Jonathan Petropoulos Art as Politics in the Third Reich Chapel Hill & London 1996, 184

suffered a tremendous drop in prices (for examp.. Romney's *Miss Anne Warren* sold for $28,014 in 1928 but fetched only $3,767 in 1934). Yet the prices for old masters tended to hold relatively steady or even gain slightly (Rembrandt's *Portrait of an Old Man* went for $91,770 in 1930; the Melbourne National Gallery bought Rembrandt's *Self-Portrait* for $98,900 in 1936).[2] During the 1930s, works from the Renaissance and those by exceptional artists such as Vermeer (who produced fewer than forty known works) garnered the highest prices. The Hermitage Museum sold Raphael's *Alba Madonna* for $1.104 million and Botticelli's *Adoration* for $795,800 in the mid-1930s in order for Stalin to generate foreign currency.[3] In 1939 Hitler bought Vermeer's *An Artist in His Studio* (the Czernin Vermeer) at the highly favorable price of RM 1.65 million ($640,000); four years earlier American collector Andrew Mellon had reportedly offered a million dollars for the painting but was blocked by the Austrian government citing national export laws.[4] The prices of modern art decreased in the 1930s, in part due to the depression and in part from the Nazis' propaganda campaign and their selling such works from the German state collections. Figures for Matisse, for example, show a discernible drop in price, with, for example, *The Red Atelier* selling for $3,680 in London in 1927 and *Village Stream* bringing $1,256 in 1937. Granted, these works, as with others compared here, varied in quality, but they serve to illustrate the trend.[5] The market for the art of Picasso and Braque as well as Monet and a number of the Impressionists was also relatively poor.[6]

German old masters, like most other traditional art, rose in price in the mid- to late 1930s. Works by Hans Memling, the fifteenth-century master, sold for impressive sums, such as $29,900 for *Holy Family* in 1938 and $78,798 for the larger and more significant triptych *Descent from the Cross* in 1939.[7] Nineteenth-century German art also increased in price within Germany. Hitler's love for this art arguably contributed to the trend, with prices for works by Carl Spitzweg (one of his favorite painters) increasing approximately 500 percent from 1938 to 1944.[8] This figure is slightly artificial, as the sums fetched by all artworks rose considerably during the war. This occurred in the markets throughout western Europe. In the Netherlands and France inflation of 100 to 200 percent was not uncommon between 1940 and 1943. The buying and selling frenzy in Paris was so great that one of the leaders of the resistance, Jean Moulin, concealed himself in the capital by masquerading as an art dealer.[9] The Hôtel Drouot and other Parisian establishments had several record years during the occupation.[10] The market in Germany proved even more uncontrollable. The reports of the SD chronicled this inflation, as people sought safe investments in durable goods.[11] As previously discussed, the Nazi leaders contemplated regulating the market early in the war but then decided against it when they realized that they had virtually unlimited financial resources and therefore could outbid the competition. The Germans also enjoyed a highly advantageous rate of exchange in the countries they occupied. An OSS officer, for example, described the art market in France: "German buyers came to Paris in hundreds. There was nothing to hold them back. Armed with their paper money, the *Reichskassenscheine* (invasion marks), which cost their country nothing, they had a twenty-to-one advantage over the franc and the reassuring knowledge that no matter what they paid in France, they could usually make a 100 percent profit at home."[12] In short, the art market flourished in western Europe throughout most of World War II, as the economic situation compelled the Germans to buy immoderately.

ADOLF HITLER

Hitler's favorite art was the Austro-Bavarian genre painting stemming predominantly from the nineteenth century.[13] It was this art, specifically the work of Carl Spitzweg and Eduard Grützner, that Hitler first collected. Aesthetically conservative, the Führer expanded his holdings during the Third Reich so as to include old masters and a limited quantity of contemporary "Nazi art." Using both personal and governmental funds and empowering his agents to select pieces from the war booty, Hitler amassed art at the most rapid pace in history.[14] A May 1945 inventory of the Sonderauftrag Linz repositories compiled by the MFA and A officers listed 6,755 paintings, of which 5,350 were identified as old masters.[15] Subsequent estimates of the size of the collection have been more modest. Certain scholars now place the number of paintings earmarked for Linz at 4,800 to 5,000.[16] Still, the Führermuseum, which would have featured massive galleries, could have exhibited roughly four times more works than the Louvre at that time.[17]

Hitler, like the other top Nazi leaders, blurred the distinction between official and private property. Hitler allocated enormous sums of governmental resources to build his collection and claimed in his personal will that he had collected on behalf of the state.[18] Yet he so identified with the state and so often treated the artworks assembled as part of the Linz Project as his own (placing pictures such as Watteau's *Landscape with Figures* and Vermeer's *An Artist in His Studio* in his home at the Berghof), that it is justifiable to use the term "Hitler's art collection."[19] Heinrich Hoffmann testified after the war that "after [the late 1930s] Hitler gave up all ideas of a private collection."[20] The manner in which Hitler shuffled the artworks to his

various headquarters and residences affirmed his personal control of these objects.[21]

Though Hitler had long been interested in art—his twice unsuccessful application to the Viennese Akademie der Bildenden Künste in 1907–8 is an oft-told story—financial limitations prevented him from buying art until the late 1920s.[22] Contemporaries have reported that the first noteworthy work Hitler purchased was a painting by Spitzweg. The title of the piece is never specified, but the work appeared in the ground floor of Hitler's Prinzregentenstraße apartment in Munich in 1929.[23] Heinrich Hoffmann, who acted as an unofficial art adviser prior to the war, claimed, however, that the first purchase by Hitler of which he was aware was a sketch by Arnold Böcklin, the nineteenth-century Romantic artist whose work had mystical overtones.[24] Hoffmann played an important role in Hitler's early collecting activities, that is, in the pre–Linz Project period when Hitler made a sharper distinction between personal and state holdings. The two men shared a love for the Austro-Bavarian genre paintings. As they each had large sums of money at their disposal—Hoffmann's coming mainly from his monopoly on photographs of Hitler and postcard sales at the Haus der Deutschen Kunst—they would receive the myriad dealers and inspect the seemingly unending offerings.

Hitler's purchases alone supported a number of German art dealers, especially the Munich clique that included Maria Alma Dietrich, an amateurish vender who nonetheless sold more paintings to Hitler than anyone else.[25] Karl Haberstock, who directed over a hundred works to Hitler and the Linz agents, was preeminent among the Berliners.[26] A host of lesser figures—there are at least forty-eight dealers who are mentioned in the extant records concerning the Führermuseum—sustained their businesses by turning to the Führer. The most significant include Hans Lange in Berlin, Gersternberger in Chemnitz, Theodor Abel in Cologne, and Hildebrand Gurlitt in Hamburg.[27] Through these establishments Hitler exerted a considerable influence on the art market. As mentioned earlier, paintings by Spitzweg, Defregger, Thoma, and others in the Austro-Bavarian genre steadily escalated in price. This was both due to his zealous buying habits (thus increasing demand) and because of his influence as a tastemaker. Hitler sought to keep afloat the non-Jewish art dealers in Germany, thereby keeping open his conduit of artworks.

Much of Hitler's collecting took place in Munich, the city designated as the art capital of the Reich (hence the situation there of the showcase museum, the Haus der Deutschen Kunst).[28] There are a number of reasons why Hitler associated Munich with art. It had been one of the sites of his days as an artist prior to the First World War, when he worked as a painter and make of postcards. Even after the war, he enjoyed the artistic ambience of the Schwabing district. Hoffmann, his confidant in artistic matters, based his photographic business in Munich. In postwar interviews Hoffmann described accompanying Hitler to the Führerbau to meet with dealers and select paintings.[29] A large building belonging to the Nazi Party, the Führerbau was located on the Arcisstraße in the center of the city and offered storage facilities that were used to house artworks until May 1945.[30] Munich also proved a suitable place to center collecting activities because it had a thriving art market. There were not only a score of dealers eager to do business but a number of important auction houses, including Adolf Weinmüller (Odeonsplatz), Julius Böhler (Briennerstraße), the Brüchwiller brothers (Lenbachplatz), and Karl und Faber (Briennerstraße), as well as the Münchener Kunsthandelgesellschaft (Lenbachplatz).[31] Prior to the war Hitler typically visited Munich every few weeks, and he rarely passed up the opportunity to visit the dealers to inspect their offerings.[32] Later he became accustomed to making decisions based on photographs. Heinrich Hoffmann estimated that Hitler ultimately inspected in person only one-third of the works destined for Linz.[33]

Hitler also purchased a remarkable quantity of Nazi art—that is, art produced under his regime. He acquired Nazi art both from museums and the artists themselves. As an example of the former, his patronage of the annual *GDK* from 1937 to 1944 in the Haus der Deutschen Kunst deserves emphasis. Hitler would typically purchase 200 to 300 pieces from the *GDK* (out of 880 to 1,400 works exhibited). He would also usually make more than one buying foray per show. Nineteen thirty-eight is a representative year as Hitler made five trips to the Haus der Deutschen Kunst, buying 202 pieces and spending a total of RM 582,185.[34] While solicitations from artists also proved extremely common, Hitler and his staff did not buy in bulk in such instances and therefore acquired fewer works in this way. The artists themselves often wrote to Hitler, usually through the Reich Chancellery, offering their creations.[35] As Hitler wanted to nurture a new type of art that represented the Third Reich and as the Nazi government undertook unprecedented building projects that used art for decorative purposes, Hitler's generous patronage does not defy explanation. It is extraordinary, however, that Hitler himself made most of the buying decisions, leaving the Reich Chancellery staff—in particular Hans Lammers and the latter's immediate subordinate, Wilhelm Kritzinger—to negotiate the price and arrange payment. Hitler placed most of the Nazi art in his offices and various public or semipublic spaces. For example, Breker's sculptures adorned the New Reich Chancellery and Ziegler's triptych, *The Four Elements*, was placed in a salon of the Munich Führerbau. His private residences rarely had con-

temporary pieces. At the Berghof, for example, a[illegible]ng the 534 pictures located there in 1945, only a couple can be classified as Nazi art, and these invariably had special sentimental value (a portrait of Troost, for example).[36]

A serious collector such as Hitler could not ignore opportunities in Berlin, and he naturally established contact with the city's important dealers. He had learned of Karl Haberstock because the dealer had developed a clientele in the 1920s within right-wing anti-Semitic circles. Haberstock, a shrewd businessman and sincere Nazi, catered to those who disliked doing business with Jews (although he received his training in the firm of Paul Cassirer).[37] He sold his first picture to Hitler in 1936 at a time when Hitler was accelerating the pace of his purchases.[38] Haberstock's peak years of influence came in the early 1940s. He counted Hans Posse as an ally and fared particularly well prior to the Linz director's death in December 1942. Both Haberstock and Posse competed with Heinrich Hoffmann for influence with Hitler. The rivalry grew quite bitter. Posse and Haberstock rightly thought Hitler's photographer ignorant of art (and frequently ridiculed him, for example, claiming that he pronounced the name of the Austrian painter Hans Makart like the Cafe Maquart in Berlin).[39] Hoffmann, conversely, accused Haberstock of profiteering, a claim that also had much substance. Haberstock prevailed in this contest while Posse lived. Yet even subsequently he fared better than Hoffmann, who was marginalized further because he was held in poor regard by Bormann and Hermann Voss. Haberstock had developed extensive foreign contacts. His own dealership included a branch in London until the onset of hostilities, and he worked with a number of influential collaborators in Paris, Lucerne (he was a friend of the *entartete Kunst* auctioneer Theodor Fischer), and other European cities.[40] His numerous contacts kept him in business until the end of the war.

Although the OSS investigators recommended that the Sonderauftrag Linz be declared a criminal organization, much of their collecting came about through purchases.[41] Hitler "spent more on art than anybody in the history of the world"—RM 163,975,000.[42] The agents in Hitler's employ tended to have territories where they specialized. Hans Posse, for example, though the director of the Linz Project, rarely traveled to Paris. He concentrated on the Netherlands and Italy and left France to Haberstock and others. In the Low Countries Posse's most effective representative was a German dealer named Alois Miedl, who obtained the famed Goudstikker collection, among many important finds.[43] In Italy Posse engaged Philipp Prinz von Hessen, who provided the advantage of being married to Princess Mafalda, the second daughter of King Vittorio Emanuele III. Prinz Philipp was well acquainted with many of Italy's leading families, thus helping indu[illegible] many of them to sell their art. He also had good relations with Mussolini, which proved particularly useful to Hitler because he was able to circumvent the Italian export laws that were made increasingly strict starting in the 1930s.[44] Hermann Voss used a somewhat different corps of agents, but the effect was the same.[45] In fact, Voss purchased more artworks than Posse, while continuing to mine largely the same quarries in the Netherlands and Italy.[46]

Hitler's art collecting activities depended on funding. While collecting privately, prior to the *Machtergreifung* and in the early years of the Third Reich, Hitler relied primarily on the revenue generated from the sales of *Mein Kampf* and on donations made to the Nazi Party. Book royalties amounted to substantial sums: the Eher Verlag paid Hitler royalties of RM 1.5 to 2 million per year between 1934 and 1944.[47] Income from investments, including the real estate holdings managed by Bormann and the various financial windfalls, such as the Adolf Hitler Spende, which was financed by major industrialists such as Gustav Krupp von Bohlen und Halbach, provided Hitler with supplemental income.[48] In 1937 Hitler developed the scheme for the *Kulturfonds*. The *Sonderbriefmarken* or special postage stamps, where buyers made a contribution above and beyond the postal rate, generated sizable revenues.[49] A report from Reichspostminister Ohnesorge to Hitler in February 1942 noted that the program had generated RM 20,387,046 to date, of which RM 19,990,000 had been allocated to *Kulturfonds*.[50] While archival records indicate that the annual revenue produced by the *Sonderbriefmarken* ranged from RM 3 to 6 million per year, one document, dated March 1945, suggests that over RM 52 million were eventually raised by way of the stamp program (an average of RM 6.5 million per year).[51] A bank account reserved for Sonderauftrag Linz purchases, called *Sonderfonds L*, was replenished with the *Kulturfonds*. The *Sonderfonds L* were administered by Reich Chancellery chief Lammers.

While Hitler paid for most of the art destined for the Führermuseum, he was not averse to illegal means of acquisition. Within the Reich Hitler allowed his agents to procure art through forced sales. The Czernin Vermeer, *An Artist in His Studio*, which was acquired only after the intervention of Bormann, Seyss-Inquart, Bürckel, and Baldur von Schirach, was a sufficiently unpleasant experience for the Czernin family that after the war members initiated proceedings challenging the legality of the transaction. In negotiating for the Vermeer Hitler's surrogates undertook investigations into the aristocratic Austrian family's tax obligations and made veiled threats via remarks about their patriotism. As mentioned earlier, Hitler obtained the picture for the favorable price of RM 1.65 million.[52] Hitler's recourse to illegal means of acquiring art also included the enhancement of

his collection with art confiscated from Jews within the Reich. One finds at least 324 pictures in the inventory of the Führermuseum that stemmed from Viennese Jews. Hans Posse exploited the Aryanization process, as shown earlier where he selected paintings for the Führermuseum in Munich in the wake of the November 1938 confiscations.[53] Later, when the ERR became active in France, one of the first treasures to be apprehended and earmarked for the Führermuseum was Vermeer's *The Astronomer*, which was owned by Baron Edouard de Rothschild.[54]

Hitler believed it his right as conqueror to claim artworks as the spoils of victory; even after nonmilitary successes, such as the dismemberment of Czecho-Slovakia, Hitler took artworks for his own collections. Thus, for example, Hitler removed tapestries from the Hradcany castle in Prague in March 1939 after his two-day visit and had them taken to Berlin. Later he had Breughel's *The Hay Harvest* taken from the National Museum, earmarking it for Linz.[55] The plundering in Poland also yielded works for the Führermuseum. Hans Posse visited Mühlmann in Poland in late 1939 and selected pieces for Sonderauftrag Linz, including works by Raphael, Leonardo, and Rembrandt.[56] The ERR collected over 21,000 works that had once belonged to French Jews as well as many artworks from Belgian, Dutch, and Eastern European Jews. The finest of the stolen works were to be part of Hitler's collection. Fifty-three of the best paintings confiscated by the ERR in France were not placed in the Neuschwanstein or Herrenchiemsee repositories but were among the artworks destined for Linz discovered in the Munich Führerbau.[57] In Vienna Hans Posse personally visited the Rothschild villa on the Theresianeumgasse in order to expropriate the leather wall hangings for Linz.[58]

Besides plunder and purchase, Hitler had one other means of acquiring art: gifts. An elaborate culture of gift-giving developed among the Nazi elite, and Hitler received hundreds of artworks as tribute. These gifts came from a variety of sources, but foremost from subordinates within the Party. To take but a few examples, on Hitler's birthday in 1936 Goebbels presented him with a Lenbach painting, and in 1939 he gave Becchi's *Leda and the Swan*, while Gauleiter Fritz Sauckel that year sent Lucas Cranach the Elder's *Naked Venus*.[59] Gifts also stemmed from foreign leaders. Mussolini gave Hitler Hans Makart's *Plague in Florence*, remembering the Führer's praise of the piece during the 1938 trip to Italy.[60] Finally, gifts were often presented by those who sought to curry favor with the dictator. The industrialist Alfried Krupp von Bohlen und Halbach, for example, journeyed to Obersalzberg in 1940 to give Hitler an ornate table made from Krupp steel, carved by the sculptor Erich Kuhn with various Nazi insignia and laudatory inscriptions.[61] This practice of giving art became standardized and even ritualized, with Hitler and others fully cognizant of the symbolic import of the gesture.

Hitler receives a painting in the company of friends at the Berghof on his birthday in 1943 (Getty Center, Resource Collections, Stefan Lorant Papers)

HERMANN GÖRING

The number two man in the Third Reich had the second largest art collection in the country. Although Göring claimed that he eventually planned to turn his collection over to the state and make Carinhall a museum on his sixty-fifth birthday (which would have been 12 January 1958), he was also known to boast that he possessed the largest art collection in Europe owned by a private individual.[62] The emphasis of the collection, as illustrated by the instructions of the Direktor der Kunstsammlung des Reichsmarschalls, Walter Andreas Hofer, to the subordinate agents, lay in German old masters (the Cranachs, Dürer, and Grünewald), Italian Renaissance painting and sculpture, Dutch and Flemish old masters and tapestries, and the art favored by the French court in the eighteenth century

warranted consideration. Alfred Rosenberg, for example, crossed out the respectful *Ihr* in a draft of a birthday greeting to Goebbels when they were feuding with one another in 1934.[68] Similarly, whether Hitler presented a hand-signed photograph or a reproduced signature also hinted at the current standing of the recipient. Gifts, and artworks in particular, were fraught with many meaningful subtexts.

THE COMPETITION TO COLLECT

While artworks were exploited by the Nazi leaders as a means of expressing admiration and articulating group bonds, the competitive search for desirable pieces also led to rivalries. Infighting permeated the circle of Nazi leaders from the outset of the Party's existence—a condition observed by both contemporaries and historians of the period.[69] Such rivalries could involve gifts. Gauleiter Fritz Sauckel, for example, became upset with one of Bormann's assistants, Walter Hanssen, when the latter purchased a painting by Otto Runge that the Thuringian Party chief had intended to give to Hitler.[70] The competition for artworks, however, usually concerned works that were earmarked for their own collections. As nearly all the ruling elite collected artworks, a forum developed that expressed their competitive feelings. Jean Cassou, a curator at the Louvre, vividly described this situation as "a network of intrigues and dirty deals in which the most redoubtable leaders of National Socialism squabbled and defied each other in a sordid, stubborn struggle for the possessions of famous paintings or valuable pieces of sculpture."[71]

The Nazi leaders' competition for artworks nonetheless conceded a submissiveness to Hitler. With the exception of Hermann Göring, no other member of the Party elite challenged the Führer or his agents.[72] While even Göring was cowed by Hitler and often relinquished artworks on command (he openly granted priority for eighteenth- and nineteenth-century works), there were a number of noteworthy occasions when the number two figure in the Reich asserted his own interests.[73] The most important incident involved Göring's defense of his 5 November 1940 order regarding the selection hierarchy for the artworks confiscated by the ERR in France, whereby the Reichsmarschall had second choice after Hitler.[74] In fact Göring in this instance fought to maintain his ability to expropriate pieces for his own collection from the ERR, and hence the Führermuseum. Competition between the two leaders' staffs of agents also occurred, most notably in Holland and Italy. Hans Posse, for one, was highly conscious of his rivals. He wrote Bormann on 14 October 1940, just prior to a buying trip to Belgium and the Netherlands, "I wish to arrive earlier than certain other people, and catch them napping."[75] As noted in Chapter 5, Posse tried to induce Hitler to issue orders that would legally limit other German buyers, although no such restrictions were ever implemented. Kajetan Mühlmann also reported the dilemma presented by answering to both Hitler and Göring. He noted after the war, "The competition between Hitler and Göring caused a pressure from which one could not escape. . . . I personally was in a very difficult position."[76] When Mühlmann assisted Göring in the trade of a number of modern French paintings for the Kröller-Müller museum's *Venus* by Hans Baldung, Posse became deeply upset.[77] Göring's occasional victories induced him to act the braggart, and he once remarked to Mühlmann, "As collectors, we are, the Führer and I, private persons: first come, first serve."[78] Yet this bluster was confined to his interactions with underlings. In nearly all situations that entailed direct competition with Hitler, Göring acceded to his superior.[79] Göring would on occasion take steps to avoid even the appearance of challenging his Führer. In 1939 he sent a series of telegrams to Bürckel and other leaders denying any intention of acquiring the Czernin Vermeer because of Hitler's interest in the painting.[80] When Hitler commented that Carinhall was too dark, Göring commissioned Speer "to do the whole thing over in the light and bare style favored by the Führer"; after the war he admitted to becoming sick to his stomach whenever he tried to confront Hitler.[81]

The competition for artworks among the subleaders was considerably more unrestrained and open. The Nazi elite were, of course, conscious of hierarchies and spheres of influence. Therefore, few wanted to antagonize Himmler, and most recognized the legitimacy of Goebbels's patronage of contemporary artists. Yet the leaders openly pursued the necessarily limited number of artworks that were to their liking. Auctions occurred where either the leaders or their representatives bid against one another. One illustrative sale took place at Lange's auction house in Berlin in December 1940, when the remainder of the Goudstikker collection (Hitler and Göring having first selected the most precious works) was offered to the public. Albert Speer acquired two Dutch landscapes, and both Goebbels and Ribbentrop evidently sent agents.[82] Even the rush to purchase artworks from the *GDK* constituted a form of open competition. Hitler had the right to select first, but Goebbels, Himmler, and other leaders also bought from these very commercial exhibitions before they were opened to the public.[83]

During the twelve years of the Third Reich a variety of incidents took place that involved leaders' competing for precious objects. Such episodes sowed discord and intensified already existing antagonisms. Hence, for example, Ribbentrop's successful bid to claim Metternich's globe from the

Austrian Foreign Ministry in 1938 upset Göring greatly, as the Reichsmarschall had supposedly been promised the historic piece by Guido Schmidt, the official charged with liquidating this branch of the state bureaucracy.[84] Kajetan Mühlmann told of another incident involving Göring, where the Reichsmarschall and Generalgouverneur Hans Frank vied for da Vinci's *Lady with an Ermine* from the Czartoryski collection in Cracow. Answerable to both leaders, Mühlmann carted the treasure "at least twice" back and forth between Cracow and Berlin (Göring lost this contest as well, as the picture went to Frank and was found at the end of the war in his Bavarian retreat).[85]

Amid this struggle to commandeer artworks, a key principle stands out as the underpinning of many of the leaders' actions: the Nazi chieftains, whether they were Reichsministers, Reichskommissars, or Gauleiters, wanted control of those artworks that they perceived as falling within their bailiwick. The ability to retain treasures reflected their personal power and their mastery of the domain in their charge. This was true especially for the Gauleiters and Reichskommissars, where their territorial jurisdiction was clearly defined and independence of action a key goal.[86] The most clear-cut effort of a local ruler fighting to resist the encroachment of other leaders took place in Vienna directly after the *Anschluß*, as Gauleiter/Reichskommissar Josef Bürckel fought to keep the confiscated Jewish artworks stored in the Hofburg palace (see Chapter 3). He conducted a veritable *Papierkrieg* with the Reich Chancellery over this issue, stymying Hitler's first art agent (Haberstock) but eventually succumbing to the efforts of his successor, Hans Posse, who took the exceptional pieces for the Führermuseum and arranged for the rest to be distributed throughout Austria (though nearly all of the art ended up stored in salt mines and castles and was divided up only on paper). Hans Frank operated according to this same principle in the General Government; hence the reason for his successful retention of the Leonardo, despite Göring's exertions. In certain cases the Gauleiters and Reichskommissars voluntarily directed pieces to Berlin, but these actions served as gestures of tribute and demonstrations of their willingness to administer their territories in the harsh and unsentimental manner ordered by Hitler. Gauleiter August Eigruber's forwarding of the Hohenfurth Altar to the Reich after the dismemberment of Czecho-Slovakia offers an apt example.[87] Still, such gestures did not negate the subleaders' wish to retain control over the bulk of the local treasure.

A subleader who managed to effect the relocation of an important artwork into his territory could score a major symbolic victory—one that did not go unnoticed by his peers. Undoubtedly the most adroit territorial chief in this respect was Wilhelm Liebel, the mayor of Nuremberg. His most noteworthy coups involved moving the Holy Roman treasures from Vienna to Nuremberg and arranging for the Veit Stoß altar to be brought to his city from Cracow. With the latter, Hans Frank opposed him, but as Josef Mühlmann (Kajetan's half-brother, who was also a plunderer) noted, "Liebel had too influential friends" [*sic*].[88] Liebel personally traveled to Cracow for the altarpiece. With a *Führerauftrag* (Führer commission) in hand, he confronted Frank but was still thwarted in his initial efforts. Only an appeal to Bormann, who communicated to Frank that Hitler was "enraged" by his uncooperative behavior, induced Frank to relinquish the piece.[89] Liebel could justify his demands on the grounds that Nuremberg was the site of the Germanisches Nationalmuseum (that is, the national museum deserved such national treasures) and that a curator there was the preeminent expert on Veit Stoß.[90] Previously he had argued for transferring the imperial treasures for historic reasons, claiming that they had been removed from his city to Vienna in the 1790s due to the threat of a French invasion.[91] The clever and well-connected Liebel held his post as Oberbürgermeister until the capitulation in 1945.[92]

THE EXHIBITION VALUE OF ART

The collecting of art offered the Nazi leaders the means to demonstrate both their political puissance and their private prosperity—the two concepts of course often being interlinked. Göring again provides the most extreme example of using art collecting and wealth to communicate power. Speer noted, "Göring loved to revel in his illicit riches and it was a ritual with him to show his guests through his cellars, where some of the world's most priceless art treasures were stored."[93] The Reichsmarschall's attempt to realize the communicative potential of artworks included placing glass vitrines in Carinhall that displayed some of the gifts he had received from other political figures. The sheer scope of his collections was enough to intimidate (and in certain cases repulse) visitors.[94] Yet as the German market experienced a steady and marked inflation during the war, the artworks became more potent symbols of power. Because the domestic art market gradually became exhausted, the possession of prized works soon came to denote power that extended to foreign lands, the regions that emerged as the best sources of art.

Because the stringent currency controls imposed by the government made purchases abroad quite difficult, only the best-connected leaders and dealers were able to procure the needed *Devisen*. The availability of foreign currency gradually dwindled, such that by 1944 only Hitler and Göring—the

latter possessing tremendous clout in the economic realm due to his Four-Year Plan Office–could buy abroad on a regular basis.[95] Prior to this point a broader range of top officials could procure *Devisen.* Yet even during the early years of the war, considerable influence was still needed in order to arrange purchases abroad. Goebbels, for example, experienced difficulties when his star was low prior to 1942.[96] The records of approval and rejection that exist in the Reich Economics Ministry and in the clearing offices–such as the Reich Office (Reichsstelle) for Wood and Paper–reveal the competitive nature associated with foreign purchases.[97] Gauleiters frequently failed to get the needed approval. The rejected application of the Party chief of Salzburg, Gustav Scheel, in his attempt to buy art, rugs, and furniture in France in June 1942 is but one example.[98] The hierarchical Nazi elite had numerous ways of expressing the omnipresent distinctions. Access to foreign currency was another symbol of power and status in the Third Reich.

The Nazi elite, while surely a competitive, back-stabbing group, nonetheless shared a common semiotic vocabulary–or a way of interpreting signs, symbols, and behavior. Artistic treasures offered them a particularly expressive means of communication: as tribute to the dictator, as ritualized gift-giving to help convey the appearance of group solidarity, or as representations of rank. The import of these symbolic expressions was that Hitler was dominant and virtually incontestable, while Göring was successful, but often by means of his bluster and amoral guile. The remainder of the Nazi elite occupied various positions within the hierarchy. Their ability to elicit gifts and their proficiency in collecting art roughly corresponded to their rank. Artworks, which emerged as a lingua franca for the Nazi elite, therefore served as evocative symbols. These symbols were manipulated or used instrumentally by the Nazi elite. While some communication was unconscious, much involved careful consideration and planning. Walter Benjamin's concept of the aestheticization of politics found expression here in a way perhaps unintended by the author as the NS leaders worked creatively to exploit the expressive power of this medium.[99]

10 ART COLLECTING, LUXURY, AND THE NATIONAL SOCIALIST ELITE'S CONCEPTION OF STATUS

This study examines a group of Nazi leaders who constituted a distinct and self-conscious elite within the Third Reich. The concluding chapter focuses on the social position of the NS elite and, more specifically, the leaders' evolving views toward the aristocracy–the traditional elite. While the Nazi leaders' opinions regarding the historic nobility varied greatly during the years prior to the seizure of power, and while no complete agreement on this issue was ever reached, a trend in their thinking can be discerned from the pre-1933 period to the years of total war. The Nazis began with highly ambivalent views about the nobility, in which socialistic and populist sentiments conflicted with ultranationalist and even monarchical impulses. There then followed a period of greater respect for the traditional aristocracy. The Nazis moderated their views in an attempt to coopt them as wealthy backers and parlay their support into greater legitimacy. The seizure of power marked the start of the Nazi leaders' serious efforts at emulation and assimilation; in promulgating a new, more meritocratic basis for elite status, they hoped for a merging of the old and new

[320a, b]

[a] *19. 12. 1939 FS Reichskommissar GL Bürckel (Wien) an Lammers*

mir ist heute abschrift eines an sie gerichteten berichtes des hiesigen ministeriums fuer innere und kulturelle angelegenheiten vom 13. ds.mts. ueber den verkauf des bildes »das atelier« von vermeer van delft aus dem besitz des grafen jaromir czernin an herrn philipp reemtsma, hamburg, vorgelegt worden. in dem schreiben werden sie gebeten, die angelegenheit dem fuehrer vorzutragen. ich hatte von dem inhalt des schreibens und der absicht, ein solches an sie zu richten, keine kenntnis. ich bitte, den bericht als nicht erstattet zu betrachten, da ich unter keinen umstaenden eine derartige gegenvorstellung gegen eine vom generalfeldmarschall getroffene massnahme durch eine mir nachgeordnete dienststelle zulassen kann[1].

[b] *30. 12. 1939 FS Antwort Lammers'*

es trifft trotz zustimmenden telegramms des ministerialdirektors gritzbach[2] nicht zu, dasz generalfeldmarschall goering seine genehmigung zum verkauf des in der graf czernin-'schen gemaeldegalerie in wien befindlichen gemaeldes »das atelier« von vermeer van delft erteilt hat. der fuehrer wuenscht, dass das bild in der galerie verbleibt und ohne seine persoenliche genehmigung ueber das bild nicht verfuegt wird.

Hitlers belegt, wonach weder seine englischen Themen noch dann später das englische Theater des großen Dramatikers wert gewesen seien.

320 [1] Göring hatte die Genehmigung erteilt, das – von der Regierung Schuschnigg unter dem Druck der Öffentlichkeit amerikanischen Interessenten verweigerte, 1938 mit der ganzen Sammlung unter Denkmalschutz gestellte – Bild dem mit ihm befreundeten Zigarettenfabrikanten für 1,8 Millionen Mark zu verkaufen. Gegen die »Abwanderung dieser Wiener Hauptsehenswürdigkeit, noch dazu kurz nach der Rückwanderung der Reichsinsignien nach Nürnberg«, hatte das Wiener Ministerium, ziemlich mutig, Hitlers Entscheidung angerufen.

[2] Erich G., Chef von Görings Stabsamt, der das Telegramm »irrtümlich abgeschickt« haben sollte, ohne daß G. es gesehen hätte! Der große Göring windet sich hier wie heutzutage ein ertappter Minister der Demokratie.

[321] *1. 2. 1940 Bormann an Lamm[illegible], mit Anlage (Oberpräsident der Rheinprovinz Terboven an Bormann vom 25. 1.)*

Dem Führer war mitgeteilt worden, dass Frau von Eltz die Annahme des Mutterehrenkreuzes abgelehnt habe; bei dieser Gelegenheit war auch die den Nationalsozialismus und seine Regierung scharf ablehnende Einstellung des ehemaligen Reichsministers Eltz betont worden. Der Führer beauftragte mich daraufhin, einwandfreie Feststellungen zu treffen; die Feststellungen sollten nicht durch politische Leiter, sondern durch geeignete Beamte des Oberpräsidenten Terboven getroffen werden.

Von dem Inhalt der Feststellungen habe ich den Führer gestern unterrichtet. Der Führer hat daraufhin angeordnet, dass dem früheren Reichsverkehrsminister Freiherrn von Eltz Rübenach die Pension als Reichsminister und die Freifahrkarte der deutschen Reichsbahn entzogen werden soll [...]

[Anlage]

Dem Auftrag vom 12. ds. Mts. entsprechend habe ich zwei geeignete und besonders gewandte Beamte zu dem ehemaligen Verkehrsminister von Eltz Rübenach geschickt. [...]

Nach Erledigung der üblichen Formalitäten erklärte mein Beamter dem Freiherrn von Eltz Rübenach, dass nach gewissen Verlautbarungen seine Ehefrau einer Beauftragten der örtlichen Frauenschaft gegenüber Bedenken gegen die Entgegennahme des Mütterehrenkreuzes geltend gemacht habe. Von Eltz bejahte das und erklärte nach den Gründen befragt: Wie bekannt habe er seinerzeit dem Kabinett von Papen und Hitler angehört. Er habe sich anlässlich der Verleihung des Ehrenzeichens der Partei von »Hitler« getrennt, als ihm zur Gewissheit geworden sei, dass der Nationalsozialismus Anspruch darauf erhebe, als Religion gewertet zu werden. Aus dieser Einstellung heraus habe sich auch seine Frau zur Annahme des Mütterehrenkreuzes nicht entschliessen können, zumal gerade die Form des Christenkreuzes gewählt worden sei. [...]

So unerfreulich die ganze Haltung dieses klerikalen und antinationalsozialistischen Burschen ist, so bietet sie an sich nicht ohne weiteres eine Handhabe für mich, polizeilich gegen ihn vorzugehen. Ich wäre Ihnen deshalb für eine Mit-