

Einsatzstab Rosenberg

(Operational Staff Rosenberg), organization established by Alfred Rosenberg for the systematic plunder of the art and cultural objects belonging to Jews in Europe.

Right after the Nazis occupied France in June 1940, Hitler announced his wish to pillage the artistic treasures belonging to France's Jews. The first repossessions were carried out in France by the Special Operational Staff for the Arts (*Sonderstab Bildende Kunst*), created by Hitler on September 17, 1940. The French Police, German Security Police, and the German Embassy in Paris all assisted in the operation (Rosenberg nonetheless complained that the French authorities involved kept works of art for themselves). Unit members raked through the collections of the Rothschild family and others, and looked for hidden art storehouses. They also searched through the shipments of overseas removal companies, claiming that they wanted to ensure that no art treasures would be smuggled out of France.

From 1940--1944 almost 22,000 items, including pieces of art, furniture, paintings, and antiques, were transferred to Germany in 29 shipments. The objects stolen—relocated by 137 freight cars holding 4,174 crates—represented all kinds of art from world over, from different periods. Besides those items, many distinctive pieces were taken to decorate the homes of Hitler, Hermann Goering, and other Nazi leaders.

At the same time the Jewish art of France was being plundered, Operational Staff Rosenberg administered the seizure of furniture (*Mobel Aktion*) in the Netherlands and Belgium, similar to the appropriation done previously in Germany. Tens of thousands of Jewish homes were stripped of their furniture; the homeowners had either left the country or had been deported to Eastern Europe. The possessions were relocated to Germany in 735 freight trains. Some of the Dutch property, which included linens and clothing, was transported down the Rhine River on rafts. On October 3, 1942 Rosenberg reported to Hitler that 40,000 tons of furniture had been confiscated and brought to Germany.

The pillage in Eastern Europe was less methodical; however, many ritual objects and artworks were stolen. Jewish libraries all over Europe were also looted.