dealers whom HOFFMANN had introduced to the Fuehrer had much less to say than had been the case previously.

Hermann VOSS. POSSE's successor. MIEDL reported that HOFFMANN had been partly responsible for the VOSS appointment. HOFFMANN denies this. HOFFMANN describes VOSS as being completely under BORMANN's influence. He has little respect for VOSS' taste and describes him as buying anything that was put before him. As an example he cites the SCHLOSS Collection.

Erhart (Erwin ?) GOEPEL. HOFFMANN only saw him once or twice during his visits to Holland where GOEPEL was the representative of Linz.

Hans REGER. The architect in charge of the Fuehrerbau, Munich. He received and catalogued all pictures which were sent for the exhibitions at which HITLER or POSSE chose pictures for Linz. REGER has no knowledge of art but his files contain complete information about all pictures which went through his hands. HOFFMANN confirms that REGER had pictures in storage in the Fuehrerbau air raid shelter for certain of his friends, among them MIEDL.

(c) Funds

Purchases for Linz were made with money from a special Kunstfond, the original idea for which came from HOFFMANN. He suggested to HITLER that the Reich postal authorities issue a special HITLER stamp with the Fuehrer's portrait (taken from a HOFFMANN photograph) and that the stamps should be specially taxed and the fund obtained exclusively to artistic projects. The special stamps were first issued about 1941. Their value was 6, 8, 12, and 20 pfennigs to which was added a supplementary tax. The idea was most successful and, by the end of the war, the fund had risen at times to fifty million marks. HITLER had the final say as to its disposition.

HOFFMANN has no detailed knowledge of the methods of payment. He only knows that the bills were sent to the Reichskanzlei, where payment was made by Staatssekretar LAMMERS direct to the seller.

Foreign currency, which was extremely difficult to obtain, was available to the official buyers for Linz and to certain favored dealers through von HUMMEL, BORMANN's assistant. Here again HOFFMANN denies having any detailed knowledge, and adds that he himself never had any difficulty with foreign currency for art purchases because it was always available in his own branch offices.

(d) Methods of Acquisition

The majority of the works of art purchased for Linz were originally proposed to the directors of the Museum or to HOFFMANN by letter, photographs enclosed. If they were considered desirable as acquisitions, the photographs were forwarded to the Reichskanzlei and, if accepted by HITLER, the owner was notified and instructed to send the objects to the Fuehrerbau. The same system existed for the agents who bought outside of Germany. POSSE was the only man who could buy outright.

Every six or eight weeks, an exhibition of the pictures chosen was organized in the Fuehrerbau by REGER. This was visited either by POSSE or the Fuehrer, sometimes in the company of HOFFMANN. BUCHNER and other museum directors were also called in to give advice. It was there that the final decision was made as to purchases for the museum.

(e) Dealers

(1) BRUESCHWILLER Brothers, Munich, Furstenstrasse 22.

HOFFMANN says that the BRUESCHWILLERS were Swiss who came to Munich after the last war and opened a small shop which specialized in Medieval Art. They were early members of the inner Nazi circle. HOFFMANN did not see them for about fourteen years until they suddenly appeared as exhibitors of pictures for Linz at the Fuehrerbau. HOFFMANN says that they worked completely under BORMANN's influence. One of the brothers was appointed director of the Coburg Museum. The other traveled throughout Europe buying pictures for their dealing establishment. He was particularly active in Paris, and sold on the German market what was not accepted for Linz.

(2) DIETRICH, Frau Maria (Almas) Munich, Ottostrasse 9

One of the early friends of HOFFMANN who introduced her to HITLER and in whose company he visited her shop. She had been married to a Turkish Jew, ALMAS, but had changed her name for more Aryan appearances. Her daughter was a great friend of Eva BRAUN. Through HOFFMANN's protection, she presented pictures in person to HITLER and was one of the dealers from whom he bought the most. Again, as BORMANN's ascendancy over the Fuehrer became stronger, she lost some of her position. However, she always traveled with a letter from the Reichskanzlei stating that she was buying for HITLER and the German museums. She obtained foreign currency through BORMANN's office. She also was commissioned by HITLER to buy at German auctions for the Linz Museum. There are cases on record when pictures reached fantastic prices because she was bidding against some of the other Linz representatives. HOFFMANN says that he often gave her tips about the location of good pictures, and that she sometimes bought pictures for him. In 1940 she brought the Czernin Vermeer, The Master in his Studio, from Vienna for HITLER's consideration but he did not buy it at that time because the price was too high.

(3) HABERSTOCK, Karl, Berlin, Kurfuerstenstrasse 59

During the early days HITLER bought from him, using HOFFMANN as an intermediary. They often visited HABERSTOCK's shop together. Later HABERSTOCK by-passed HOFFMANN and also dealt with HITLER directly. HITLER sometimes went to his shop alone and he sent pictures frequently to the Reichskanzlei. Hewas a close friend and, HOFFMANN believes that he traveled with a letter stating that he was an official buyer for Linz and the German museums. When he was abroad he appeared to have direct contact with the Reichskanzlei. HOFFMANN says that at the time of the purchase from the French wine merchant, NICOLAS, of two pictures by Rembrandt, Portrait of Titus and Landscape, he obtained permission to pay out 60 million francs within 24 hours. He was a bitter enemy of VOSS, and lost much of his influence when the latter took over the directorship of Linz. However, he had a talent for intrigue, and during the last part of the war was rapidly regaining his old position.

(4) LUZ Gallery, Berlin, Kurfuerstenstrasse

One of the few dealers who worked directly with HITLER. HOFFMANN recalls his selling to the Fuehrer a Lenbach Portrait of Bismarck and a Blechen Landscape, the latter for RM. 150,000.

(5) MICHLES, Frau. Munich, Maximilianplatz.

One of the dealers from whom HITLER bought during the early days. She specialized in Bavarian and Austrian paintings and occasionally sold things to Linz.

(6) MIEDL (GOUDSTIKKER), Amsterdam, 458 Heerengracht

HOFFMANN had been a friend of MIEDL for many years. They were particularly close during the war. HOFFMANN used MIEDL as an agent in Holland and supplied him with money during his visits to Paris. It was through HOFFMANN that MIEDL sold pictures to Linz and on one occasion presented them personally to the Fuehrer. This was in 1941 when MIEDL had a large number of paintings from the GOUDSTIKKER collection stored in a warehouse in Leneestrasse, Berlin, just behind the Reichskanzlei. (See Reference 1.) HOFFMANN took HITLER there to look over pictures which might be acquired for Linz. Some were chosen and the deal was completed by POSSE. MIEDL also acted as HOFFMANN's buying agent. As an example he cites six or seven pictures, among them a Molenaar Interior, Lisvens' Portrait of a Man, and a van der Velde Landscape which MIEDL purchased for him from the Dienststelle MUEHLMANN.

HOFFMANN considers that MIEDL was given the dirty end of the deal by GOERING both in the case of the GOUDSTIKKER sale and of the Vermeer exchange. He says that he would have sold the latter to HITLER at a much better price if HOFER had not grabbed it away from him. He adds that he heard of another Vermeer discovery in Holland, a picture representing Christ Driving the Money-changers from the Temple, which, to the best of his knowledge, had been bought by the end of the war. He is a great admirer of this particular phase of Vermeer's art. (For further details see Reference 3.)

V. THE EINSATZSTAB ROSENBERG

HOFFMANN states that he never had any personal contact with this organization. To the best of his knowledge, HITLER never saw even one-third of the pictures confiscated in his name. HOFFMANN insists that HITLER was unwilling to acquire any of these pictures for the Linz Museum. As a proof of this statement he cites the following story. On one occasion his magazine, Kunst dem Volk, was to publish an article on recent acquisitions for the Linz gallery. Among these were included The Astronomer by Vermeer and Portrait of a Lady by Boucher, both confiscated from the ROTHSCHILD collection by the ERR. The article was shown to HITLER before publication, and HOFFMANN says that he at once gave the order that any mention of these two pictures as acquisitions for the Linz Museum should immediately be stricken out. Subsequent evidence has shown that HITLER did, in fact, include these pictures in his collection. (See Reference 2.)

VI. THE HOFFMANN COLLECTION

(a) Purchases

HOFFMANN's specialty was the German School and he claims to have the best Spitzweg collection in the world. He also had some 17th Century and French 18th Century pictures. He bought from all dealers and had no special agent who sought out things for him. He says that the country from which he bought most was Holland. There he dealt with MIEDL, the Dienststelle MUEHLMANN, KATZ, TIETJE, and DELAUNOY. In France Frau DIETRICH sometime acted as his buying agent. In Paris he himself made only one purchase, a Sheperd Scene by Fragonard, bought from FABIANI for 500,000 francs. He protests that he never bought a picture which had formerly been in a confiscated Jewish Collection. However, he admits that he never acquired about the immediate provenance of anything he bought, even if it was from MUEHLMANN of whose activities he was well aware.

(Note: A complete catalogue with photographs of the HOFFMANN collection is in the possession of 1st Lt. James J. Rorimer, Monuments and Fine Arts, G-5, 7th Army.)

(b) Deposits

HOFFMANN states that his collection is stored in the following places:

- (1) Berlin, Kochstrasse 10 A number of pictures located in an air raid shelter which HOFFMANN says was sealed by debris when his house was destroyed.
- (2) Neuruppin, near Berlin A small number of pictures located in his country cottage, "Baracke Hoffmann."
- (3) Griffelham, near Burghausen "Heinrichshoff", his country estate. Administrator WOEHRESHOFER. Pictures and furniture since removed to Munich by MFA & A, 3rd U.S. Army.
- (4) Griffelham, near Burghausen The house of Count TOERRING where he has deposited about 100 pictures, including photographs, archives, etc.

- (5) Reichenhall

The house of Fraulein DASTERT (next to the Burgermeister). A file of photographs and equipment.
- (6) Dietramszell, near Holzkirchen

The house of Baron SCHILLOHER, a few pictures.
- (7) Nurnberg

In the house of the painter ULRICH, his representative in that city, a small number of pictures.
- (8) Waldmunchen, near Passau

Some of his furniture is hidden in The Grenzland Hotel.
- (9) Vienna, Verlag Heinrich HOFFMANN, Opernring 19

Miscellaneous pictures, furniture, and files.

VII. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

The interrogation of HOFFMANN is a thankless task. He is an alcoholic and has all the weaknesses which go with this vice. His memory is bad and he changes his story from day to day, according to what he thinks will please his interrogator most. When he feels happy he boasts about his success with the Nazi Regime and when he feels unhappy, he is contrite and repentant. He curses and praises HITLER alternately. Above all, his chief concern is the future of his material possessions. He appeared more upset about the theft of his linen than by unfavorable reports about his immediate family.

The importance of HOFFMANN's role in the formation of the Linz Collection has been much exaggerated. During the early period he was close to HITLER who unquestionably listened to him. However, his advice concerned chiefly German XIX Century pictures; and his prestige, already undermined by the purchase of fake Spitzwegs, disappeared almost completely through BORMANN's influence.

The question as to whether or not HOFFMANN was responsible for the appointment of Hermann VOSS as successor to POSSE has not yet been satisfactorily answered. Under interrogation he denies having any part in it. However, there is good reason to believe that he boasted about it to his friends. The truth is probably that, in an effort to win back his influence, he did what he could to replace POSSE, a BORMANN favorite, by a man whom he knew to have the reputation of an anti-Nazi and to be an enemy of POSSE's chief backer, HABERSTOCK.

HOFFMANN emerges as a parasite of the Nazi regime. His only usefulness to the present investigation is to identify the works of art which he acquired in occupied countries. It is recommended that he be put at the disposition of G-5, MFA & A for this purpose.

T.R. Jr.