"Aryanization" in Leipzig.

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Touring Exhibition

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Introduction

“Aryanization” – this was the term used by the National Socialists (Nazis) to describe the systematic cultural and economic repression and deprivation of that portion of the population labeled “Jews”, who were persecuted under Nazi rule during the years from 1933 to 1945. This expropriation of property, which, according to Nazi propaganda, was intended to lead to a “De-Jewification” of the German economy, began immediately following the completely legalized rise to power of Hitler and his party. In the early months of 1933, the National Socialists called for a nationwide boycott: “Don’t buy from Jews; shop at German stores!”

This was the prelude to one of the most egregious plunders in modern history, one that would play out in Germany and, eventually, in all of Europe for the next twelve years. In 1933, even in Leipzig, which was well-known as Saxony’s trade fair and publishing metropolis, the windows and facades of Jewish shops, among them, the Joske Department Store on Karl-Heine Street, were smeared with anti-Semitic slogans. Storm troopers blocked the entrance to shops and attempted to intimidate customers.

Under the “Aryan Clause” of 1933 and the notorious Nuremberg Race Laws of 1935, Jews were classified well-known as Saxony’s trade fair and publishing metropolis, the windows and facades of Jewish shops, among them, the Joske Department Store on Karl-Heine Street, were smeared with anti-Semitic slogans. Storm troopers blocked the entrance to shops and attempted to intimidate customers. as “racially inferior” and labelled “the ruination of the German population”. Excluding them from the general populace was now openly declared to be the most important goal of the Nazi dictatorship. In the ensuing years, through the practice of banning them from certain professions, through racially biased taxation and economic policies, extortion and the confiscation of property, the Nazi regime systematically destroyed the basic civil rights of Jews. This segment of the population, whom some were driven to emigrate, some forced into “Judenhäuser”, and some of whom eventually ended up in ghettos and concentration camps, was robbed by the German Reich and by local authorities of its last remaining belongings.

The policy promoted by the National Socialists for the “Aryanization” of German society meant more than just the destruction of a segment of the population which, since the mid-1800s, had played an increasingly important role in the development of German culture and economy. The implementation of this racist policy was characterized, above all, by the vast transfer of Jewish companies and institutions into “Aryan” hands committed by the Nazi Regime, along with the change of ownership or liquidation of numerous medical practices, lawyers’ offices, antique shops, art galleries, banks, department stores and factories. In the end, the methodical confiscation of property took everything of value or which could be assigned a value – houses, land, even synagogues and Jewish cemeteries, along with books, stamp collections, jewellery and art objects of every kind, down to the last silver spoon. Everything was taken from the Jews and ended up in auction houses or in the Nazi coffers, which soon became merely a war chest.

Based on research focusing on specific aspects of “Aryanization” in Leipzig, this exhibition shows how, from 1933 to 1945, Jews living in Leipzig were systematically driven out of the cultural and economic life of the city and how they were deprived of their possessions and forced to emigrate. Every Jew in Leipzig who was unable to flee the country was eventually murdered in a Nazi concentration camp.

This exhibition attempts to take a close look at this disturbing piece of Leipzig’s history. It shows that this plunder took place in full view of the public eye, with the full knowledge of the community. Anyone could have seen what was happening: the customers of the Joske Department Store and the Heine Cloth Factory, the employees of the music publisher C. F. Peters or anyone whose neighbors happened to be Jewish. Numerous Leipzig residents were directly or indirectly involved – whether as bureaucrats or willing executioners, beneficiaries or observers. Bureaucrats issued the orders, former colleagues took over the professorships or firms of the dispossessed, neighbors watched the proceedings. Among the bidders at the auctions held by the Klemm Auction House in Leipzig were municipal organizations like libraries and museums, along with private individuals, who purchased works of art or other household belongings which had been the property of Jews. In so doing, they became participants in these infamous events.

Opening this darkest chapter in Leipzig’s history was not undertaken lightly, especially for those who regard Leipzig as a cosmopolitan city of trade and culture. The Israeli diplomat Michael Elizur was asked, during an interview in the 1980s, what one could make of all the inhumanities that took place during the Nazi regime, “...a God who did not prevent Auschwitz from happening.”

Michael Elizur, son of Jewish parents, born in Leipzig in 1921, who, in 1933, as a 12-year-old, had been forced to emigrate to Palestine, leaving behind the place where he and his father before him had been born, answered: “I have to say that I don’t consider myself competent to answer this question. I personally cannot bring myself to make any sense of Auschwitz. If I may comment from a non-religious perspective, then I would say that I believe that today it is the responsibility of every person to make certain that these experiences remain a part of our active consciousness. Until all of this happened, it might have been possible to say that people didn’t know what they were doing. That innocence is now lost. Therefore, every person has to work to make his or her own society as humane and democratic as possible, in order to preclude the possibility that it will ever again be possible for anyone to perpetrate such crimes. Unfortunately, even after the war, terrible things happened again. Every person in his own community – I, as a Jew in Israel, the Germans in Germany, the Americans in America – each of us bears a responsibility and must do everything in his or her power to ensure that such events never happen again. But we shouldn’t preach about it. Such sermons will never be effective. In this situation, critical self-analysis is not only the best, but the only prescription.”

In this exhibition, the topic of Leipzig’s “Aryanization” is presented to the general public for the first time. It should be regarded as a mandate to preserve the memory of these occurrences and to make clear that a democratic culture cannot be taken for granted, but, rather, always requires individuals who will actively work to create and support a democratic and humane society.

The handbooks of the Jewish Question

The Beginnings of Racist Social Policy

On January 30, 1933, a presidential cabinet appointed Adolf Hitler to the post of Reich Chancellor, catapulting the Nazi Party’s “Führer” to the highest position of power in the Weimar Republic. Since the founding of the National Socialist Deutsche Arbeiterpartei – NSDAP (National Socialist German Worker’s Party, commonly known as the Nazi Party) in 1920, its aims were well-known: the party publicly called for the “purification of the German race” through a resolute battle against all Jews, Marxists and Republicans, along with the creation of a “German society” founded on racist criteria, and the “restoration of Germany’s honor” by means of a war of revenge, which would also serve to “conquer new living space”.

The mainstream of National Socialist ideology was a militant anti-Semitism, which was not an innovation of Hitler and his Party, but had been a firm element of the political culture in Germany since the final years of the Empire. From the beginning of the modernization crisis in the 1880’s, numerous nationalistic organizations and associations had played a large role in voicing public expression of anti-Semitic resentment. These sentiments gained strength in the aftermath of Germany’s defeat in World War I, which had left the country at the brink of political and economic collapse.

Germany’s first democratic government, the Weimar Republic, established in the wake of the 1918 November Revolution, remained largely a “republic without republicans”. Under the prevailing economic inflation and political tension, where violent conflict was becoming more and more common, anti-Semitic sentiment gained further ground. This could be seen in Saxony as well, where, from 1900 until the 1920’s, entire regions, such as the textile-industry dependent Vogtland and Erzgebirge districts, suffered under the long period of structural crisis. In these areas, even in the early 1920s, supporters of nationalistic ideology called for the expulsion of Jews from economic life and for the creation of an “Aryan economy”. This was seen as the sole solution to the existing economic crisis. The first NSDAP chapter to be established outside of Bavaria, which was known as the cradle of National Socialism, came into being on October 21, 1919 in Zwickau.

The NSDAP established a Leipzig chapter in 1922 and, by 1933, it had about 210 members. As early as the Reichstag elections in May 1924, a coalition consisting of the NSDAP and the German Völkisch Freedom Party won 7.9% of the votes. However, Leipzig was a stronghold for the Worker’s Movement, whose membership largely belonged to the Socialist and Communist Parties, and which therefore represented a formidable opponent to the Nazi Party. A decisive element to the NSDAP’s success in Leipzig was the trade and publishing house owned by the bourgeois middle class, whose members were influenced by anti-Republican, anti-Semitic thinking. In February 1933, more than 50% of the members of the Leipzig chapter of the NSDAP came from the middle class, while only 35% came from the working class. As was the case throughout Germany, many organizations, clubs and publishing houses which promulgated this ideology became established in Leipzig. The author and publisher, Theodor Fritsch (1852–1933), head of the Hammer Publishing House in Leipzig, had served since the 1880s as a tireless promoter of anti-Semitic propaganda. His publishing house was entirely devoted to racist propaganda, making this “champion of the völkische movement” (the German term ‘völkisch’ stands for a concept of a genetic and national community derived from the word Volk) a intellectual trailblazer for the aggressive concept of “anti-Semitism in action.” The 29th edition of his anti-Semitic pamphlet “Handbuch der Judenfrage” (Handbook of the Jewish Question) appeared in 1933 and, according to Hitler, was a major contributing factor to the establishment of “the National Socialist anti-Semitic movement”. Entrepreneurs in Saxony also supported the rise of the NSDAP and were among its first active protagonists. Among them was Martin Mutschmann (1879–1947), a textile merchant from Plauen, who later served as Saxon’s Gauleiter and who was a fanatic anti-Semite.

By the end of the 1920s, Saxony was also weighed down by the enormous German economic crisis. The Presidential Cabinet’s reaction to the crisis had been a policy of social indifference, which provided fertile ground for the rise of the NSDAP as the party of the masses. The effects were felt in Leipzig as well. Here, the strongly anti-union Society of Saxon Industrialists (VII), led by Wilhelm Wittke (1884–1943), exerted enormous influence over the state government, which it pressured into making radical social cutbacks that would benefit employers. This fueled the hatred of not only the working class, but also the apprehensive middle class, toward the Republic. Increasingly, more voices joined the call for a change in the distribution of political power and for a new Ordnungsmacht. Particularly within the large middle class populace of Saxony, the anti-Republican and anti-Semitic Nazi movement rapidly found increasing acceptance.

By the end of 1928, the Nazi Party in Saxony had 4,000 members. In Leipzig, where, until the end of the Weimar Republic the Social Democrats and Communists had been able to count on the largest number of voters, the Hitler Party began to make headway. While in 1926 there were a mere three SA-Sturmmachttruppen (Storm Trooper units), by 1929 there were already 600. Thousands turned out to see Adolf Hitler on May 3, 1929, as he appeared at a rally prior to the Landtag elections. Even so, the Nazis won only 5% of the vote that year in Saxony and took only 5 seats in the state parliament. One year later, in the 1930 Landtag elections, they earned 44.4% of the vote, and in the Reichstag elections of July 1932, 41.2% of Saxons voted for Hitler and his party. Even in “red Saxony”, the Nazis had become the strongest party. The other parties, splintered, had to content themselves with only 8.9% of the vote. On November 22, 1932, Germany’s industrial and agricultural leaders successfully petitioned Reich President Hindenburg to appoint Hitler Chancellor. Hindenburg resigned and named Adolf Hitler as his successor. Consequently, as of January 30, 1933, the country’s highest political office was held by an avowed racist and fervent anti-Semitic. Within a very short time, Hitler supporters held key positions in German politics and would begin establishing anti-Semitism as a cornerstone of public policy. Hitler’s party, which in 1933 had unsuccessfully attempted to remove the “unpopular Republic” through force, was able to take power in January 1933, only a few months after the 1932 Reichstag elections, not through a coup, but by legal and democratic means.

In the Reichstag elections of March 5, 1933, the National Socialists won 44.1% of the vote, dashing their hopes for an absolute majority in the Parliament. They won only 288 of 647 seats. It was only after the nullification of 81 Communist Party seats on March 8, 1933, that the NSDAP held the absolute majority. On that very day, Reich Chancellor Adolf Hitler named Manfred von Killinger, leader of the SA (Storm Troopers), to the post of Police Commissioner for the Free State of Saxony. On March 10, 1933, Saxony’s Minister-President Walther Schück resigned and von Killinger became Reichskommissar, becoming the first in a series of NSDAP party leaders who would go on to hold positions in Saxony’s government.


Handbook of the Jewish Question

zum Geburtstag von Dr. Theodor Fritsch

Am Ende des 19. Jahrhunderts verlagerte sich die Antisemitismusbewegung ins Volksseits und gewann dort eine neue Stärke. DieHANDLEBUNG DER JUDENFRAGE

Theodor Fritsch

Handbuch der Judenfrage

Hammer Publishing Company, Leipzig, 1923

Architect of Anti-Semitism:

Theodor Fritsch

Theodor Fritsch, whose father was an agriculturist, was born in Wiesenena (Delitzsch district) on October 28, 1871. After his schooling, Fritsch absoloved an apprenticeship in mill machine design and attended the Vocational Institute in Halle (Saale), after which he studied at the Technical University of Berlin. Fritsch aspired to self-employment, and in the late 1870s he settled in Leipzig, where he opened a mill machinery business. Along with his business activities, he became active in industry association politics and with journalistic endeavors. Fritsch founded the German Association of Millers and later published the technical journal, "Der deutsche Müller" (The German Miller). His involvement in the millers' association sparked his concern for problems faced by small and medium-sized businesses in November 1905, Fritsch became chairman of the Deutschen Mittelstandsvereinigung (German Alliance of Small and Medium-Sized Businesses), whose purpose was to represent the interests of existing and new businesses, along with those of diverse segments of the economy, from small retailers to large landlords.

By the end of the 1890s, Fritsch had become a radical anti-Semite and an advocate of politically-sanctioned anti-Semitism. He blamed the Jews for the economic difficulties being suffered by small and medium-sized businesses. In November 1905, Fritsch became chairman of the Deutschen Mittelstandsvereinigung (Alliance of Small and Medium-Sized Businesses) of the Kingdom of Saxony. Fritsch was a Freiheitspartei (Freedom Party) representative to the Reichstag. He was motivated by strong populist-socialistic convictions, and was one of the first Germans to draft plans for a utopian "Garden City".

Fritsch viewed social democracy as an arch political threat, and viewed its rise to be the direct result of a Jewish-funded subversive movement. He continually intensified his efforts against this perceived Jewish threat. In 1880, he founded the Hammer Publishing House in Leipzig and, under the pseudonym "Thomas Frey", sporadically published anti-Semitic leaflets. In 1885, he began publishing anti-Semitic correspondences. Fritsch became increasingly well-known as a writer and publisher, and expanded his anti-Semitic activities within the professional associations to which he belonged. He became head of the German Reform Party and, in 1886, founded the German Anti-Semitic Alliance. In 1887, he published a book under the title "Antisemitische Kautschuk" (The Anti-Semitic Catechism). This publication, which, in 1907 was renamed "The Handbook of the Jewish Question" became the standard reference for the völkische Bewegung (the nationalist right wing) during the German Empire. When the Antisemische Deutschnationale Partei – DSP (Anti-Semitic German-Socialist Party) came into being in 1891, Fritsch was among its founding members. A few years later, he withdrew from the anti-Semitic political movement. In 1900, Fritsch purchased a parcel of land in Gautzsch, known today as Markkleeberg-West.

Fritsch conceived the idea for a new anti-democratic journal, which would scrutinize the many subversive emancipatory movements of the day. In 1902, he published "Hammer. Blätter für deutschen Sinn," an anti-Semitic, anti-Catholic, anti-freemason magazine. In 1902, he founded the Reichshammerbund (National Hammer League), with which he hoped to usher in a new era of non-partisan anti-Semitism. His anti-Semitic tirades landed Fritsch in court on more than one occasion, but he generally got away with only a light sentence. Fritsch died on September 8, 1933 in Gautzsch. The National Socialists named him the "Architect of Anti-Semitism" and saw him as an important contributor to Nazi doctrine.

Scientist Dedicated to National Socialist Doctrine:

Otto Reche

Otto Reche was born on May 24, 1871 in the town of Glatz (Polish: Kłodzko) in the province of Niederschlesien. He was the eldest son of pharmacist Paul Reche. He studied zoology, comparative anatomy and anthropology in Jena, Berlin and Breslau (Wrocław), where he was awarded his doctorate in medicine in December 1904. In 1906, he began working for the Museum für Völkerkunde (Museum of Ethnology) in Hamburg. From June 1908 to September 1909, Reche took part in a South-Sea expedition. Upon his return, he accepted a position as lecturer at the Hamburg Colonial Institute and was awarded tenure in his position at the Museum für Völkerkunde. Reche married and his first daughter was born.

In World War I, Reche served from 1915–1917 as an officer at the eastern front. In 1919, Reche was promoted to professor at the Hamburg University of Anthropology and Ethnology. In 1924, he was called to a full professorship in ethnology at the University of Vienna. In June 1927, Reche accepted a position as chair of the Ethnology Department at the University of Leipzig. Reche was a proponent of biological anthropology. In Leipzig, he was head of the Ethnological Anthropological Institute, which was renamed in November 1933 to the "Institute for Ethnology and Race Studies". Reche's research in blood-typing led to the discovery of florescence in the blood serum of sick persons. He played a major role in the rational and development of racial-biological Aktionskommissgutachten (proof of lineage). During the Nazi Regime, genetic and racial testing were primary tools in enforcing the Party's racial policies. Reche himself also carried out such tests. Until 1939, Reche served as chairman of the Leipzig chapter of the Gesellschaft für Rassenhygiene (Society for Racial Hygiene). Prior to the time of the Nazi takeover, remarks regarding Jews were rarely to be found in Reche's writings. He considered Jews to be a separate race. However, the new political circumstances that came into existence in 1933 led to a change in his public manner. Reche, now a public anti-Semite, played an active role in the ostracism of Jews. On his 55th birthday, the National-Socialist newspaper, Leipziger Tageszeitung, featured an article about him, calling him "an architect of northern racial theory". Reche joined the NSDAP on May 1, 1937. In his 1938 work "Verbreitung der Menschenrasse. Kleine Rassenkunde" (The Spread of the Races of Man. A Brief Racial Study), a wall chart with accompanying text, Reche exploited all of the familiar anti-Semitic stereotypes. This work was used for classroom instruction during the Nazi Regime. Following the collapse of the Nazi dictatorship, Reche was labelled a "politically implicated professor" by the University of Leipzig. He went to Hamburg, where, after undergoing a denazification procedure, he was exonerated (Category 5). In 1953, Reche moved with his second wife to Schmalenbek (near Ahrensburg). Reche was contracted to perform anthropological-genetic paternity tests and he also continued to publish his writings. He died on March 23, 1966 in Großhandsdorf, near Hamburg.
The Boycott of April 1, 1933: 
The First Step toward the Exclusion of Jews from Public Life in Leipzig

“The time has come. On Saturday morning at 10:00, our boycott of all Jewish businesses will begin. On Friday, March 31, City Councilor Rudolf Haake will give a public address in the Zoo’s Festival Hall regarding these defense measures.”

The huge poster on an advertising pillar on Gießerstrasse was too big to overlook, and it was not the only method used in Leipzig to alert people to the anti-Semitic boycott to be held on April 1. On March 29, 1933, the daily Leipziger Tageszeitung ran the headline: “Jews, Be Warned!” In the days following the Reichstag elections on March 5, 1933, several “spontaneous” boycotts had taken place in other cities and towns. The SA (Storm troopers), members of the NSDAP and Hitler Youth posted groups of bouncers in front of Jewish businesses and shops, waving signs which read: “Don’t buy from Jews, shop at German stores!” They smeared anti-Jewish sayings on shop windows and building walls and prevented would-be customers from entering. Violence often erupted. Jewish business owners were mistreated, incarcerated and extorted.

At first, the Nazi Party leaders sanctimoniously denounced these “isolated incidents” carried out by their local branches. A decree issued by the Reich Interior Ministry on March 13, 1933 warned against threatening shop owners or forcing shops to close. Three days earlier, on March 10, Hitler had already claimed in the official party newspaper, the Völkische Beobachter, that communist spies had instigated the violence. He told his followers that the nation’s “rise to exaltation” was to be a systematic process directed by top leadership and called for restraint in carrying out national socialist goals.

The NSDAP leadership’s vision of this “systematic process” was made demonstrably clear only a few weeks later. On March 31st, the “Central Committee for Defense against Jewish Atrocity and Boycott Propaganda”, led by Julius Schleicher, published an appeal in the Völkische Beobachter, calling for a nationwide anti-Jewish boycott to take place, beginning at 10 am on April 1, 1933. It said: “Millions of Germans have awaited this day with longing, when the German people will be awakened in their entirety to the realization that the Jews are their enemy. Alljuda wanted this battle and it shall have it! It shall have it for as long as it takes for it to realize that the Germany of brown battalions is not a Germany of cowardice and surrender. Alljuda shall have the battle until victory is ours! National Socialists! Defeat the enemy! Even if the world were full of demons, we must prevail!”

In Leipzig, too, on that Saturday, Jewish businesses, shops, doctor’s offices and law practices were ravaged and their owners harassed. The 1933 April Boycott was the beginning of the racist anti-Semitic public policy that would be carried out openly by the Nazi regime in the ensuing years, the goal of which was the creation of a “pure German race”.

Call to boycott in 1933: 
“We will fight until Juda capitulates!”
(Leipziger Tageszeitung [daily newspaper], April 1–2, 1933, p. 1)

Poster: ‘Avoid all Jewish shops! Only buy from Germans!’
Leipzig, 1933
(German Historical Museum, Berlin)
In 1904, businessman Michaelis-Max Joske opened a department store at 43 Karl-Heine-Street, in Leipzig’s western Plagwitz district. The store was named M. Joske & Co. and was operated as a general partnership. It was the first department store in Plagwitz. During the following two decades, the store was expanded through reconstruction and the purchase of additional property. In 1924, Michaelis-Max Joske resigned from the company. He died in Leipzig on May 10, 1933, at the age of 74. His sons, Julius and Hans Joske had become the new partners and had been managing the company since 1924. Beginning in the late 1920s, the department store’s spacious entry area had become a popular gathering place for SA men (storm troopers). The shop windows had been broken on more than one occasion. On April 1, 1933, the day of the national boycott of Jewish businesses, doctor’s practices and law offices, Hans and Julius Joske were ordered to stand at the entrance to their department store, where they were taunted and humiliated by boycotters and passers-by. This scene served as a deterrent to the store’s customers, most of whom were not Jewish. Many of the store’s customers of long standing stopped shopping there and there were no new customers to replace them. The financial loss threatened the establishment’s future. In September 1933, legal proceedings successfully kept the firm from insolvency. The store’s fate was sealed fourteen months later, however, when, on November 8, 1934, Julius Joske filed for bankruptcy. The company was liquidated, and in 1939 the property was sold at a forced auction.

The Harmelin family was originally from Brody, a trade and manufacturing hub in Galicia. The first family members to settle in Leipzig came to the city in 1818. In 1830, businessman Marcus Harmelin established a fur and bristle trade, which became a great financial success. In 1905, a shop was opened in the prestigious building at 47 Brühl, and, before 1914, a store was built at 57/59 Nikolai Street. Following World War I, Max Harmelin and Josef Garfunkel became partners in the firm. After the Nazi takeover, business quickly declined at the Marcus Harmelin Company, which was owned at that time by Max Harmelin. In early 1933, the Saxon Minister of Justice banned attorney Wilhelm Harme- lin, Max Harmelin’s brother, from practicing law. Wilhelm then became a partner in his brother’s firm. In August 1935, he was accused of committing Rassenschande (racial defilement) and sent to the Sachsenberg concentration camp near Chemnitz. He was released after nine months. During the time of his incarceration, the company was hit hard economically. Import restrictions on pelts and bristles brought trade to a veritable standstill. As a consequence, the firm was almost completely dependent on its property management and leasing business. Max Harmelin emigrated to England, where he ran a fur trade in London. In March 1939, Wilhelm Harmelin, who was then managing partner of Ostrabor Ltd. London, was also permitted to travel to England. Before his departure, Leipzig’s Chief Finance President demanded a security order for Harmelin’s assets, which were then confiscated by the Reich Treasury.
The Expansion and Institutionalization of Anti-Jewish Policy

After the boycotts and acts of violence of March and April 1933, which were primarily carried out at the local level and which targeted Jewish businessmen, doctors and lawyers, a new phase of legalized anti-Semitism began. In their aftermath, what had merely been anti-Semitic policy began to be made law.

In the months and years that followed, Reich and State governments enacted numerous laws and regulations which provided for the official exclusion of Jews from public life in Germany. This phase began on April 7, 1933 with the “Law for the Restoration of the Professional Civil Service” and its “Aryan paragraph”, which prevented Jews from holding positions as civil servants. Jewish teachers and scientists were forced into premature retirement; government and state employees were pressured to leave their jobs.

The exclusion of Jewish entrepreneurs from economic activities was also begun shortly after the 1933 boycotts. The Retail Trade Law of May 12, 1933 was designed to prevent Jews who had been forced out of their positions in government offices, schools and universities from seeking new jobs in the economic sector. However, in contrast to the civil service, in commerce there initially were no legal regulations regarding “Entjudung” (“De-Jewification”). The consolidation of the economy was not to be unnecessarily disrupted, since public acceptance of the new power structure was clearly dependent on an immediate economic upswing. In addition, a strong economy was essential to the NSDAP’s planned battle of vengeance. For these reasons, the National Socialist leadership did not initially envisage the immediate and radical “Entjudung” of the economic sector, a concept which had been promoted by the NSDAP and other nationalist and conservative organizations for decades. Instead, the initiative for the expulsion of Jews from the economic sector came from the combative grass-roots membership of the NSDAP as well as from “Aryan” business competitors. Among the early protagonists for the “Aryanization” of the economy was the Arbeitsgemeinschaft deutsch-aryischer Fabrikanten der Bekleidungsindustrie e. V. – ADEFA (“The Consortium of German-Aryan Clothing Industry Manufactures”), which was founded in 1933. The ADEFA ran a large campaign in the Leipzig newspapers, promoting “Aryan businesses” and “goods produced by Aryan hands”. Additionally, lists were compiled to aid consumers in identifying “Aryan” businesses. On October 9, 1935, the Leipziger Tageszeitung published a list of “Aryan” shops and tradesmen. With the enactment of the Nuremberg Racial Laws in Autumn 1935, a new phase of National Socialist anti-Jewish policy was begun. Although this set of laws did not contain any official regulations regarding Jewish economic activity, it legally relegated the Jews to the status of an inferior race and designated them a “threat” to the “deutsche Volksgemeinschaft” (“pure German race”). It subsequently led to a growing practice of discrimination and exclusion of Jews from the economic sector. Even in the early years of the Nazi regime, governmental harassment, denunciation and hostility, along with measures designed to hinder trade, drove many Jews into exile. As a result, as early as 1936, over 100 Leipzig tobacco shops were liquidated or “aryanized.”
In early 1938, Jewish merchant Arthur Sonder, together with a business partner, opened a large emporium at 16 Peters Street, where he sold silk, wool and cotton fabrics, as well as curtains and rugs. Born on May 27, 1886 in the Thuringian town of Stadtlengsfeld, Sonder attended elementary school and then received private tutoring. Following a business apprenticeship at a textile and manufactured goods factory in Eisenach, he studied at the Eisenach College of Trade. He then worked as procurer and department manager for textile wholesale firms in several German cities. In 1910, he founded Sonder & Co. Textile Store in Gelsenkirchen. Arthur Sonder married Fridel Engel and the couple had two daughters, Lore and Ellen.

In Leipzig, Sonder ran a thriving business. Even in the wake of the world financial crisis of the early 1930s and the boycotts and hardships imposed on Jewish enterprises by the Nazi Regime, Sonder managed to maintain profits. The firm’s reputation for high quality and low prices had earned it a large and loyal customer base, made up not only of Jews, but also non-Jews.

The effects of the boycott of Jewish shops soon made themselves felt at the Sonder & Co. Textile Store. In 1933, Arthur Sonder found himself the sole proprietor when his partner, Bernhard Wartensleben, pulled out of the business. Early in 1935, after the company held a sale of fabric remnants at reduced prices, it became the target of planned attacks. These attacks were carried out by the National Socialist Trade and Industry Organization (NS-Hago), whose goal was to have the company conveyed into “Aryan” hands. Since Sonder was unwilling to agree to the sale of his company, allegations were raised regarding his business practices. It didn’t take long to find a public prosecutor who would file complaints of unfair competition and violation of the trade competition law. A judge who would act just as quickly was also found and, on July 25, 1935, he pronounced an unjustifiably severe verdict on a case that, at the most, should have amount to a misdemeanour. The Leipzig Association of Retail Traders was listed as a joint plaintiff, and expert testimony was provided by a twenty-two year old employee from the Theodor Althoff Department Store. Arthur Sonder was ordered to either pay a fine of 30,000 Reichsmarks or serve a jail sentence of five months. This verdict inevitably led to the forced sale of his company, the details of which were agreed upon by the leader of the NS-Hago and the deputy district director of the Deutsche Arbeitsfront – DAF (German Labour Front), along with a representative of the Kreisverwaltungsmannschaft (district administrative authority). The company was purchased by Berlin businessman Curt Hentschel, who had been brought into the transaction by lawyers working for Salamander AG, the owners of the property at 16 Peters Street.

In 1936, Arthur Sonder emigrated with his family to England, where he took over a small London business. In March 1938, the Sonders were denaturalized, robbing them of their German citizenship. This permitted the confiscation of all of the belongings and assets that they had had to leave behind in Germany.
During the Nazi regime, municipal governments were the local interface for the implementation of national socialist policies. Beginning in spring 1933, municipalities began to develop entire catalogues of local measures designed to individually and collectively exclude Jews, sometimes actually preceding by many years the directives issued by the Reich. In Leipzig, the city’s anti-Jewish approach was agreed upon by the NSDAP regional leadership, the regional administrative authority, the head revenue office and the state police.

The Reichstag elections of March 5, 1933 were the catalyst for a wave of suspensions and firings of Jewish civil servants, employees and artists who were employed by the municipal government. Following the local National Socialist takeover, streets were renamed, as were Jewish charitable foundations, which were, in effect, “aryanized” through this renaming and the subsequent redirection of their financial resources to municipal coffers. Jewish companies were prohibited from being awarded public contracts, and municipal lending institutions were prohibited from granting them business loans. Beginning in 1938, Jewish tradesmen were no longer issued Wanderwerkscheine (trade licenses for traveling salesmen) or Legitimationskarten (identity cards).

In August 1935, the municipal government issued a list of Jewish doctors and dentists in Leipzig and circulated it to the populace with a call to visit only non-Jewish physicians. This was followed, in early 1938, with the threat of professional sanctions for non-Jewish government employees who were observed patronizing Jewish businesses. By the end of 1938, the city’s leaders had decided to ruthlessly press the Jews into forced labor. In April 1940, Leipzig became the first major city in Germany to institute compulsory labor for all Jews. Central decisions made later by the Reich government would be based on the Leipzig model.

In 1937, the city implemented the “Aryanization” of real estate and property for communal purposes. Following the outbreak of WWII, the city acquired numerous properties, including the Israelsite Hospital, two nursing homes and a child care center. The “Law Governing Property Rental to Jews”, enacted on April 30, 1939, led to the creation of a “Judenstelle” (Jewish area), constructed by the Office for Housing Development. By fall 1939, 47 so-designated “Judenhäuser” had been erected, in which Jewish residents and the non-Jewish spouses of “mixed marriages” lived under extremely cramped conditions. In January 1942, as the deportation of Leipzig’s Jews began, the employees of the “Judenstelle” participated in compiling the names which would go onto the transport lists. These radical, deeply convicted anti-Semites were the chief decision makers. They were fully aware that the powers of life or death for those people branded “Jews” lay in their hands.
1935


The Municipal Government of Leipzig under the Nazi Regime

Lord Mayor Alfred Freyberg

Alfred Freyberg, a farmer's son, was born on July 12, 1892 in Harsleben (Halberstadt district). After graduation, he studied law at universities in Munich, Königsberg, Halle and Geneva. When World War I broke out, he volunteered for duty and was sent to the Western front. After the war, he completed his education. His first work experience was with a revenue office. In 1922–23, then a young lawyer, Freyberg became involved in the National Socialist movement, and, in 1925, he helped found the local Quedlinburg branch of the NSDAP. He also joined the SS. His Party activities caused problems for Freyberg with his employer, who gave him the option to resign from the NSDAP or be fired. Freyberg decided to resign. His Party activities caused problems for Freyberg with his employer, who gave him the option to resign from the NSDAP or be fired. Freyberg decided to resign. His Party activities caused problems for Freyberg with his employer, who gave him the option to resign from the NSDAP or be fired. Freyberg decided to resign.

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The Turning Point in the “Aryanization” Process

On November 9th and 10th of 1938, synagogues all over Germany were burning. Jewish shops and homes were also set ablaze, including the Bamberger & Hertz Men’s Clothing Store in Leipzig. Hordes of Nazis all over the country shattered thousands of windows, plundered shops and committed murder. According to official reports, “The Night of Broken Glass” or Kristallnacht, claimed 91 victims, but the actual number was probably much higher. The pretext for this orgy of violence was the assassination of the German diplomat Ernst vom Rath on November 7, 1938 in Paris by the 17-year-old Herschel Grynszpan. Though the attacks in Germany were most likely instigated by the Minister of Propaganda, Joseph Goebbels, the Nazi leadership accused the Jews of being responsible for the “spontaneous outbreak of rage”. The “Decree on an Atonement Tax of Jews with German Citizenship” issued on November 12, 1938, imposed a penalty of one billion Reichsmarks on Jewish citizens as recompense for economic damages brought about by the events of Kristallnacht.

Hermann Goering, commissioner of the Nazi’s “Four-Year-Plan”, now developed a proposal for a state-controlled “Aryanization” of the economic sector. The November pogroms ushered in a new phase of persecution for the Jews of the Third Reich. The year 1938 became a turning point in the Nazis’ financial plundering of the Jews and the ultimate expulsion of Jews from the economy. Where, until this time, the interplay of market conditions and other forces had been allowed to shape circumstances, the State now took direct control. No longer would the lucrative takeover of Jewish businesses, usually purchased for well under their appraised value, be left to the private economic sector. The Nazi Treasury now wanted a larger take of the profits.

Preparations for this systematic, state-controlled plunder of the Jewish citizenry had already begun in early 1938. First, the Nazi leadership assembled a detailed report on the number of Jewish businesses and the financial assets of the approximately 390,000 Jews who were still in Germany. To facilitate this, new laws were passed, such as the “Ordinance Prohibiting the Camouflaging of Jewish Businesses” (April 22, 1938), “Ordinance on the Registration of Jewish Assets over 5000 Reichsmarks” (April 26, 1938) and the “Third Ordinance to the Reich Civil Law” (June 14, 1938). This last ordinance called for the compilation of lists of Jewish businesses. Armed with these documents, local finance and revenue offices began to collect the compulsory payments and special taxes that were now being levied on Jews. A long list of government offices, institutions and individuals took part in this logging of Jewish assets and their ultimate plunder. Banks provided the account balances of their Jewish customers, the Chamber of Industry and Trade, along with municipal trade offices, made their information about Jewish companies available, and, finally, public accountants and art experts appraised the value of land, homes and furnishings.

In this way, entire art collections and valuable furnishings were documented and, once a Jew registered for emigration or was determined to be “in danger of fleeing”, these belongings were confiscated. Some ended up in pawn shops and auction houses, but the most valuable of these stolen possessions, classified as “cultural assets”, found their way into museum storage rooms. Those who tried to elude this program of state-organized and state-executed pilferage were pursued by the Gestapo and imprisoned. The money raised through the auctions and forced sales of Jewish belongings was put into restricted bank accounts (Sperrkonten), to which the victims of the theft had no access. Banking institutions ultimately transferred Jewish savings along with confiscated stocks and bonds to the Reich Finance Administration. According to the records of Leipzig’s Chamber of Industry and Commerce, by the end of November 1938, 1800 of the city’s businesses had been forcibly sold to “German” buyers. Only 40 manufacturers, 900 wholesale businesses and 450 retail companies were left in Jewish hands. On November 12, 1938, with the enactment of the “Ordinance on the Elimination of Jews from the German Economy”, the final phase of “Aryanization” and “De-Jewification of the economy” was begun. The implementation of the law on January 1, 1939 rendered the existence of Jewish business in Germany impossible.
Elkan Tänzer was born on November 18, 1883, in Podgórze, near Krakow. After successfully completing an apprenticeship in bedspring and decorative plume production, he married Ruchla (Rózia) Lemberger (born July 10, 1891) on January 25, 1912, in Krakow. Both husband and wife were of the Mosaic faith. On May 28, 1913, their first daughter, Eugenia, was born. Elkan Tänzer began a business as a wholesale buyer and exporter, trading in raw bedsprings. In order to further his business, he moved with his young family from Krakow to Saxony on September 29, 1914. They moved to the trade capital, Leipzig, where he intended to permanently settle, especially after both of his sons were born there: Bernhard Nathan on August 19, 1918, and Wolfgang on March 2, 1926. On May 17, 1935, he filed a petition for naturalization. In the wake of Germany’s loss in WWI, Leipzig’s Municipal Administration tried to drive Elkan Tänzer and his family out, labeling them “nasty foreigners.” In December 1928, and again on June 9, 1930, the Leipzig Police Department requested that Tänzer leave the Free State of Saxony. The authorities declined his petition for naturalization on June 19, 1930. As a merchant, Tänzer was well-positioned and renowned in his profession, and he therefore found the Leipzig Chamber of Industry and Trade to be an influential advocate. The economic importance of Tänzer’s business for Saxony’s decorative plume industry convinced the authorities to abandon their expulsion plans. On March 15, 1939, together with his younger brother Izidor, owner of the Krakow-based bedspring factory Pierz-Puch, Elkan Tänzer, still a Polish citizen, registered a company with the Trade Department of Leipzig (known as the “Book and Trade Fair City”): the Bedspring Trading Company “Gebrüder Tänzer” (Tänzer Bros.), located at 2/5 Fleischer Square. Subsequently, on April 30, 1939, the Leipzig authorities issued him a residence permit. During the ensuing years of the Weimar Republic, Elkan Tänzer was able to successfully expand his business. The family soon belonged to the wealthy business upper-class of Saxony’s trade capital.

In Spring 1933, once the National Socialists came into power, establishing state-promoted wealth and Jewish persecution, the situation changed drastically for the successful merchant and his family. Elkan Tänzer once again became the target of anti-Semitic attempts to drive him out. On October 25, 1933, Werner Pfau, a tradesman from the city of Wurzen, wrote a denunciatory letter to the Foreigner’s Office of the Police Headquarters in Leipzig. He called for the “withdrawal of German citizenship from the Jew Elkan Tänzer,” accusing Tänzer of allegedly charging exorbitant rents. Once again, the Leipzig Chamber of Industry and Trade intervened on behalf of Elkan Tänzer and prevented his expulsion. However, the hostilities continued. The Saxon authorities filed a lawsuit against the merchant, blaming him of an alleged breach of currency regulations. On December 17, 1936, the Leipzig District Court sentenced Elkan Tänzer to a penalty of 75,000 Reichsmarks and two years imprisonment. He served his sentence in the prison at Bautzen. Once released on February 15, 1938, the authorities expelled Elkan Tänzer from the country. He left Leipzig on May 12, 1938. His daughter Eugenia, who at that time was living in Krakow, took him in. The other family members remained in Leipzig. A file at the Leipzig Trade Department bears an entry from July 10, 1938, indicating that the Gebrüder Tänzer Company had been dissolved.

Robbed and “Aryanized”: The Example of the C. F. Peters Music Publishing House

During 19th century, Leipzig became one of the leading locations for the German music publishing industry, a development that also contributed to the success of the C. F. Peters Music Publishing House, which, since 1900, had been owned by Henri Hinrichsen. Hinrichsen was a successful businessman and an important philanthropist. Under his generous sponsorship, the opening of the Women’s College in 1911 and the purchase of major musical instrument collection for the University of Leipzig were made possible. C. F. Peters was a family-run business. Beginning in 1931, Henri Hinrichsen’s sons, Max, Walter and Hans-Joachim, also worked in the company.

In March 1933, Henri Hinrichsen, the sole proprietor of C. F. Peters, became the target of an insidious program of discrimination and exclusion carried out by the Berufs- und Standesorganisationen der Musikverleger (Music Publisher’s Association) and the Boards of his own foundations. The publishing house’s relationship with certain writers also underwent a transformation.

In 1936, C. F. Peters was one of 17 “Jewish” music publishers in Germany approved by the Reichsmusikammer (Reich Chamber of Music). Two of Henri Hinrichsen’s sons, Max and Walter, left Germany, but a third son, Hans-Joachim, remained in Leipzig. On November 10, 1938, the firm’s premises at 10 Tal Street were ransacked and copies of Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy’s music were burned in the company’s courtyard. This was followed by the expulsion of Henri and Hans-Joachim Hinrichsen from the Reichsmusikammer on November 15, 1939. A “forced aryanization” of the company began, carried out by SS regiment leader Gerhard Noatzke, a trustee of the Reich Ministry for Public Enlightenment and Propaganda. In July 1939, a sales contract was concluded. The new partners were Kurt Hermann and Dr. Johannes Petschull. Petschull also took over the firm’s executive leadership. The negotiated sales price for the publishing house and property, including the Peters Music Library, was one million Reichsmarks.

Henri Hinrichsen, completely destitute, left Leipzig with his wife, Martha, in January 1940, headed for Brussels. Two months later, their son, Hans-Joachim, followed. An attempt to emigrate to the United States proved unsuccessful. In 1940, Hans-Joachim Hinrichsen died in a camp in the French town of Perpignan. Martha Hinrichsen died in Brussels in 1941 and Henri Hinrichsen was deported one year later to Auschwitz, where he was murdered.

In June 1945, at the end of World War II, the American occupying forces declared the rightful owner of C. F. Peters to be Walter Hinrichsen, son of Henri Hinrichsen, the dispossessed owner of the music publishing house who had been murdered at Auschwitz. Petschull was offered the opportunity to continue managing the firm, which he accepted, and Hinrichsen made him his general agent in Germany. In 1947, following the first failed attempt by the Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands – SED (the Socialist Unity party of Germany) to take ownership of the company, Hinrichsen and Petschull began to shift portions of their inventory to West Germany, where they planned to establish a new publishing house. In November 1948, Petschull was arrested by Sovjetska Militarna Administracija – SMAD (Soviet Military Administration) and accused of illegally transporting music supplies to the West. He remained imprisoned until 1950, when he was unexpectedly released and allowed to return to West Germany. He became manager of the C. F. Peters Music Publishing House in Frankfurt and died on January 9, 2001 in Königsstein/Taunus.

Dr. Johannes Petschull, son of a medical councillor, was born on May 8, 1901 in Düsseldorf. He attended Gymnasium (secondary school) in Limburg. From 1918 to 1920, he absoluted a pharmaceutical apprenticeship, after which he studied musicology, philosophy and political science at the University of Gießen, while simultaneously studying piano at the Dr. Hoch’schen Conservatory in Frankfurt and Mainz. In 1931, Petschull received his doctorate from the University of Gießen. He accepted a position at a publishing house. In 1945, Petschull became head of the B. Schott’s Söhne Music Publishing House in Mainz. Following the pogroms of November 1938, the forced aryanization of Jewish publishing houses began to take place. Many interesting parties vied to obtain the C. F. Peters Music Publishing House, with the choice finally falling on businessman Kurt Hermann. Hermann brought in Petschull as a trade expert, and they became partners of C. F. Peters in 1939. Petschull ran business operations and, through the targeted acquisition of other “aryanized” music publishing houses, especially “Universal Edition” in Vienna, was able to build the company into a major privately-held music publishing corporation.
Art Treasures Expropriated and Put on Display: Exposing the Network of Art Thieves and Profiteers in Leipzig

"Aryanization" meant not only the forced sale or expropriation of businesses. Furnishings from private homes, along with the last remaining belongings of those Jews who were first relegated to the cramped "Judenhäuser" and later deported to the concentration camps were included in the "transfer of Jewish property into Aryan hands", as it was propagandized.

In the process, private libraries, valuable stamp and coin collections, jewelry, porcelain, faience, and "antique furnishings of all kinds, including works of art – portraits, graphics, sculptures and statues – were ali ‘aryanized’. In the early years of "Aryanization", the officially sanctioned removal of individual works of art as well as entire art collections from Jewish citizens and their placement into the "Aryan hands" of art dealers, private collectors or museums, was carried out exclusively through the sale of such items, which was organized by the Jewish art collectors themselves. Technically viewed, these sales were completely ordinary, legal transactions. A closer look at these property transfers, however, quickly reveals that, culminating with Hitler’s rise to power, Jewish property owners found themselves in a historically unique situation. Before 1933, the voluntary sale of art works and art collections was virtually unheard of. The sales that took place after 1933 were generally brought about by circumstances in which Jewish art owners found themselves at the mercy of the new political situation. A subtle form of expropriation was taking place.

These art treasures, which were required to be declared by their Jewish owners, whetted the appetite of Germany’s art and cultural world. This held true in Leipzig, as well. Museums, independent art dealers and municipal authorities all hastened to gain access to these cultural assets and prevent them from being diverted to other sources. The valuable collections of Jewish art lovers, such as the families of textile merchants, world-renowned music publisher Hinrichsen or eminent bookbinder and artist, were sold at forced auctions or were confiscated. The orchestrators of this "Aryanization", which was nothing more than the pilferage of art and cultural assets, were, once again, the Finance Ministry and its local Leipzig office, the municipal authorities (Lord Mayor, individual councilmen, and employees of the Finance Office), and municipal cultural establishments such as museums and libraries, as well as banks, art dealers, auction houses and removal companies, along with attorneys and notaries. The local media, through the systematic conformity of its reporting, was, of course, also culpable. Among Leipzig’s many advocates for the "Aryanization" of cultural artefacts were the art dealer Georg Werner, owner of the venerable C. G. Boerner art dealership (established in Leipzig in 1836), Hans and Wolfgang Boerner, the Hans Klemm Auction House, and Art Museum director Werner Teupser.

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**Chief Finance President Friedrich Sobe**

Friedrich Sobe, son of elementary school teacher Hermann Sobe, was born on December 30, 1881 in Leipzig. He attended the Wettiner Gymnasium in Dresden and graduated in 1901. Sobe studied law in Leipzig and Marburg, and in 1912, following his assessor examinations, began a career in Saxony’s judicial service. He served as District Attorney and District Judge. In 1915, he made a career move to the Finance Department. In 1917, Sobe took on a position at the Generaldirektion (ministerial customs office), working first as a revenue officer and later as a financial councilor. In 1920, Sobe moved to the Reich Finance Administration and became Division Head of the Landesfinanzamt Leipzig (Leipzig branch of the state revenue office). In September 1921, he married Bertha Rausch. In 1923, Sobe was promoted to head of the Kondominiumamt (ministerial customs office), which was organized by the Jewish art collectors themselves. Technically viewed, these sales were completely ordinary, legal transactions. A closer look at these property transfers, however, quickly reveals that, culminating with Hitler’s rise to power, Jewish property owners found themselves in a historically unique situation. Before 1933, the voluntary sale of art works and art collections was virtually unheard of. The sales that took place after 1933 were generally brought about by circumstances in which Jewish art owners found themselves at the mercy of the new political situation. A subtle form of expropriation was taking place.

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Art Treasures Expropriated and Put on Display: Exposing the Network
of Art Thieves and Profiteers in Leipzig

Letter from Georg Werner to the Leipzig Museum of Fine Arts regarding
the sale of paintings from the Hinrichsen collection, July 27, 1939
(Leipzig City Archives)

Newspaper article about the exhibition of works of art
originally owned by Jews, “Leipzigs Great New Art
Treasures”, May 1940
(Leipzig Neueste Nachrichten [daily newspaper], May 4, 1940)

Wilhelm Leibl (1844–1900),
Portrait of the Painter Johann Herterich, 1886, oil on canvas
(Siegfried Unterberger Collection, Photo: Ursula Gerstenberger, Leipzig Museum of Fine Arts)

Joseph Fritz von Uhde
(1848–1910), In F海湾, 1890, oil on canvas
(Siegfried Unterberger Collection, Photo: Ursula Gerstenberger, Leipzig Museum of Fine Arts)
Five-page letter from Werner Teupser to City Councillor F. A. Hauptmann on September 21, 1939, regarding the pre-emptive right of the city of Leipzig to pieces of art from the Hinrichsens’ possession (Leipzig City Archives)
A 1938 ruling which entitled the Nazi State to all Jewish assets and also allowed the legal liquidation of the Jewish sector of the economy affected only the few remaining businesses that still were in the hands of Jewish owners. The majority of small and medium-sized retail companies had long-since been liquidated or "aryanized". Well-known companies with an international clientele, such as the renowned music publishing house C. F. Peters, which had, for economic reasons, until now been protected from even the most covetous "aryanizer" activists, were finally caught in the cogs of the "Aryanization" process. This final act of economical "Entjudung" brought significantly more revenue to the coffers of the Third Reich.

By the end of 1939, the National Socialists and their clientele had, for the most part, reached their goal of "De-Jewifying" the German economy and transferring lucrative Jewish businesses into Aryan hands. After that began the process of appraising the last remaining possessions of those besieged Jewish citizens who had not been able to flee the country.

In autumn 1939, Leipzig’s municipal government began to "aryanize" residential areas. Jews were forced to relocate to so-called "Judenhäuser" ("Jew houses"). An edict issued by the Reichssicherheitshauptamt – RSHA (Reich Security Central Office) on October 23, 1941 prevented the emigration of Jews out of Germany and, with the implementation of the "Eleventh Decree of the Reich Citizenship Law" of November 25, 1941, all Jews were immediately stripped of their German citizenship and subjected to the confiscation of all of their remaining belongings and assets. An edict issued by the RSHA on March 13, 1942 required Jewish homes to carry an identifying mark on the front door. On January 21, 1942, deportations began to be carried out in Leipzig. The sparse furnishings that the Jews had been allowed to take with them to the miserable "Judenhäuser", and even the baggage they had been forced to leave behind, were subsequently confiscated.

The revenue offices contracted bailiffs and auction houses to appraise Jewish assets. This took place openly, with full public knowledge. The citizenry was informed by the press about auctions at which they could inexpensively obtain furniture, clothing and household furnishings of all kinds. From 1942 until the collapse of the Nazi Regime, various Leipzig auction houses appraised the last remaining belongings of Jews who had been deported to concentration camps. The most prominent player during this phase of "Aryanization" was Leipzig's Hans Klemm Auction House. At public auctions, it offered Leipzig’s "Aryan" citizens everything from books to art objects, right down to the last shirt and the final remaining dinner plate that had belonged to Leipzig’s Jewish residents. Surviving records from the Klemm Auction House prove that many of Leipzig’s citizens were interested in these "abandoned" possessions. Municipal institutions, such as libraries and museums, also took advantage of the opportunity to enrich themselves with the expropriated belongings of Leipzig’s Jewish residents. The question of why the deported Jews would no longer need their personal belongings was one that the numerous purchasers left unasked.

Profiteers of “Aryanization”:
The Example of the Klemm Brothers and Hans Klemm Auction House

In 1933, the Hans Klemm Auction House was the most profitable enterprise of its kind in Leipzig. The owners were the brothers Hans and Karl Klemm. The sales rooms and warehouse were located in a large building at 19 Grosse Fleischer Lane. From early 1933 on, as oppressed by National Socialist anti-Jewish policy, an increasing number of Jews emigrated, the number of contracts received by the auction house rose proportionately. Karl Klemm joined the NSDAP on May 1, 1937. In the course of the Polenaktion on October 28, 1938, during which approximately 1600 Jews with Polish citizenship were arrested and deported from Leipzig to the German-Polish corridor, the household goods of the affected residents were confiscated. The Gestapo and the Chief Finance President of Leipzig contracted the Klemm Auction House to dispose of the property that had been required to be left behind. From 1939 on, the company’s books were primarily filled with contracts from the Gestapo and the Chief Finance President. Contracts awarded for the appraisal of property which had been confiscated from Jews led to an enormous increase in profits for the company, thus making the Klemm brothers profiteers of Jewish persecution.

The firm retained a commission of ten percent of the auction price, and costs for delivery and advertising were reimbursed. Klemm auctioned off belongings that had been confiscated by the authorities as well as household goods that had been stored with moving companies. Moreover, when Jews were forced to move to the cramped quarters of the “Judenhäuser”, they found themselves forced to auction off their belongings. From 1942 until the end of the Nazi Regime, the Klemm Auction House auctioned off the last worldly goods of Jews who were deported from Leipzig. Before the auctions, Hans and Karl Klemm would seek out the most valuable and desirable objects for themselves, which they then either gave to friends and acquaintances or sold at a discounted price.

Hans and Karl Klemm continued to run their auction house even after the events of 1945. In 1946, accusations regarding their activities during the Nazi Regime began to pile up. On May 26, 1948, Hans and Karl Klemm were arrested by the Leipzig police and an investigation was begun by the District Attorney’s office. In February 1949, a trial was held in the Leipzig District Court. The auction house’s business activities were judged to constitute active support of the Nazi Regime, along with illicit personal enrichment. Hans Klemm received a prison sentence of two years and six months, his brother Karl was sentenced to two years. They were incarcerated in the Brandenburg-Görden penitentiary. Their private assets became the property of the Free State of Saxony.
The End of Nazi Rule and the Development of East Germany’s Policy Regarding “Aryanized” Property

The legalized theft of property that was the consequence of the Nazi Regime’s “Aryanization” of companies, real estate, household belongings and cultural assets was the largest seizure of private property in Germany’s history. Following the Allied victory in the spring of 1945, the four occupying powers concerned themselves with the question of reparations for the crimes committed by the Germans. No reparation could be made for the murder of six million European Jews, the deaths of millions of victims of the devastating war in the east, the prisoners of war and the forced labourers, or the murders of people who had been stigmatized as “gypsies”, “genetically ill” or “anti-social” and anyone who had openly opposed National Socialism.

By 1945, most of the victims of “Aryanization” were no longer alive. It was only their heirs and the few remaining survivors who were able to demand either the return of their property or financial recompense. Even today, there are those who have not availed themselves of this opportunity. The restitution of aryanized property and the payment of financial compensation remains a current concern. Post-1945, the Allied Forces were not able to agree on a uniform regulation regarding restitution and repairation. On November 10, 1947, the American zone enacted a “Law on the Restitution of Identifiable Property”. It was the first of its type and was quickly followed by similar laws and regulations issued by the British and French zones. The Soviet occupying forces did not issue any uniform regulation. Repairation for the material injustice carried out by the Nazi State was not their primary concern. Of course, in certain federal states in the Soviet zone, there was, in 1945/46, the first German initiative toward making material reparations. On October 21, 1946, Saxony’s State Government decreed that property that had been sold by victims of the Nazi Regime due to “political, religious or racist reasons”, or through the passage of new laws, or “under the pressure of the prevailing conditions” would require an official permit in order to be resold. To prevent the tracks of injustice from being erased, courts began flagging the entries of aryanized property in their registers, in order to make it recognizable as such.

These early attempts to secure the rights of the victims of “Aryanization” came, however, before the Soviet Military Administration (SMAD) issued tight restrictions. On October 30, 1945, Order No. 124, providing for the “sequestration of assets of former members of the National Socialist Party”, including businesses which had belonged to Nazi offenders and war criminals, was issued. The beneficiary of this expropriation of war criminals was the new Soviet State. Since those who were now being dispossessed of their property had only gained it through the “Aryanization” process, it meant a de facto second dispossession for the victims of “Aryanization”. As recently as 1989, the GDR Government relied on this SMAD Order to deny the restitution of businesses and real estate. Jewish survivors in the Soviet zone, and, later, in the German Democratic Republic (GDR), were entitled to a significant amount of state money in financial restitution through the Office for Victims of the Nazi Regime, but most of this money never made its way to the victims of “Aryanization”. The socialist program to nationalize key industries, banks and insurance companies, right down to medium-sized businesses, would have easily allowed the restitution of “aryanized” small businesses, houses, lands, art collections and other assets. However, there were only sporadic selective attempts to undo the affects of “Aryanization”. Historical research indicates that the primary reason for the denial of Jewish claims for restitution in East Germany lay in socialist principals, in which state-owned property could never be privatized, even when came from the aryanized former assets of Jews. A fundamental change in restitution policy came about only when the Unification Treaty of 1990 established that all open inquiries regarding estates in the former GDR would be resolved by the principle of natural restitution, meaning the return of property instead of financial compensation (“Rückgabe vor Entschädigung”).


The Expropriation of the C. F. Peters Music Publishing House by the SED

In April 1945, as Leipzig was occupied by US forces, Walter Hinrichsen, who had emigrated to the USA in 1936, entered the city as an American cultural officer. In June 1945, he was declared the rightful owner of the music publishing house that had belonged to his father, Henri Hinrichsen, who was murdered at Auschwitz. C. F. Peters resumed operations under the leadership of Johannes Petchell. Hinrichsen also had the support of the noted Leipzig attorney and notary, Dr. Martin Drucker. Leipzig fell to the Soviet occupation forces on July 1, 1945, and in September of that year, the Soviet Military Administration of Leipzig transferred ownership of the publishing house to the Sozialdemokratische Parthei Deutschlands – SPD (Social Democratic Party of Germany). In August 1946, Leipzig’s City Council named the local SED chapter trustee for the firm, which had been placed under SMAD Order No. 124, regulating the “sequestration of assets of former members of the National Socialist party”. The local SED party chapter ignored the order of restitution of the company to Walter Hinrichsen and considered “aryanizer” Kurt Herrmann the firm’s owner. Hinrichsen appealed to the SMAD in Saxony, which resulted in confirmation by the Dresden office of the Saxon State Government of his ownership of the company. His success was short-lived, however. At the end of January 1949, the SED again claimed the company as its own. In 1950–51, the expropriation was made complete. The company was declared public property and, in 1952, C. F. Peters was absorbed by Druckerei- und Verlagskontor, an SED holding.


Nationalization Document for the C. F. Peters Music Publishing House, 1951 (Saxon State Archives, Dresden)
The End of Nazi Rule and the Development of East Germany's Policy Regarding “Aryanized” Property

The Sonntag File: A “Little Something” for the Leipzig City History Museum

On November 10, 1946, Frau Laura (Lore) Sonntag contacted Hans Klemm, owner of the Hans Klemm Auction House, from New York. She asked for his help in reclaiming her property, which had been confiscated in 1940 by the local Leipzig Gestapo. Laura Sonntag, a Jew, had escaped the Nazi horrors with her children when, during 1939–40, they fled into exile and eventually emigrated to the USA. What was most important to her was the return of books that had belonged to her husband, the renowned book binder and artist Carl Sonntag (1883–1930), whose artistic book covers had made him famous well beyond Leipzig. Hans Klemm himself had auctioned off the widow’s household goods, taken from her home in Großdeuben (near Leipzig), at a public auction on August 21, 1941, at which time the directors of Leipzig’s libraries and museums had also taken a great interest in the valuable books and works of art. In 1994, a restitution agreement returned certain works of art, which the City of Leipzig itself had purchased for the Museum of Fine Arts, to the heirs of Laura Sonntag, who had died in 1979. On August 18, 1941, Leipzig’s Stadtgeschichtliche Museum (Leipzig City History Museum) had purchased various works of art, valuing 30 Reichsmarks, from the Hans Klemm Auction House in the 19 Grosse Fleischer Lane. They had included three watercolor paintings, one wood engraving, one copper engraving, one color lithograph and two photos showing various views of Leipzig and the surrounding area. It was only during research for the exhibit “Aryanization” in Leipzig that these objects were discovered in the museum’s storage rooms and recognized as having belonged to Laura Sonntag.

Literature


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