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## **THE REPOSITORIES OF THE PRUSSIAN STATE LIBRARY COLLECTION IN LOWER SILESIA DURING WORLD WAR II**

Despite the fact that more than 70 years have passed since the end of the Second World War, the issues related to the revindication and protection of cultural goods relocated in the 1940s still require thorough research and analysis. One example of the inadequate state of knowledge in this respect is the fate of the collections of the Prussian State Library, which were transferred during the war – from Berlin threatened by bombing – to the provincial repositories in the territory of the Third Reich. As a result of the decisions of the Potsdam Conference – aimed at discussing the mode and way of eliminating the effects of the war and working out a model for the organisation of post-war Europe – some of the areas where the resources of the Berlin library were located were placed under Polish administration. The effect of the indicated decisions was that our officials took over the management of the cultural property of the so-called Western Lands (or Regained Lands). It would therefore appear that the history of the aforementioned resources should be quite well documented and investigated. When it comes to the collections of the Prussian State Library – which got into the hands of the Polish people after the war – the situation is completely different. Until today, the aforementioned collection – colloquially known as ‘Berlinka’ – is identified only with the deposit lodged in the Jagiellonian Library in Cracow. No wonder – this collection includes over half a million archives, comprising medieval manuscripts, prayer books and musical autographs ( among them Bach, Beethoven, Brahms, Busoni, Haydn, Loewe, Mendelssohn, Meyerbeer, Mozart, Schubert, Schumann, Paganini, Telemann, Wolff) as well as letters and other private documents of Goethe, brothers Grimm, Luther, Herder, Hegel or Calvin. However, not many people know that the indicated resource comes from only one repository – created in Krzeszów in Lower Silesia. Thus, it constitutes only a fragment of the collection of the Prussian State Library found after the war in the areas annexed to Poland. Further research into the subject – in terms of the fate of the Berlin Library collections evacuated to Lower Silesia – points to a wider spectrum and complexity of the issue. In order to study it, the author used source materials (including the correspondence between the directorate of the Prussian State Library and the conservator of monuments in the province of Lower Silesia as well as the owners of the buildings, which were used as repositories for the evacuated goods – preserved at the Herder-Institut für historische Ostmitteleuropaforschung – and the documentation of the Allied investigation services responsible for the protection of cultural goods after the war, stored at the National Archives and Records Administration in

Washington D.C.) along with a few studies (foreign and Polish) on the fate of the Prussian State Library during World War II.

Opening the discussion on the subject of the present paper, it is worthwhile to outline the process of making German cultural institutions ready to protect their collections in case of the outbreak of war. The said activities were undertaken as early as in the first half of the 1930s – before anyone even started to take seriously the Third Reich's aspirations to dominate the world. As early as 1934, Dr. Bernhard Rust (head of the Reich Ministry of Science, Education and Upbringing – Reichsministerium für Wissenschaft, Erziehung und Volksbildung), issued an ordinance requiring the directors of museums, libraries and archives to prepare an action plan for the protection of German cultural heritage. One of the first institutions to perform the task was the office of the Director General of the State Museums in Berlin (Generaldirektoren der Staatlichen Museen zu Berlin). Dr. Otto Kümmel, who was in charge of it, *recommended that two lists of exhibits belonging to the Castle Museum (Schlossmuseum) be drawn up, containing all the objects that would have to be protected against possible bombings*<sup>1</sup>. In 1935, another task was assigned to Kümmel – he was to supervise the construction of an underground shelter in Brandenburg, where (in case of an armed conflict) the collections of the Berlin Kaiser Friedrich Museum were to be deposited, among others<sup>2</sup>. Plans for the construction of this facility were abandoned but the strategy for the protection of the German cultural heritage in the event of the outbreak of war continued to be worked on. In 1936, Dr. Walter Peschke, Berlin's provincial conservator of monuments (Provinzialkonservator der Reichshauptstadt), prepared a study entitled 'The Protection of Berlin's monuments' („Denkmalpflege in Berlin”), in which he proposed solutions for securing museum collections, memorials and even architectural monuments. Initially, the activities were to be extended to Berlin alone, but it was very soon recognised that similar arrangements should be made for other areas of the Reich as well<sup>3</sup>. The first institution included in the evacuation plans was the Prussian State Library (Preussische Staatsbibliothek) – one of the most eminent cultural institutions in Germany.

On 16 October 1937, an order regulating the way of protecting the collections of this institution in case of the outbreak of war was sent by the Minister Bernhard Rust to Hugo Andres Krüss, the director of the Prussian State Library. The order imposed an obligation on librarians to take stock of the resources in order to secure them and prepare for possible evacuation from the capital. A year later *the department of manuscripts of the Prussian State Library selected 166 volumes, which should be placed first on the list of objects under special protection*<sup>4</sup>. Due to the unrest that occurred in 1938 – following the annexation of Austria and the Sudetenland, preparations were started as regards the relocation of the selected resources to safe places. Johannes Popitz, the Minister of Finance, provided support for the indicated

<sup>1</sup> The report of Dr. Robert Schmidt, the employee of the Berlin Schlossmuseum, of 15 October 1945, National Archives and Records Administration (hereinafter NARA), Records Concerning the Central Collecting Points: Wiesbaden Central Collecting Point, 1945-1952, RG 260.

<sup>2</sup> Ch. Norris, *The Disaster at Flakturm Friedrichshain; a Chronicle and List of Paintings*, „The Burlington Magazine”, No. 597/1952, pp. 337-347.

<sup>3</sup> D. Nellesen, *Von Baudenkmalern zu Baudenkmalen. Die Entwicklung des Denkmalrechts im Land Berlin von 1949 bis heute*, Berlin 2009.

<sup>4</sup> J.M. Kowalski, J.R. Kudelski, R. Sulik, *Lista Grundmanna. Tajemnice skarbów Dolnego Śląska*, Warsaw 2015, p. 15.

measures. Hugo Andres Krüss noted in his diary that it had been decided to place the most valuable library collection in *the basement of the then Disconto-Gesellschaft, and now the Reich Ministry of Economics*<sup>5</sup>. Other selected goods were to be deposited in the cellar of the Preussische Staatsbank, located at Markgrafenstraße and Friedrich-Wilhelm-Universität (Friedrich Wilhelm University) in Berlin. Alternative sites for depositing library collections in the German province were also looked for. Other regions that met the requirements of the Ministry of Science (rail transport and relative proximity to the capital) were Lower Silesia, Thuringia, Brandenburg and Pomerania. It was there that the most valuable collections of the Prussian State Library were placed in the following years. Lower Silesia played a special role in this respect – the unique resources of the said institution went to, inter alia, Fürstenstein (Książ) Gießmannsdorf (Gościszów), Gröditzburg (Grodzic), Grüssau (Krzeszów), Fischbach (Karpniki) and Hirschberg (Jelenia Góra). The evacuation of the Berlin collection to the above mentioned repositories was carried out in cooperation with the conservator of monuments in Lower Silesia, Prof. Günther Grundmann.

Mass raids on Berlin began in spring 1941. As some of the bombs fell on the archives of the Prussian State Library, the director of this institution decided to evacuate its most valuable collections. There were plans to send them to the *Banz palace* [Benedictine monastery], *Beuron monastery and the spacious Książ castle in Lower Silesia*<sup>6</sup>. The latter was the residence of the Hochberg von Pless family. After the western media published the information in 1941 that two descendants of this eminent family joined the army fighting against the Germans (one in the British forces, the other in the Polish ones), the castle was taken over by the Third Reich. For this reason, *as early as 29 August 1941, the first talks about the possibility of creating a third repository in Książ Castle appeared. Due to its huge and massive structure, it was to become a shelter for the most valuable part of the Prussian State Library's collection. With the approval of the Ministry of Culture – under certain conditions – and in agreement with the Board of the Principality of Waldenburg [Walbrzych] (10 October), the first deliveries of the goods were launched (from 27 to 28 October, the next ones took place from 4 to 6 November 1941) in connection with the action in Beuron and under the supervision of Max Weisweiler*<sup>7</sup>. Weisweiler later recalled that due to the snowfall, it was difficult for cars to enter the castle grounds in Książ. *After a short uphill ride we were forced to disconnect the second trailer and drive in with the rest of the transport*<sup>8</sup>. However, the operation of depositing the collections of the Prussian State Library in Książ was successful. It was also decided that the location could be taken into account during the evacuation of further resources of the aforementioned institution. In May 1942 and March 1943, a member of the directorate of the Prussian State Library, Wilhelm Poewe, visited Książ. Owing to the positive results of the inspection – at the turn of April and May 1943 – additional 304 boxes of manuscripts were delivered to Książ. It was also planned that a collection of manuscripts would be brought to the castle, but in 1943 the central authorities decided that the residence of the Dukes Hochberg von Pless would

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<sup>5</sup> W. Schochow, *Bücherschicksale: Die Verlagerungsgeschichte Der Preubischen Staatsbibliothek*, Berlin 2003, p. 16.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 4.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 34-35.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibidem*.

be occupied for the needs of the Reich Chancellery. On account of the construction works undertaken, in February 1944, the gauleiter of Lower Silesia, Karl Hanke, commissioned *an inventory of the cultural goods stored in the castle and decided which of them could remain and which would be exported*<sup>9</sup>. Finally, the decision was made to move the historic equipment of the castle and deposits placed in the duke's residence to other locations. *The collection of models of castles and churches, entomological collections, antique weapons, seals, miniatures, musical instruments and the deposit of the Prussian State Library were all designated for transport*<sup>10</sup>. The chests with valuable manuscripts were transported to the Benedictine Abbey in Krzeszów. On February 21, 1944 Prof. Grundmann informed the construction office at the Książ castle that he had ordered the *transportation of 400 chests* [Werner Schochow in his book *Bücherschicksale: Die Verlagerungsgeschichte Der Preubischen Staatsbibliothek* states that there were 505 thereof] *with the resources of the Prussian State Library to St. Joseph's Church in Krzeszów*<sup>11</sup>.

The directorate of the Berlin Library was not satisfied with the decision to relocate its collections to Krzeszów. However, Prof. Grundmann explained that he had to take such action due to the construction works threatening the safety of the manuscripts. At the beginning of March 1944, the conservator received another letter in this matter. *Your message about taking our resources away from Książ was not nice to us but there is no other way. We are grateful to you for appointing an appropriate repository and providing careful supervision of the relocation*<sup>12</sup>. As a result of the decisions taken and the acceptance of this solution by Berlin librarians, in July 1944, *the most substantial collection of the Prussian State Library in the East* reached Krzeszów<sup>13</sup>. The deposit survived the war safely and was one of the first to be secured by the Polish Revindication Commission operating in Lower Silesia under the leadership of Professor Stanisław Lorentz – acting as Director of the National Museum in Warsaw and General Director of Museums and Monuments Protection. Thanks to its activities, *numerous book repositories* were found (e.g. in Krzeszów), etc.<sup>14</sup>. The collection of the Prussian State Library found in this location was left in the place until 1946. It was only then that the transfer of the collection to Krakow began. Eventually, 490 chests were transported to the building of the Jagiellonian Library, which also served as a local Secured Books Repository<sup>15</sup>. The research conducted on the aforementioned resources has shown

<sup>9</sup> The minutes of inspection in the Książ Castle of 8 February 1944., Marburg, Herder-Institut für historische Ostmitteleuropaforschung, Institut der Leibnitz-Gemeinschaft, Dokumentensammlung, Günther Grundmann's team (hereinafter: Marburg, Herder-Institut, Dok. Z.G.G.), doc. 1/203.

<sup>10</sup> J.M. Kowalski, J.R. Kudelski, R.Sulik, *Lista Grundmanna. Tajemnice skarbów Dolnego Śląska*, Warsaw 2015, p. 155.

<sup>11</sup> The Letter from Prof. Günther Grundmann to the construction office at the Książ Castle of 21 February 1944, Marburg, Herder-Institut, Dok. Z.G.G., doc. 1/204.

<sup>12</sup> The letter from the director of the Prussian State Library to Prof. Günther Grundmann of 2 March 1944, Marburg, Herder-Institut, Dok. Z.G.G., doc. 1/206.

<sup>13</sup> W. Schochow, *Bücherschicksale: Die Verlagerungsgeschichte Der Preubischen Staatsbibliothek*, Berlin 2003, p. 7.

<sup>14</sup> W. Kieszkowski, *Składnica muzealna Paulinum*, in: *Pamiętnik Związku Historyków Sztuki i Kultury*, Warsaw 1948, vol. 1, p. 141.

<sup>15</sup> P. Lechowski, *Sporna Berlinka. Kontrowersje wokół zbiorów byłej Pruskiej Biblioteki Państwowej przechowywanych w Bibliotece Jagiellońskiej w Krakowie*, „Biuletyn EBIB”, No. 8/2008 (99), <http://www.ebib.pl/2008/99/a.php?lechowski> [accessed on 16.06.2016].

that there are about 500,000 archival records, including manuscripts, prayer books, music autographs and lists of prominent figures of German culture and science.

In summer, 1942, the Lower Silesian conservator, acting on behalf of the Directorate of the Prussian State Library, continued to search for places where it would be possible to deposit another part of the collection of the Berlin institution. One of the locations taken into account was the palace of the Hochberg family in Rohnstock (Roztoka) in the Świdnica County. After many months of talks with the owner of the estate – Count Hans Heinrich XVIII von Hochberg – Prof. Grundmann received a permission to place the chests with Berlin collections in the Rohnstock palace. The Directorate of the Prussian State Library started to prepare the transport. Prof. Grundmann immediately informed Count von Hochberg about the actions taken. *In order to perform the necessary librarianship work, there is a need for 2-3 separate heated accommodation rooms for the staff of the institution, in addition to the storage rooms for books, which do not need to be heated*<sup>16</sup>. The next step was to inspect the rooms of the palace in Roztoka intended for a repository. The person delegated to perform the aforementioned task was a member of the Directorate of the Prussian State Library, Josef Becker who was the director of the Universitätsbibliothek (University Library) and Stadtbibliothek (Municipal Library) in the 1920s. However, Becker did not pay a visit to the place and the plans to move the collections of the Berlin institution to the palace in Roztoka were postponed. The reason was the decision of the command of the German army, which intended to use the free rooms in the residence of Count von Hochberg for *war purposes*. Prof. Grundmann hoped that this was a temporary situation. Therefore, in a letter to the owner of the estate in Roztoka he wrote: *Assuming that an agreement is reached with the Wehrmacht, all other proposals to use the palace should be rejected, giving priority to the interests of the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin*<sup>17</sup>. In December, 1942, von Hochberg told the conservator that the military command did not intend to resign from using the occupied palace premises. *For this reason, it is not possible for me to provide the rooms necessary to secure the library collection. However, I could provide two large rooms to store the chests with books but then no more free rooms would be left for me since the rest of them had been requisitioned by the Wehrmacht or had been loaded with the furniture and paintings*<sup>18</sup>.

The talks on the possibility of using the palace in Roztoka as a repository for the resources of the Prussian State Library were resumed in July 1943. By that time, however, Prof. Grundmann had already used some of the free rooms for depositing the collections of the Schlesische Museum der Bildenden Künste (Silesian Museum of Fine Arts) in Wrocław. That is why he informed the commissioner of the Silesian Museum of Fine Arts, Dr. Hubertus Lossow, about his plans to place the manuscripts from Berlin in Roztoka: *I plan to use the remaining free rooms in the palace [in Roztoka] in order to protect the valuable collections of the Prussian State Library*<sup>19</sup>. Despite the advanced preparations for the relocation of the Berlin collection, Professor Grundmann had to stop the aforementioned operation. The change

<sup>16</sup> The letter of prof. Günther Grundmann to Count Hans Heinrich XVIII von Hochberg of 2 December 1942, Marburg, Herder-Institut, Doc. Z.G.G., doc. 2/290.

<sup>17</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>18</sup> The letter from Count Hans Heinrich XVIII von Hochberg to prof. Günther Grundmann of 4 December 1942, Marburg, Herder-Institut, Doc. Z.G.G., doc. 2/291.

<sup>19</sup> The letter of Dr. Hubertus Lossow to Count Hans Heinrich XVIII von Hochberg of 14 July 1943, Marburg, Herder-Institut, Dok. Z.G.G., doc. 2/307.

of plans was motivated by a letter he received from Count von Hochberg on July 15, 1943. The owner of the palace informed the conservator that *there were measures undertaken to accommodate [in the residence] people from cities threatened by bombardment*<sup>20</sup>. Due to the uncertainty about the use of the Roztoka Palace, Prof. Grundmann resigned from the plans to place the collection of the Prussian State Library in the indicated place.

In the first half of 1942, the Directorate of the Prussian State Library planned to evacuate another part of its collections from Berlin. Valuable manuscripts were to be placed in a medieval castle in Gröditzberg (Grodzicz in Goldberg Country). Josef Becker and Wilhelm Poewe inspected the premises designated for the library repository. Both considered this location *to be appropriate for securing the library's property and soon afterwards they were given permission by von Dirksen* [German diplomat Herbert von Dirksen], the owner of the castle, *to place the collection there*<sup>21</sup>. The manuscripts were to be deposited in the Knights' Hall on the high ground floor of the castle. *It had an area of 8x12 meters and could hold – according to the Poewe report – 250 chests*<sup>22</sup>. It is worth mentioning that it is in this part of the castle that the Dirksen family also gathered their own art collections. Some of the exhibits stored in the Knights' Hall included, inter alia: *two knights' suits of armour from the first half of the fifteenth century, Renaissance wardrobes with decorations, an arquebus from the second half of the fifteenth century, fifteenth century landknecht weapons, other medieval weapons, trumpets from 1686 made in J.K. Radisch's plant in Nuremberg, a fragment of beautiful Persian armour, a model of a siege machine from the 16th century, a Spanish drinking corner from the 14th century, models of weapons from the 16th century and hunting weapons from the 15th and 16th centuries. Numerous paintings depicted successive German rulers from Frederick Wilecki to Frederick William IV, Theodor Körner, Louis XIV, General Seidlitz, Emperor Joseph I, General Ziethen, Gustav Adolf, Wallenstein and Tilly*<sup>23</sup>. Other parts of the castle were filled with art collections and archaeological monuments as well. At the end of September 1942, chests with Berlin manuscripts were brought to such 'free' rooms. The persons responsible for evacuating and protecting the indicated property were Johannes Brede and Walter Schwarzenecker. Thanks to their report on the operation, we know that 250 chests were transported to Grodzicz. When the train reached the railway station – about three kilometres from the castle – the deposit was loaded onto trucks. *Previously, however, it was necessary to stop at the foot of the inner gate of the castle due to the fact that the wooden drawbridge over the moat did not have sufficient load capacity to carry all three trucks. So, by means of a horse-drawn carriage, the boxes were transported to the other side of the bridge. The employees of the forwarding company Hohberg from Goldberg [Złotoryja] continued to carry the collected items to the lower castle hall (knight's hall) and placed them along longer walls, in double rows, three on top of each other*<sup>24</sup>. The chests deposited in the castle contained, among other things, more than 5,000 early prints by Martin Luther, more than 6,000 manuscripts, letters and documents by the writer Gotthold Ephraim Lessing (donated

<sup>20</sup> The letter of Count Hans Heinrich XVIII von Hochberg to prof. Günther Grundmann of 15 July 1943, Marburg, Herder-Institut, Dok. Z.G.G., doc. 2/309.

<sup>21</sup> W. Schochow, *Bücherschicksale...*, p. 74.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>23</sup> M. Olczak, *Grodzicz. Przewodnik historyczny*, Warsaw 2000, pp. 42-43.

<sup>24</sup> W. Schochow, *Bücherschicksale...*, pp. 74-75.

to the Library by Carl Robert Lessing), more than 3,000 incunabula, about 14,000 volumes of works from the music department, with more than a thousand documents of the legacy of the German composer Giacomo Meyerbeer and about 4,000 volumes of East German newspapers.

A year after depositing the collections of the Prussian State Library in Grodziec Castle, the possibility of using this location as a place of placing the collections of the Berlin institution was again considered. In September 1943, Herbert von Dirksen learned that the Directorate of the Prussian State Library was planning to build barracks near the castle to store its resources. *The barracks will be built in a fachwerk construction [the so-called Prussian wall] with walls covered with pumice stone. Each of them will be 38 m long, 9 m wide, and 3 m high; in two cases, 19 m long barracks are planned*<sup>25</sup>. Von Dirksen informed the Lower Silesian conservator about the plans of Berlin librarians. Prof. Grundmann recommended the owner of the estate to be prudent in making the decision regarding the availability of land for this type of investment. He claimed, inter alia, *that the implementation of the project would have a significant impact on the landscape and for this reason the location of the barrack should be chosen extremely carefully*<sup>26</sup>. On the occasion of the aforementioned correspondence exchange, the conservator asked von Dirksen about any free rooms in the castle that could be used for the storage of art collections. The owner of the residence described in detail the space available to him. *There are only two floors in the main castle building, Pallas. Besides, there is a large, very damp cellar and an attic under a high, soaring roof. In my opinion, neither the cellar nor the attic can be taken into account*<sup>27</sup>. In the remaining part of the castle, many rooms were already filled with the collections of various institutions – including the Mineralogisch-Petrographisches Institut (Mineralogical-Petrographic Institute of the University of Wrocław), Stadtarchiv der Stadt Breslau (City Archive of Wrocław). Soon, more archival resources of various German institutions (including the Ministry of Foreign Affairs from Berlin and the Osteuropa-Institut from Wrocław) joined Grodziec, the palace serving as the residence of von Dirksen. No documents have survived that would indicate that the Prussian State Library was using the subsequent spaces of the castle and palace in Grodziec. The post-war accounts provide information that *Grodzisk [Grodzisko, Grodziszcze – post-war names of Grodziec] near Złotoryja, was the place where, about 250 chests of Preussische Staatsbibliothek in Berlin burned down in the castle at the turn of February and March 1945. The Russians took away the Osteuropa-Institut library [deposited in the palace, not the castle], brought by the Germans from Wrocław. Alphabetical and systematic catalogues remained in place*<sup>28</sup>. The information about the destruction of part of the resources of the Prussian State Library deposited in Grodziec is also confirmed by German historians and librarians. *A moment after the town [Grodziec] was occupied without a fight by the Russians (15/16 February 1945), from 18 February to 03 March 1945 the castle, and in particular Pallas, including the treasures of the Berlin library, burned to the ground.*

<sup>25</sup> The letter of Baron Herbert von Dirksen to prof. Günther Grundmann of 19 September 1943, Marburg, Herder-Institut, Dok. Z.G.G., doc. 1/241.

<sup>26</sup> The letter of Professor Günther Grundmann to Baron Herbert von Dirksen of 27 September 1943, Marburg, Herder-Institut, Dok. Z.G.G., doc. 1/242.

<sup>27</sup> The letter of Baron Herbert von Dirksen to prof. Günther Grundmann from 1 October 1943, Marburg, Herder-Institut, Dok. Z.G.G., doc. 1/243.

<sup>28</sup> R. Nowicki, *Zabezpieczenie księgozbiorów po II wojnie światowej w Polsce*, „Napis. Pismo poświęcone literaturze okolicznościowej i użytkowej”, Series XI, 2005, p. 283.

*The most severe loss involved the irreplaceable and valuable collection of incunabula*<sup>29</sup>. German studies regarding the history of the indicated repository include also another piece of information confirming the fate of the collection of the Prussian State Library brought to this town. *According to eyewitness accounts, they were supposed to see a grey, 10/15 cm thick layer of limestone ash in autumn, 1945. The charred or half-burned paper, leaving visible traces of the backs of the books was disintegrating at the slightest touch*<sup>30</sup>. The Polish revindication commissions, which reached Grodziec after the Soviet troops (staying there for many months) left the castle, found only a fragment of von Dirksen's private collection. However, they did not include the library deposits brought from Berlin. The memoirs of Witold Kieszkowski, who supervised – on behalf of the General Directorate of Museums and Monuments Protection – the revindication of cultural goods in Lower Silesia, include information about the conditions under which the protection of the collection found in Grodziec was carried out. *Recently, my colleagues and I mentioned how it was when we loaded the collections in the castle and in the palace in Grodzisk, using the floodlights, lighters and matches because the batteries for electric lamps were exhausted, just to avoid wasting time and to prevent the cars from coming home empty*<sup>31</sup>. Kieszkowski does not talk about finding any goods that could belong to the collection of the Prussian State Library.

Another repository in which the collections of the Prussian State Library were housed was established in Lower Silesia in summer 1943. Originally, it was planned that the free rooms of the castle in Gościszów (Bolesławiec district), owned by Friedrich Karl and Hildegarda von Eggeling, would be used for the needs of the institution. However, due to the historical value of the aforementioned object, the Lower Silesian conservator decided to place the library resources in another repository. Owing to the fact that there were church buildings in the same village, prof. Grundmann asked the Evangelisches Konsistorium der Kirchenprovinz Schlesien (Evangelical Consistorium of the Silesian Church Province) in Breslau to make the church rooms in Gościszów available for the storage of cultural goods. The office of the consistory discussed the indicated matter with the local church council. The answer as regards the said issue came on October 10, 1943. *The Evangelical Community Council, after a detailed discussion, decided unanimously, obedient to the patriotic duty – to make the Evangelical Church available as a place where the goods could be stored during the war, provided that after the end of the war the congregation will return to the ecclesiastical ministry and any financial damage caused will be compensated to the Church*<sup>32</sup>. Having received the answer, the conservator organised an inspection of the premises that were to become a repository for the manuscripts evacuated from Berlin. A note was made from a meeting on the matter – attended by Pastor Hellmuth Klein and Dr. Kurt Sommer from the conservation office – that the church could make 511 running meters of free space available. The director of the Prussian State Library, Hugo Andres Krüss, was also informed about the results of the inspection: *According to Dr Sommer there were 600 running metres for book storage. I think that the indicated calculation is not fully reliable because books do*

<sup>29</sup> W. Schochow, *Bücherschicksale...*, p. 76.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 77.

<sup>31</sup> W. Kieszkowski, *Składnica muzealna Paulinum...*, p. 153.

<sup>32</sup> The minutes of the meeting of the evangelical community council in Gościszów on October 10, 1943, Marburg, Herder-Institut, Dok. Z.G.G., doc. 1/218c.



*not have to stand on the shelf and can be stacked in layers. Anyway, I am convinced that the capacity of a reasonably filled church in Gościszów practically corresponds to the capacity of a special barrack for books*<sup>33</sup>. Additionally, prof. Grundmann informed Berlin librarians about the technical condition of the premises selected for the repository. *The condition of the stalls is very good, they are extremely durable which is enough to stack books up to the height of the bench, then place the boards over the backrests and put the books on them again to form a stack. The church emporiums likewise have a fairly high load capacity. Anyway, I am convinced that the church in Gościszów is an ideal place to store books from a practical point of view*<sup>34</sup>. In November 1943, the director of the Prussian State Library agreed to place the collections of the Berlin facility in Gościszów.

The transport of the library resources from Berlin to Gościszów was scheduled for January 1944. *The books were delivered by rail in two stages (January 1944). In the first stage, from December 31, 1943 to January 6, 1944, six railway carriages containing various books were checked in. In the second stage, after a short break, i.e. from 19 to 30 January, another twelve railway carriages (180 000 kg) were loaded. The books were transported by train to Bunzlau [Bolesławiec], then, the vehicles of the local company took over the cargo. Moreover, the local rural population was actively involved in the evacuation action*<sup>35</sup>. Johannes Brede, who was appointed to take care of the collections placed in the church in Gościszów, wrote later that *the books were arranged in three blocks 2-2.5 m high. The parish clerk – Paul Wieland – protected the windows from the sun and prevented the deposit from being seen from the outside*<sup>36</sup>. Brede's associate – Kurt Tautz – completed the above mentioned report as follows: *Probably, even more than in Karpniki, the depressing impression of using a book like a building stone was even more relevant here – in this extremely tall room – one could comfortably wander between the book buildings, moving around the vast streets, created out of massive, high, not having the slightest gap, walls made of books*<sup>37</sup>. The inventory of the resources transported to Gościszów showed that 280 thousand volumes of old prints and 14 chests containing private collections of Hugo Andres Krüss were deposited in the local church. Most probably at the end of 1944, the chests with the collections of the Silesian Museum of Fine Arts in Wrocław were also placed in the church. At the beginning of January 1945 a part of this collection was moved to Roßla am Harz. The majority of old prints from the Prussian State Library deposited in Gościszów burned down several weeks later during the warfare. The information on the course of the event was provided to the Berlin librarians by Hellmuth Klein, a pastor in Gościszów. *Due to the lack of any possibility to extinguish the fire, the Evangelical church together with the wooden roof construction burned to the ground. At the end of May 1945, one could still recognise the charred backs of the books from the library in Berlin inside the ruins. Traces of ash, empty windows of the church and visible signs of rooms destroyed by fire remained unchanged for the next decades*<sup>38</sup>.

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<sup>33</sup> The letter of Prof. Günther Grundmann to Hugo Andres Krüss of 2 November 1943, Marburg, Herder-Institut, Dok. Z.G.G., doc. 1/222.

<sup>34</sup> W. Schochow, *Bücherschicksale...*, p. 143.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 144.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 145.

The last stage of evacuation of the Prussian State Library resources to Lower Silesia took place in 1944. Due to the catastrophic situation in which the German cities found themselves – being targets of daily carpet bombings – the directorate of the institution made efforts to transfer further parts of its resources to a safe province. An agreement was made with the Lower Silesian authorities that the next deposit of the Berlin library would be placed in Fischbach Castle (Karpniki in the district of Jelenia Góra), owned by the Duke Ludwig von Hessen. The residence had already housed art collections – the private collection of the ducal family and resources brought from the Großherzoglichen Museums (Hessian Grand Dukes' Museum) in Darmstadt. In February 1944, Eduard Neuschäffer, the administrator of the Carpathian estate, was informed by the head of the district of Jelenia Góra that on the basis of '§ 25 of the Reichsleistungsgesetz [Law on Benefits for the State] of 1.9. 1939 RGB [Reichsgesetzblatt, Reich Act Journal] I, p. 1645' several rooms of the castle were to be occupied for the purpose of housing the Reichspressearchiv (Reich Press Archive) as well as the collections of the Prussian State Library in them<sup>39</sup>. The supervision over the transport of the library resources to Karpniki was entrusted to Hans Jessen – a member of the board of the Prussian State Library. About 20 thousand volumes of German press (newspapers) were to be transported to the place. Despite the decisions made by the starosty authorities, the managers of the duke's estate did not want to take responsibility for taking care of the Berlin collection. Moreover, it turned out that the evacuation of the Prussian State Library resources and the Reich Press Archive to Karpniki was not settled with the Lower Silesian conservator. In the aforementioned circumstances, the administrator of the duke's estate informed the starost of Jelenia Góra that *following the decision of the conservator Prof. Dr. Grundmann and pursuant to the provisions of the Reichsleistungsgesetz, the Karpniki Palace already fulfils a defined function and therefore no changes may be made to its use without agreement with the Reich Defence Commissioner [Reichsverteidigungskommissar]*<sup>40</sup>. For fear of the consequences of the conflict arising from the aforementioned situation, the estate administrator (in agreement with prof. Grundmann) decided to make one of the vacant rooms in the castle and the so-called Gardener's House available to the resources evacuated from Berlin. The carrying capacity of the ceilings did not allow for placing more chests in the duke's residence. The analyses carried out by the expert showed that according to the building standards: *1) the storage of shelves and cabinets with the contents (also incomplete) such as files, books, archives, etc., involves a load of 0.6 tonnes per metre. 2) paper storage (magazines) calls for a load of 1,1 tonne per metre*<sup>41</sup>. Nevertheless, prof. Grundmann tried to help librarians from Berlin to find free rooms for collections prepared for evacuation. In order to find a satisfactory solution, Josef Becker came to Karpniki. *Director Becker was in Karpniki and informed me that he reached an agreement with Neuschäffer, the forest manager, taking into account the needs of the State Library and Großherzogliche Vermögensverwaltung [the Board of the Hessian Grand*

<sup>39</sup> The letter of the starost of the Jelenia Góra County to Eduard Neuschäffer, the forest manager, dated 25 February 1944 Marburg, Herder-Institut, Dok. Z.G.G., doc. 1/166.

<sup>40</sup> The letter of the representative of the estate management of the Grand Duke of Hessen to the starost of Jelenia Góra County from 9 March 1944, Marburg, Herder-Institut, Dok. Z.G.G., doc. 1/165.

<sup>41</sup> An expert opinion of Klose, a construction specialist, dated 10 March 1944 Marburg, Herder-Institut, Dok. Z.G.G., doc. 1/169.

Dukes' Estate]<sup>42</sup>. Thanks to the indicated arrangements, the Berlin deposit was transported by train to Jelenia Góra and from there to Lomnitz (Łomnica) near Karpniki. At the station the chests were repacked into lorries and transported to the castle. *In the period from 13 May to 25 September 1944 a total of 6,000 cetnars [300,000 kg] of newspapers were delivered to the castle in Karpniki by means of 21 railway carriages. There were about 20,000 volumes or so-called files according to the documents. They were distributed into three parts of the building and under the direction of Eugen Paunel, they were placed in the castle in piles by the walls where possible (sometimes several meters high) – (four rooms on the ground floor and the first floor were only partly suitable for use), in the farm building (six rooms) and in a free-standing shed [the so-called Gardener's House] in the castle park*<sup>43</sup>. We know little about the post-war history of the resources. In February 1945 prof. Grundmann, who managed to take a part of the ducal collection of paintings from the castle, came to Karpniki. Then a representative of the Kunstschutz – a unit of the German General Staff responsible for the preservation of works of art in the occupied territories – Count Ernst Otto Solms-Laubach, who *took the rest of the items brought from Darmstadt and a number of paintings and memorabilia which were the equipment of the castle*, arrived at the estate<sup>44</sup>. Tens of thousands of volumes of newspapers and documents were left on the spot – there was no time or means of transport to take them to a safe place. After the war, an unspecified part of the resources of the Prussian State Library found in Karpniki was transported to Cracow<sup>45</sup>. The collection was *deposited in a few institutions, and later, unless it was given away for waste paper, it was partially transferred to the institutes in Olsztyn and Lodz. A large part of the newspapers [German press] from Karpniki was sent back to Berlin in 1965*<sup>46</sup>.

The last evacuation stage regarding the collections of the Prussian State Library to Lower Silesia was the decision to transport the catalogue department of this institution from Berlin to Hirschberg (Jelenia Góra)<sup>47</sup>. The resources of the indicated unit along with its employees were located in the Museum des Riesengebirgsvereins (the Sudetenmuseum since 1938, today the Muzeum Karkonoskie) and the Municipal Archive (until recently the State Archive was located there)<sup>48</sup>. *Situated at the foot of the mountains, the small town provided shelter in the premises of the Municipal Archive and the Muzeum Karkonoskie mainly to parts of the collection department and the catalogue department, including a large part of the multi-volume material catalogue. The library was carefully managed by Rudolf Juchhoff and Eugen Paunel in the last years of the war. The department operating in Jelenia Gora was personally the strongest external branch of the Prussian State Library*<sup>49</sup>. The functioning efficiency of the said unit was ensured by bringing to Lower Silesia *eleven field librarians and five certified librarians of the material catalogue; in addition, there were employees*

<sup>42</sup> The letter of prof. Günther Grundmann to the representatives of the estate management of the Grand Duke of Hessen of 30 March 1944, Marburg, Herder-Institut, Dok. Z.G.G., doc. 1/170.

<sup>43</sup> W. Schochow, *Bücherschicksale...*, p. 151.

<sup>44</sup> W. Kieszkowski, *Składnica muzealna Paulinum...*, pp. 147-148.

<sup>45</sup> J.R. Kudelski, *Zbiory sztuki na zamku w Karpnikach w czasie II wojny światowej*, mps.

<sup>46</sup> W. Schochow, *Bücherschicksale...*, pp. 151-152.

<sup>47</sup> K. Trautz, *Die Preussische Staatsbibliothek in Hirschberg im Riesengebirge zur zeit des zweiten grossen krieges, 1944-1945*, Berlin 1950.

<sup>48</sup> W. Schochow, *Die Dienststelle Hirschberg (1944-1945)*, Berlin 1994.

<sup>49</sup> W. Schochow, *Bücherschicksale...*, p. 147.

from a department making printouts of signatures. With full staff, the unit had even 46 to 49 employees. Apart from the documentation of adhesion contracts, an important instrument of work in the unit was the material catalogue, the volumes of which were available in the archive building from April 1944, and it was further supplemented by new acquisitions<sup>50</sup>. As part of the operation carried out in spring, 1944, 6000 items were transported to Jelenia Góra from the department responsible for book development and a part of the reference library of the factual catalogue and the file department as well as 1926 volumes of the real catalogue (except for natural sciences and technology)<sup>51</sup>. The Muzeum Karkonoskie building received 17 000 items from the book development department (new deliveries); 150 parcels containing files and the collection and catalogue department<sup>52</sup>.

In June 1944, the institution in Jelenia Góra was visited by Hugo Andres Krüss, the director of the Prussian State Library. After the inspection, he decided that both the staff and the evacuated resources can wait there safely for the end of the war. The progress of the Soviet troops and the January offensive – which aimed, among other things, at seizing Lower Silesia and marching to Berlin – meant that Krüss had to decide to bring the catalogue department back to Berlin. Re-evacuation was only partially successful. *Some of the files and volumes were taken back to Berlin (beginning of April), otherwise they would have to stay on site and be secured there. Most of the workers – between 10 and 27 February (others only in early April) – were fired*<sup>53</sup>. However, in the chaos of the last weeks of the war, it turned out that the resources of the *Binding Department and files, sent in Berlin between January and the beginning of April 1945*<sup>54</sup>, was still transported to Jelenia Góra. On April 1, a carriage with books, files and 1000 items from the reference library left Jelenia Góra for Berlin. However, a large part of the resources of the Binding and Catalogue Department including files, documentation of the unit as well as bibliographical works and 22 750 books: *monographs, political magazines and official publications*<sup>55</sup>, were as left on the spot. That part of the deposit of the Prussian State Library was handed over by German employees of the institution to the Polish authorities in early July 1945. After completing the indicated task, Rudolf Juchhoff and Eugen Paunel returned to Berlin (in August 1945). The resources of the Berlin library were transferred to the Secured Books Repository in Wrocław<sup>56</sup>. It housed about 900 000 volumes of various German publishers in the years 1947-1949<sup>57</sup>. This mass of books, autographs, prints, newspapers and manuscripts was later used to rebuild and complete the library collections of many Polish institutions. The only items preserved in the State Archive in Jelenia Góra are: correspondence, official publications and antiquarian catalogues, being part of the resources of the Prussian State Library.

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<sup>50</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>51</sup> Ibidem, p. 148.

<sup>52</sup> Ibidem, p. 149.

<sup>53</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>54</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>55</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>56</sup> Aleksander Birkenmajer's report on the visit paid to the University Library in Wrocław on 14-19 June 1949. Archive of New Files, Ministry of Education, sign. 6943, k. 1-36.

<sup>57</sup> R. Nowicki, *Aleksander Birkenmajer jako wizytator Zbiornicy Księgozbiorów Zabezpieczonych we Wrocławiu*, „Biblioteka”, No. 17/2013, pp. 139-151.

The wartime and post-war history of the collections of the Prussian State Library deposited in Lower Silesia during World War II shows that we still know very little about the German library collections that went into Polish collections after 1945. Polish librarians and museum workers who were responsible for the post-war revindication task have most certainly found (on the so-called Recovered Lands) many other fragments of the Prussian State Library apart from the so-called 'Berlinka' housed in Kraków – which is of course the most visible deposit of the Berlin library. The resources of this institution were deposited not only in Lower Silesia, but also in several other repositories located in the area of today's Zachodniopomorskie and Lubuskie provinces. The history of the library collections evacuated from Berlin to the aforementioned repositories (and after the war found by Polish officials and housed in Kraków, Warszawa, Olsztyn, Toruń, Lublin and Łódź) should become the subject of a separate research carried out by historians and librarians, official publications and antiquarian catalogues included in the resources of the Prussian State Library.

### **The repositories of the Prussian State Library collection in Lower Silesia during the World War II**

#### **Summary**

German cultural institutions had been conducting preparations to secure their collections in the event of a war since mid-1930s. The Prussian State Library, the holdings of which included the most precious German manuscripts and prints, was one of those institutions. Air attacks carried out on the capital of the Third Reich triggered the decision to evacuate the collection to Thüringen, Brandenburg, Pomerania and Lower Silesia. Largest deposits had been located in the latter. The unique heritage items stored there included medieval manuscripts, prayer books, music autographs and newspaper yearbooks as well as letters and private documents of many prominent representatives of German culture and art. Those items were evacuated, among other places, to Fürstenstein (Książ), Gießmannsdorf (Gościszów), Gröditzburg (Grodzic), Grüssau (Krzyszów), Fischbach (Karpniki) and Hirschberg (Jelenia Góra). The evacuation was conducted in cooperation with the heritage conservator for Lower Silesia, professor Günther Grundmann. With his assistance, in the course of a few years, a unique collection was created in Lower Silesia. Towards the end of the war the collection was deprived of proper care, as the authorities lacked resources to secure it. This resulted in the destruction of some items during military actions. The remaining parts of the collection had been taken over by Polish officials and were transferred to library collections in Kraków, Warszawa, Olsztyn, Toruń, Lublin and Łódź.

**Keywords:** Berlin State Library, Evacuation of cultural goods, Repositories of cultural goods, Silesia, Restitution, Wartime losses

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