

Raub, Raubkunst und Verwertung jüdischen Eigentums. 26. Tagung zur Geschichte und Kultur der Juden in Schwaben

Veranstalter: Heimatpflege des Bezirks Schwaben; Schwabenakademie Irsee

Datum, Ort: 28.11.2014–29.11.2014, Irsee

Bericht von: Andrea M. Gáldy, International Network Collecting & Display

In November 2014 a group of historians and descendants of survivors of the Shoah discussed aspects of theft, stolen art, and the exploitation of Jewish property at a conference jointly organised by *Heimatpflege des Bezirks Schwaben* (regional office for the protection of cultural heritage) and *Schwabenakademie Irsee*. The 26th event of this series focused on the history and culture of the Jewish population in Swabia. The conference papers attested to the bureaucratisation and alleged legalisation of theft and profiteering, ranging from important works of art to the victims' linen and kitchen utensils. The conference thus offered a rare attempt to break with a decades-long *omertà*.

PETER FASSL (Augsburg) explained that despite regular reports about the *causa Gurlitt* and Jewish restitution claims, there is still little awareness as to the scale of theft which happened at an estimated total value of 8 bn Reichsmark of which ca. 3bn found their way into the hands of new, private, owners. Recent research notes the widespread greed of what is sometimes called a *Beutegemeinschaft* (looting community) of the non-Jewish population who unlawfully and sometimes unwittingly acquired the victims' goods. Whereas some of the valuable objects are displayed in museums and libraries, we know little about the continued use of looted every-day objects.

Fassl discussed the difficulty of finding reliable as well as accessible source material for research. In the immediate post-war period the German population claimed in general that the atrocities had been committed exclusively by Nazi criminals, even though most of the population, East and West, supported Nazi ideology and was generally happy to collaborate. When the GDR joined the Federal Republic in 1989, East Germany for the first

time faced investigations into the fate of Jewish German citizens killed in the death camps as well as claims for restitution filed by survivors of the Holocaust.

The 1998 Washington agreement stated that between 1933 and 1945 Jewish property could only have changed owners by force. In that same year, the Cologne tax office made its records public, which offer a major source for provenance research. While from 1938 on theft of Jewish-owned property reached nearly 100%, it had been legalised even before WWI. A tax of 25% existed on *Reichsflucht* (leaving Germany) and was gradually increased to 65% and then 96%. Cancellation of citizenship was increasingly used against German Jews; as a result property and companies were confiscated. The tax secret was abolished so that Jews had to list their inventory and, after the pogroms in November 1938, works of art, gold, silver and diamonds had to be handed over to pawn shops at fixed prices.

UWE HARTMANN (Berlin) spoke about the work of the *Arbeitsstelle für Provenienzforschung am Institut für Museumsforschung der Staatlichen Museen zu Berlin*. He asked for a new form of art history, which also did justice to the owners. He presented the example of the *Bayerisches Nationalmuseum* (Munich) whose staff investigated ca. 400 objects from the collections of Hermann Göring (which it had received from the Bavarian State in the 1960s and 1970s) right after the Washington agreement was ratified. After their discovery at Berchtesgaden by French troops these objects were taken into custody by the US Army: American monuments men staged an exhibition and organised Central Collecting Points, for example in Munich. They also acted as trustees for objects acquired after 1933.

While it is sometimes possible to trace the paths of works of art, it is much harder to figure out what happened to objects of every-day life. The situation was and continues to be complicated; in particular after official allied guardianship ended during the 1960s. The lack of funds can today be countered with grants provided by the ministry for culture and media in Berlin. So far, sponsored projects mainly focus on larger cities,

whereas recently pilot projects were established in smaller communities in collaboration with the *Landesstelle für nicht-staatliche Museen*.

Five local case studies in Greater Swabia were presented by HEINZ HÖGERLE (Horb-Rexingen), MICHAEL NIEMETZ (Laupheim), HERBERT AUER (Krumbach), CLAUDIA MADEL-BÖHRINGER (Ichenhausen) and CHRISTIAN HERRMANN (Fellheim). They traced a pattern of persecution steadily tightened from at least 1933 onwards which used administrative structures to impose new forms of taxation, to ration raw materials, and to forbid Jewish citizens to practice their chosen profession. As companies and workshops were gradually „Aryanised“, their owners were deported and murdered. Extortionate taxes were demanded on property, the families' possessions were sold at auction, while strip searches in the lagers ensured that the victims lost even the last vestiges of personal property. Not only the offices of the German tax offices and former neighbours profited from the organised theft, food and every-day household goods were taken to charitable organisations run on behalf of the NS regime for distribution among poor families and refugees settling in Swabia.

At Laupheim as in many other Swabian villages and cities, the number of Jewish inhabitants had once amounted to ca. 50% of the total population in the 19th century. Numbers steadily declined but businesses were not „Aryanised“ until the late 1930s, since it would have caused damage to the local economy. Wealthy members of Fellheim's Jewish community started to leave for the larger cities during the 19th century and frequently settled in Memmingen. It is still possible to trace the fate of some of these families, even though the lack of surviving documentation prevents detailed research into the afterlife of works of art and other valuable property, most likely snapped up by citizens in Memmingen. Real estate occasionally changed hands by sale but, more often, by confiscation. After the war the non-Jewish families proved resistant to restitution claims filed by survivors in the US. If they were honoured, it happened if goods had been bought by peo-

ple the former owners knew and could trust. To this day enquiries are met with hostility.

Oettingen and Nördlingen were not far behind Memmingen's sad claim to fame as the first city to be free of Jewish inhabitants, as reported by WERNER EISENSCHINK (Nördlingen) and corroborated by denazification records. Instances of theft were executed at all levels of society, even prompted by the greed of the bourgeoisie, for example when the mayor's wife robbed a Jewish-owned shop to gather the trousseau for her daughter's wedding. Even after WWII Jewish claims continued to be disregarded, sacred objects kept at the communal offices rather than handed back for service, while it seems a well-known secret that numerous objects are still in the hands of the people who stole them from their neighbours' houses after 1933.

The second day focused on the experiences of Jewish families suffering the loss of loved ones and of property at the hands of their fellow citizens. GERNOT RÖMER (Stadtbergen) related the history of a Jewish family from Augsburg who escaped to the US with \$25 as well as some clothes and furniture in two „lifts“. Paul Lammfromm and his family had been successfully running the *Vereinigte Wäschefabrik* up to the moment when they had to leave for Portland, OH in 1937. Paul Lammfromm felt German, he had fought in WWI and been awarded the *Eiserne Kreuz* (1st and 2nd class) as well as the *Bayerische Verdienstorden*. His wife Marie served as a nurse during WWI and also received awards.

Once they arrived in the US, the Lammfromms changed their name to Levi and started trading in hats before establishing the Columbia sports ware company. Their Augsburg company had to be sold when the family tried to escape; the house and property in Augsburg were destroyed by allied bombs.

MIRIAM FRIEDMANN (Augsburg) gave detailed and personal insights into how Jewish German citizens lived with the constant persecution and robbery. She explained how her father, Professor Friedmann, had been able to flee to Italy, later to the US in 1933; her grandparents Friedmann and Oberdorfer, successful owners of companies producing linen and aprons or umbrellas respectively, stayed in Augsburg. Although both grandfa-

thers had fought in the German army during WWI, in the aftermath of the Great War they experienced harassment and exclusion. Eventually, one set of grandparents was deported, the other escaped deportation by committing suicide.

From at least 1933 new laws had marginalised Jewish families; by 1938 all Jewish property had to be declared if it amounted to more than 5,000 RM. On 1 July 1938 the Friedmann business was turned into the *Wäschefabrik Augsburg F&K Ölkrug*. The *Münch'sches Palais*, owned by the Friedmann family since 1889, was „Aryanised“ through Freiherr Hans v Schnurbein. The Oberdorfers' company was sold on 30 October 1940. The new owner, Hofmann, paid for the company into a blocked account at Dresdner Bank, Augsburg; the Oberdorfers received nothing. Documents from the immediate post-war period attest to the slow and difficult process of restitution due to a complicated mixture of ownership and trusteeship on the one hand and a general lack of proactive helpfulness on the other.

All the more surprisingly, the former cook at the Friedmann household returned several family pieces to Miriam Friedmann during her first visit to Germany. Some photos document works of art and pieces of furniture once owned by the Friedmanns and Oberdorfers and complement the information contained in the inventory lists the families were forced to compile in 1938.

As KATRIN HOLLY (Augsburg) stated in her paper, the theft of Jewish-owned art and precious objects was well organised and involved specialists, for example Professor Norbert Lieb, museum directors such as Hans Robert Weihrauch, and aspiring politicians such as the founding member of the CSU in Augsburg, Kleindienst. In the 1930s, Lieb and Weihrauch had become members of the NSDAP – under pressure as they claimed – though they continued their careers in the art world after the war. While the Gestapo in Augsburg was less „helpful“ with the acquisition of works of art than in other cities, for example in Munich, Frankfurt and Vienna, the trio managed to gather objects in Berlin, Paris and occasionally in Vienna for the Augsburg museums. For example, in June 1941,

Weihrauch heard in Vienna that a Jew called Pollack owned an object he had acquired before WWI. Pollack did not want to sell but was prepared to give some of his valuables away in return „for something to be discussed in private“.

KATRIN KONTNY (Augsburg) currently writes her dissertation on Weihrauch and also conducts research on Kommerzialrat Ernst Pollack. The object discussed by Weihrauch in 1941 was most likely a *Diana auf dem Hirsch* by Matthäus Walbaum (Augsburg), a drinking automaton very popular at seventeenth-century courts. Several exemplars survive, for example at the Munich Residence and in Gera, while the Viennese *Diana* disappeared, most likely when the Red Army plundered the safe in which Pollack had placed all his treasures.

HORST KESSLER (Augsburg) used the example of the *Städtische Kunstsammlungen Augsburg* to provide an insight in the complicated work necessary to filter out stolen objects so that an inventory of ca. 3,000 objects is eventually reduced to 140 dossiers, including photos, before trying to trace the owners in the city archives. While documentation at the *Kunstsammlungen* is sparse, the city archive contains papers attesting to Jewish-owned works of art as well as records of cases of restitution and cards from the registry office of the city of Augsburg.

In the immediate post-war period claims were mostly handled by Jewish Restitution Successor Organization (JRSO) on behalf of victims then residing in the US and Israel. In the early 1950s JRSO made a global agreement with the Bavarian State, according to which the organisation gave up all rights to Jewish property not yet claimed against a one-off payment of DM 20 mio. This means that since the Bavarian State is entitled to the works of art as well as the owners' claims, any future restitution payments have to be made to Bavaria.

Kessler gave several examples of the complicated detective work conducted by provenance researchers. These days a number of websites offer information regarding the afterlife of works of art across the borders of European States: an altarpiece attributed to Bernhard Strigel acquired at the Paris art mar-

ket is documented by means of the US Central Collecting point in 1945.¹ Since the painting had come from abroad, it was sent from Bavaria to France in 1947 when the Louvre distributed such returning objects among the French museums rather than searching for the rightful owners or their heirs.² The altarpiece is still at the Musée des Beaux-Arts at Dijon where it has been regarded as a completed case of restitution since 1947.

A conference such as this shows very clearly how much painstaking research is still needed to grasp the magnitude of the offences committed at the time. A first step towards atonement for past wrongs must consist in breaking the silence which sadly still persists to this day. To those ready to tell us about their families' destiny, even though this means to live through past horrors a second time, and to those investigating surviving records in archives and museums despite veiled opposition and open threats must, therefore, go our gratitude and admiration.

Konferenzübersicht:

Sylvia Heudecker (Irsee), Begrüßung

Peter Fassl (Augsburg), Einführung in das Thema der Tagung

Peter Fassl (Augsburg), Der Stand der Forschung

Uwe Hartmann (Berlin), Arbeitsstelle für Provenienzforschung am Institut für Museumsforschung der Staatlichen Museen zu Berlin

Heinz Högerle (Horb-Rexingen), Die Situation in Rexingen

Michael Niemetz (Laupheim), Die Situation in Laupheim – ein Diskussionsbeitrag

Herbert Auer (Krumbach), Die Situation in Krumbach

Claudia Madel-Böhringer (Ichenhausen), Die Situation in Ichenhausen

Christian Herrmann (Fellheim), Die Situation in Fellheim

Werner Eisenschink (Nördlingen), Die Situation im Ries

Gernot Römer (Stadtbergen), Aus den Erin-

nerungsberichten vertriebener Juden

Miriam Friedmann (Augsburg), Was geschah mit dem Privatbesitz meiner Familie in der NS-Zeit?

Katrin Holly (Augsburg), Rettung oder Raub? Die Rolle der politischen und amtlichen Funktionsträger der Stadt Augsburg bei Übernahme und Ankauf jüdischer Kulturgüter bis 1945

Horst Keßler (Augsburg), Die Kunstgegenstände aus jüdischem Besitz in den Städtischen Kunstsammlungen Augsburg

Tagungsbericht *Raub, Raubkunst und Verwertung jüdischen Eigentums*. 26. Tagung zur Geschichte und Kultur der Juden in Schwaben. 28.11.2014–29.11.2014, Irsee, in: H-Soz-Kult 12.03.2015.

¹ <http://www.dhm.de/datenbank/ccp/dhm_ccp.php?seite=9>.

² <<http://www.culture.gouv.fr/documentation/mnr/MnR-pres.htm>>.