

German Documents in the United States

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AT the end of World War II, vast quantities of German documents had fallen into the hands of the Allies either during hostilities or in the immediately following weeks. Something will be said near the end of this report about the archives captured or seized by the Soviet Union; the emphasis here will be on those that came into the possession of the Western Allies. The United States and Great Britain made agreements for joint control and exploitation, of which the most important was the Bissell-Sinclair agreement named for the intelligence chiefs who signed it. The German naval, foreign office, and chancellery archives were to be physically located in England, while the military, Nazi Party, and related files were to come to the United States. Each of the two countries was to be represented at the site of the other's holdings, have access to the files, and play a role in decisions about their fate. The bulk of those German records that came to the United States were deposited in a section of a World War I torpedo factory in Alexandria, Virginia, which had been made into the temporary holding center for the World War II records of the American army and American theater commands. In accordance with the admonition to turn swords into plowshares, the building is now an artists' boutique.

The records in Alexandria were originally all under security classification and thus not open to private scholars. In 1951, the Human Resources Research Institute (HRRI) of the U.S. Air Force, headquartered at Maxwell Air Force Base in Montgomery, Alabama, contracted with Columbia University's Bureau of Applied Social Research for the establishment of the War Documentation Project (The WDP). Dr. Fritz T. Epstein was appointed its first director, and in the summer of 1951 began to recruit scholars to work on the WDP. At the time I was finishing my Ph.D. at the University of Chicago. In a seminar paper on the May 1938 crisis in German-Czechoslovak relations, I had included in the footnotes criticisms of what I considered errors in the editorial work of the joint British-American team at Whaddon Hall that had just published in English the relevant volume of the *Documents on German Foreign Policy 1918–1945*. Professor Hans Rothfels, under whose direction I was working, suggested that I pull together all my criticisms of the editing and submit the result to the *Journal of Modern History*. The resulting critical note appeared in the March 1951 issue of that journal. Dr. Epstein called me up that spring and, on the

basis of the piece, asked me to meet him at Midway airport between planes while he was recruiting for the WDP. It was literally my only interview. I was offered and accepted a position to begin that fall, assuming that I could obtain the necessary security clearance. The details settled, I began work in Alexandria in September and only discovered much later that Epstein had been one of the editors whom I had criticized. My first assignment after preliminary orientation turned out to be outside rather than inside the torpedo factory.

While the bulk of the German records that had come to the United States were, as mentioned, located in Alexandria and subject to security classification, substantial bits and pieces had ended up by various routes in all sorts of other places and were not classified. It fell to me to prepare and coordinate a systematic set of inventories of whatever there was in such disparate places as the Library of Congress and the Hoover Institution. The resulting *Guide to Captured German Documents* was published by HRRI in 1952, was widely distributed free by the Air Force, and remains a mine of information about accessible German documents that scholars have yet to exhaust.¹

Most of the staff of the WDP devoted most of their time to a series of detailed studies of the Soviet partisan movement during World War II. The resulting works were published in classified form by HRRI but later declassified. In addition to studies that were thematic or geographical in focus, there was also a collection of Soviet documents of or about partisans that the Germans had captured and which I edited. A collection of captured partisan diaries unfortunately never made it into print. A substantial abridgement of the whole "Project Alexander" as it was called was edited and published later by a member of the WDP staff, John Armstrong, after he had gone on to a distinguished career at the University of Wisconsin.²

WDP staff members also prepared a number of other studies related to the war on the Eastern Front and based, such as those on partisan warfare, to a large extent on the captured records. There were specialized reports on the area occupied by Romania, on the collaborator military formation called the Kaminsky Brigade, on local police forces organized by the Germans and called "*Ordnungsdienst*," and bibliographic aids. These were all in mimeographed or similar form and are probably the most difficult to locate today.

It was largely as a result of having worked for three years on the WDP that I became involved in the project for microfilming the German documents before their return to the Federal Republic of [West] Germany. In 1955 it became known to scholars that the United States government, with British agreement, was beginning to return documents from Alexandria to the

¹In 1959 the National Archives published a "Supplement to the Guide to Captured German Documents" that I had prepared for the Committee for the Study of War Documents of the AHA.

²John A. Armstrong, ed., *Soviet Partisans in World War II* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1964).

Federal Republic. Once declassified by intelligence, the files would be sent back. Although there was a 1956 agreement for access after return, there could be no assurance that this would actually be allowed. In practice it turned out that the German Federal Archive in Koblenz and its Military Archive in Freiburg did allow access. On the other hand, for more than thirty years the German Foreign Ministry denied access to important portions of the materials returned to it—files on Bismarck's diplomats, for example—a policy facilitated by the microfilming procedure followed at Whaddon Hall that will be described subsequently. In any case, the news of the intended phased return of the records alarmed enough scholars in this country to lead to the creation of the American Committee for the Study of War Documents in 1955 using funds donated privately at first and by foundations from then until 1961.³

A conference was held in October 1955 in the office of Verner Clapp, the Assistant Librarian of Congress, to establish a microfilming program with the idea that all microfilms produced would go to a public institution in this country and be accessible for use or the purchase of copies by anyone in any country, especially including Germany. The Historical Office of the Department of State, which was represented at the meeting by its then-deputy chief, Dr. William Franklin, agreed to the concept. The U.S. Army, which held the documents under its Adjutant General's Office (AGO), gave its tentative approval. I had been asked to attend this meeting from my temporary position at the University of Kentucky and was subsequently appointed to establish and direct the project. The foundation funds would be administered by the American Historical Association and would pay for my salary and that of a professional assistant I was to hire, as well as a clerical person and a microphotographer.

Work in Alexandria started in July 1956 after a major session in the AGO conference room in the Pentagon and after I recruited staff. At the AGO session, the conditions for the project were laid out. By this time, the American Committee had become a committee of the AHA and was chaired by Dean Reginald Phelps of Harvard University. The subcommittee on microfilming was chaired by Professor E. Malcolm Carroll of Duke University. One of the important points made to us at the AGO meeting was that the records that had been declassified were, as technically U.S. records (a subject to which I will return), subject to the privacy protection rules governing American records generally. That, we were told, meant that records pertaining to juveniles, third parties, and other personal

³The details about the history and fate of the archives are covered best by the collected papers in Robert Wolfe, ed., *Captured German and Related Records: A National Archives Conference* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1974). See also Astrid M. Eckert, *Kampf um die Akten. Die Westalliierten und die Rückgabe von deutschem Archivgut nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg* (Stuttgart: Steiner, 2004); an English language edition is forthcoming from Cambridge University Press. Major files of the Committee for the Study of War Documents are in the Oron J. Hale Papers at the Alderman Library of the University of Virginia.

matters could be filmed but the access to such films would be subject to restrictions. When as a novice to this aspect of things I looked somewhat puzzled, the key figure in the AGO when it came to the problems of German records, Seymour J. Pomrenze, said with quiet emphasis, "There are records there on two illegitimate children of Heinrich Himmler. The U.S. Army will not take the responsibility for ruining their lives—and you won't, either." A slow learner like most academics, I got his point.

In the practice of filming, this privacy restriction meant that certain rolls of microfilm were marked "R" before the number, would not be sold, and could be used by scholars only under the condition of anonymizing the material. To the best of my knowledge, there have been no problems in this regard over the following decades; during the life of the project an argument arose only in two cases. When I wanted to take over the microfilms that the Army had already made of the Kaltenbrunner reports on the investigation into the July 20, 1944, attempt on Hitler's life, I was informed that these would have to be "R" rolls because they contained copies of the last letters of those executed to members of their families. At a meeting with Sherrod East, the head of the Departmental Records Branch (DRB), I asked him to reconsider this ruling. He was aghast at what he called the sale of copies of the last letter of a man to his wife. I suggested that he examine the matter again; that there was nothing in any way disreputable in the letters; and that it seemed to me that the extraordinary Germans who had risked their lives to topple the tyrant should have the last word, not the Gestapo. Some time subsequently Mr. East informed me that he had decided to lift the "R."

The other case arose after I had returned to teaching at Kentucky. The assistant whom I had hired and who had succeeded me, Dr. Dagmar Perman, about whom I will write more later, wrote to ask my views about a folder in the Himmler files dealing with SS *Obergruppenführer* Karl Wolff's efforts to obtain a divorce. The papers mentioned various women and illegitimate children and thus clearly fell into the category that we were to label "R" but dealt, naturally, with one of the most prominent SS leaders. I had seen the file and wrote that I was certain it fell into the "R" category. Since by that time Dr. Epstein had succeeded Professor Carroll as chair of the microfilm subcommittee, was living in Alexandria, and worked at the Library of Congress, I suggested that she ask him to stop by and look at the file. If he agreed with us, as I was confident he would—and as he did when she asked him—we would just have to take the heat if and when anyone objected. A couple of years later, after the listing that included this roll appeared, Professor Walter Dorn of Columbia University, who had been an important figure in the occupation of Germany, blew up during a meeting of the Committee for the Study of War Documents held during the AHA annual meeting. By this time Professor Oron J. ("Pat") Hale of the University of Virginia had succeeded Lynn Case of the University of

Pennsylvania, the second chair of the committee. Neither Epstein nor Perman was present, so defense of the “R” in this case fell to me. Since Dr. Epstein had been kicked out of his job in Germany and Dr. Perman had been pressed into slave labor by the SS, none of us was interested in protecting the reputation of a high SS general. We were, however, very much interested in protecting the reputation of the AHA which was committed to the policy involved. Nothing further was said, and after the meeting Professor Dorn very kindly said to me that in this case there was probably no choice. I replied that I was confident that if he took a look at the file, he would come to the same conclusion that the three of us had reached.

It should be noted at this point that about 1995, fifty years after the end of World War II, the National Archives lifted all restrictions on the Alexandria microfilm. It was and remains my opinion that this blanket lifting was a mistake since a few of the rolls should still remain under privacy restrictions. Fortunately in the more than ten years since the Archives acted, there has been no misuse that I am aware of.

The other prerequisite for beginning to film was the selection of the needed personnel. Of the candidates for my professional assistant the obvious choice was Dr. Dagmar Horna Perman, then working in New York City but eager to move to Washington where her husband lived and worked. After fleeing Czechoslovakia on the day of the Communist coup, she had studied at the University of Kansas and then taken a Ph.D. under Raymond Sontag in California. She did an outstanding job and hence was my candidate to take over the project when I returned to teaching. This proved to be extremely difficult since the white-haired, white gentlemen then in charge of the AHA could not visualize a beautiful, young, blonde woman representing the AHA to the Army, the State Department, and the National Archives. Eventually they reluctantly agreed and fortunately held this difficult transition against me and not her. The National Archives recommended Ms. Dora Howard for the technical work of operating the camera. She turned out to surpass any and all recommendations. She could make legible microfilm images out of the least promising originals—and do so at the phenomenal rate of about five thousand a day. Another lady was hired for secretarial work, and at times there was a second microphotographer.

Several major policy issues had to be resolved in the early stages of filming. The first and perhaps most important was where to deposit the master negative film that the project produced. The committee leadership was very definitely of the opinion that they should be deposited in the Library of Congress, where the project had been initiated. That was also where the microfilms that had been made of seized Japanese files before their return to Japan had been placed and where in those and prior years most American scholars were accustomed to working on their research. I argued for depositing the film in the National Archives, where the State Department was already in the process of depositing

its films of German records held in England. (I did not know then that the U.S. Navy would later do the same thing with its films of German naval documents). The Library of Congress required scholars to pay for positive copies of its master negative film for any rolls that had not been previously paid for by another scholar, while the National Archives promised to make copies of all films we deposited for use by its customers (and faithfully did so). I asked committee members to imagine graduate students being asked to pay for the making of literally dozens of rolls of film so that they could put them on a microfilm reader. The Library of Congress had not published any finding aid for the Japanese films deposited there—and has not done so in the fifty years since. The National Archives promised to issue and distribute free guides to the microfilm to libraries and did so in a format that the project developed to keep the costs to a minimum. While the Library of Congress facility for reading microfilm was closed in the evening and on weekends, at the National Archives—as I knew from personal experience—one could read microfilm evenings and on weekends. This differentiation—which has only been ended in the presidency of George W. Bush—seemed to me critical both for those employed in Washington who could look at microfilm only when the Library of Congress film was closed and for scholars from out of town who needed to make the most of their time in Washington. These arguments eventually persuaded the AHA leadership. The microfilm would go to the Archives; copies for use there were quickly made available; guides to them were published and could be used from anywhere on earth to order film; and the Alexandria film would be located at the same place as all the film from Whaddon Hall, the German navy film, the Berlin Document Center film, and the American government's records for the same years.

The decision to locate the film in the National Archives also had an important impact on another aspect of the project. The individual at the Archives with whom I had to work was the then Chief of Exhibits and Publications, Albert H. Leisinger, Jr. An extraordinarily well-informed and helpful archivist, he helped enormously in all dealings with the Archives and any problems that came up. It was also he who indoctrinated me on the problems of chemically deteriorating paper that made microfilming a key means of preserving records quite aside from its importance for research. Both explicitly and implicitly, this argued for filming whole files rather than selecting individual documents for filming. I fell in with this approach readily in part because by that time I had had experience with the Whaddon Hall microfilm deposited in the National Archives. Two things were obvious about this film that I was determined to avoid. In the first place, they did almost all the filming selectively with three, in my opinion bad, effects for future scholarship. First, it meant that vast amounts of expensive professional time was devoted to choosing individual documents to film so that the overwhelming majority of the records in England would and did end up being returned to Germany unfilmed.

Second, it meant that individual documents from the same file would later turn out to be important enough to film so that the documents from the same file might be scattered over anywhere from two to six rolls of film that a scholar or library would have to purchase to get a sense of the whole file. And then the scholar would have to go to Germany to look at whatever documents in the file had not been filmed at all in case they were important for his/her topic. In the third place, this procedure omitted all newspaper clippings and any publications included in a file. The tacit assumption that such material would be available for scholars in their library was, to put it politely, absurd. Furthermore, while those working in Whaddon Hall could and did often go back to files from which they had filmed some documents earlier, in Alexandria there was the clear understanding that the declassified records would be shipped to Germany quite promptly. In other words, if anyone subsequently decided that a file might contain additional documents that ought to be filmed, the file might well already have been sent to the Federal Republic. This, of course, would be the second great problem with the Whaddon Hall film: when the time eventually came to film whatever still needed to be filmed, the records had been returned to Germany—and the money for filming had run out.

Encouraged in this direction by both Leisinger and the army authorities of the Departmental Records Branch (DRB) who held the records, we would film whole files, omitting only stacks of duplicates. This process would involve filming newspaper clippings and included publications, especially if they had a German security classification and hence were unlikely to be in even the largest research library. The long-term result of applying this policy would be that while the overwhelming majority of the records at Whaddon Hall went back unfilmed, more than ninety percent of the Alexandria records were filmed.⁴

The decision to film whole files in almost all cases contributed to a third decision made after a few weeks into the project. All microfilm needs frame numbers for reference purposes.⁵ At Whaddon Hall this was done by hand stamping numbers onto the originals before filming. At the beginning of operations in Alexandria, we had permission to do this and had it done by the secretarial assistant. We knew that the army not only allowed us to use their cameras

⁴The records of the German Foreign Ministry held in England with an indication of which portions were filmed and by whom are covered for the years 1867 to 1920 by *A Catalogue of Files and Microfilms of the German Foreign Ministry Archives 1867–1920* prepared under the direction of Howard M. Ehrmann and published by the Committee for the Study of War Documents of the AHA in 1959. The years 1920–1945 are covered by a four-volume set, George O. Kent, ed., *A Catalogue of Files and Microfilms of the German Foreign Ministry Archives 1920–1945*, published by the Hoover Institution in 1962–72. The records of the *Reichskanzlei* that were also in England were returned unfilmed, but substantial portions have been filmed by the *Bundesarchiv*.

⁵The only exception to this in the Alexandria film is a small group of rolls taken over from the army in which numbered flashes had been inserted for help in locating items rather than frame numbers. It did not seem worth refilming the same documents with frame numbers when that risked not having funds to film other files that might then have to be omitted by the project.

but also was willing for us to use their automatic counters. Plugged into the camera, these provided a frame number as each document was filmed with the steadily changing automatic counter included in the image. I figured out that it was costing us an average of three cents to put one negative frame into the Archives. Hand stamping cost us one-quarter of a cent. In other words, for every twelve documents we did not stamp, we could stretch our funds for an additional document. Since this meant that we could film literally thousands of additional documents per year, I persuaded the committee leadership to let us use the army's automatic counters. In Whaddon Hall, stamping was necessary so that one could tell from looking for a frame number on an original document that it had (or had not) been filmed. In Alexandria, on the other hand, we were filming whole files so that the number on the automatic counter would do for reference purposes and the scholar could be assured that every page in the file was on film. I am prepared to concede that the procedure we followed meant that many documents of no likely use to anyone were filmed, but there were and still are two answers to this. In the first place, it is practically impossible to determine what will never be of interest to anyone: one person's junk is another scholar's treasure. Secondly, by placing the documents vertically to the film, we could get 1,100 to 1,200 frames on a 100-foot roll of film. The Whaddon Hall film with the same one to twelve reduction ratio only got about 800 frames onto a roll that cost the same amount when purchased from the Archives because they were placing the original parallel to the film. So I would comfort any who complained that they were getting what they considered junk included in their order, that they were getting it for free.

There was one further issue that arose early, but the Adjutant General had to make the final decision in person. How was the directive that German, and only German, records were to be returned to Germany to be interpreted in practice? Obviously if some Allied intelligence summary or other such document had been attached to a captured German file, that material would be detached and kept. But what if a German file contained one or more documents captured during the war by the Germans? This question was certain to arise especially frequently when the *Anlagenbänder* of the *Kriegstagebücher* of the Ic (G-2, Intelligence) sections of German army units at the division and corps level came into view. In innumerable cases, as I knew from my own earlier work in Alexandria, there were documents captured by the Germans during the war or taken from dead soldiers in such volumes; and these were frequently not just German translations but the original British, French, Soviet, U.S., or other Allied papers. Under a literal reading of the directive, it could be and was argued by some that such items should be removed from the file and transmitted to the country from whose people the papers had been taken. I argued as strongly as I could that this would be a terrible mistake. The file should be kept intact and filmed intact because it made little sense to send large numbers of such individual items

around the globe for almost certain disappearance in archives that would be in no position to accession them properly, while simultaneously making references to the documents within the German files incomprehensible in many cases. As might be expected, many of the items in the German files were from low levels of the Allied military hierarchies. These might be papers from the company, battalion, or regimental level. Most archives had a policy of not maintaining the files from these levels permanently. Could we seriously expect them to keep this or that fragment from a military unit whose records had long since been pulped because those pages had been in German hands for a few years? There was also the other side of this issue: did we really want to go through American army units' G-2 records and cull out for shipment to Germany any German items that had been acquired during hostilities and incorporated into the files of American units? To my great relief and his even greater credit, the Adjutant General decided that German files would not be dismantled to remove individual documents of Allied origin.

It was in the context of these decisions by the committee, the Adjutant General, and me that we started filming in the summer of 1956. We worked by Record Group as defined by the DRB though we always reserved and at times used the freedom to ascribe documents in our descriptions to provenances other than those to which the DRB staff had assigned them. Descriptions of each folder filmed would be prepared and signed by the member of the professional staff working on the records. The file was then prepared for filming, which meant removing staples and paperclips. The microfilming followed. Each roll of film would have at the beginning a "T" number provided by the National Archives for each Record Group, followed by its roll number in that sequence. The data sheets with the descriptions would also be filmed. Thereafter the data sheets with roll and frame numbers were typed on stencils that went to the National Archives where mimeographed copies of the "Guides to German Records Microfilmed at Alexandria, VA" were then issued and distributed. In the meantime, the negative films were transferred to the Archives which had purchased the raw film for us with AHA funds. In those few instances where the army had already made a microfilm, these were simply included in the process. To put this in statistical perspective, for a number of years the project annually turned foundation funds in the \$35,000 range into about one million negative frames of film and one or two dozen guides.

Both in my year of directing the project and under my successors, the DRB authorities were as helpful as they could possibly and legally be. When additional records were declassified, the project moved to film them. As this process moved toward what was called the "Field Commands Collection," that is, the records of German army groups, armies, corps, and divisions, a new arrangement was worked out by mutual agreement. It made sense for the army and the AHA project to cooperate and arrange a mutually advantageous division of work.

The army had funds to contract the technical side of filming, including the cost of raw film, but lacked personnel to prepare descriptions. The AHA project always needed funds to stretch over the largest possible number of documents. Since both the AHA and the army agreed that all of the Field Command's records deserved filming, it made sense to join in this vast portion of the Alexandria operation.

In practice this meant that the project professional staff prepared the descriptions, frequently using earlier descriptions that had been made in prior years at the DRB, and the folders then went to the contract personnel for microfilming. With their four cameras running full blast and the project's own operator also still filming, that meant that microfilm images were being produced at a rate of 20,000 to 25,000 per day. The negatives then went to the National Archives, and guides followed in a manner that kept the whole procedure uniform for all the material. Three aspects of this portion of the committee's project need brief comment. First, there were some on the committee who were dubious about the research value, and hence the need for microfilming, of all the Field Command's records including those of the *Waffen SS* units. I believed then and remain convinced that there was no realistic alternative. There was far too much of not only military but also of political, economic, and social interest in these records to allow selectivity. Furthermore, although this was a huge collection, there were large gaps at different levels of the military hierarchy that would need to be covered by the records of higher or subordinate units for the period of such gaps. The committee members reluctantly agreed, and research and publications in the years since have corroborated the wisdom of the decision for mass filming. And this, of course does not take into account the preservation issue that always needed to be considered when dealing with wartime paper of physically wretched quality.

The second aspect is that there continued to be other record groups declassified that the army representatives declared to be not of further interest to the government but that our project believed of importance for scholarly research. In such records, the project simply continued to follow the same procedure used earlier. These files were processed by the project and filmed by Dora Howard using negative film that the project, not the army, had paid for. In the latter years of the project, therefore, the two procedures—joint with the army and operating separately—went forward simultaneously without difficulty.

The third problem arose as the army ran out of money for contracts. It was decided that the way to cope with this was to restrict filming in the higher numbered corps and divisions to the Ia and Ic—Operations and Intelligence—records. The idea was that this way the most important records of all units whose records had been deposited in Alexandria would be included in the total procedure. I recommended that an exception to this approach be made for any security, air force field, special employment (z.b.V.), and field training

(*Feldausbildungs*) divisions; and this recommendation that those be filmed whole was largely followed.⁶

The committee was responsible for microfilming German records in addition to the work in Alexandria. Some microfilming was done under its auspices at Whaddon Hall and in the German naval records held separately in England. There was a microfilm operation on those records held at the Berlin Documents Center of a non-biographic character. This, of course, antedated the big government-sponsored filming of the biographic records in the 1990s before the center was turned over to the German government. In addition, some microfilming was done in the records of the German embassy in Washington. All the master negatives were deposited in the National Archives and are now in Archives II in College Park, Maryland. The last chair of the committee, the late Professor Hale, used to comment to me in the 1960s and 1970s how much it gratified him to see footnotes in books and articles that were then steadily appearing that referred to the microfilm. And as one distinguished German scholar once said to me when I commented that the originals of the records that were represented on his shelves by the familiar boxes from the National Archives had long since been returned, it was so much easier to order and use the film.

If one asks, what did all this activity mean for scholarship in the United States and Germany, I would be inclined to answer that it made a substantial difference. It meant that scholars from graduate students working on theses and dissertations to the most senior professors in any country could have ready access in Washington (or now College Park) or at their university library or home to an enormous range of German records of the recent past. And these records could be selected for examination on the basis of guides widely available—guides that had been prepared by academically trained professionals. Furthermore, individuals who read books or articles based on these records in whole or in part would be in a position to follow up on the footnote references to see for themselves whether the interpretations offered by others were reasonable. Instead of depending on an endless stream of frequently mendacious memoirs, the reader of microfilm might complain of eyestrain but had an early and important advantage—he or she could check the contemporary record against whatever had been written by others. There was and remains a major obstacle to tendentious editing or closing of originals when the films are accessible to all. Finally, given the rapid physical deterioration of the poor wartime paper, the existence of microfilm assures preservation of the record for decades to come.

⁶My own connection with the project ended when I objected to the filming without date sheets or other finding aids of records of private firms included in the Nuremberg Industrialists (NI) series of documents held at the National Archives for return to the firms in Germany.

Two aspects of the project did leave me dissatisfied, however. We knew at the time that vast quantities of German records had been taken by the Soviets. After they returned what we now know was actually a small portion of their captured German records to the East German state, the latter in 1957 published a survey of the holdings in the main archive in Potsdam.⁷ Informal talks were undertaken for an exchange of microfilms between the National Archives in Washington and the archive of the German Democratic Republic (GDR). The National Archives was willing to exchange a roll of Alexandria film for a roll of Potsdam film. The State Department agreed. Czechoslovakia, which had diplomatic relations with Washington and East Berlin, was willing to have the physical exchange of rolls take place at their embassy in Washington. The American Council of Learned Societies agreed to provide the AHA with funds for me to travel to Berlin between semesters in January 1961 to organize the project. The day before I was to leave Ann Arbor for Berlin, a telegram arrived informing us that the GDR government had decided against the project and that I would not be admitted.

As a practical matter, this decision of the GDR meant that for another thirty years scholars would be restricted in their research. Western scholars would continue to be dependent on the good—or bad—graces of the East Berlin authorities in regard to archives access. Scholars in East Germany theoretically could access microfilms at the National Archives, but in practice this meant little. The need for hard currency to purchase film through third parties proved an essentially insuperable obstacle. The National Archives sold vast numbers of rolls to libraries and individuals, but the East German government was not likely to allocate the scarce hard currency acquired by such means as the sale of people out of its jails to West Germany for the purchase of microfilm by East German university libraries or scholars.

The other regret of mine is of a different sort. It relates to a key development in the return of the records to Germany. There was originally the great puzzle: how can a U.S. government archive turn over to another government record holdings whose legal status is in doubt? This question was answered in a manner no work of fiction could have offered. When the Austrian State Treaty was signed in 1955, American troops evacuated the American zone of occupation in Austria. When they were about to leave an old building used as housing, it turned out that there was a batch of records in the attic. On examination, they turned out to be records of the local *Pferdeeeinziehungskommission*, the local horse draft board, operating in the Linz area under *Wehrkreis XVII*.

⁷ Helmut Lötze and Hans-Stephan Brather, *Übersicht über die Bestände des Deutschen Zentralarchivs Potsdam* (Berlin-East: Rütten & Loening, 1957). There is a helpful discussion of the situation before the vast holdings of the Moscow Special Archive became known in Friedrich P. Kahlenberg, *Deutsche Archive in Ost und West. Zur Entwicklung des staatlichen Archivwesens seit 1945* (Düsseldorf: Droste, 1972).

On the basis that the office had been in what had been and was now again Austria, and the horses were Austrian, the Austrian authorities argued that these records should go to the *Kriegsarchiv* in Vienna where they would be accessible to any German scholar who wanted to use them. The German authorities argued that since the records had been created by a German agency—and the horses were long since dead—the papers belonged under the principle of provenance in the *Militärarchiv* then being developed in Freiburg, and that any Austrian scholar wishing to use them would have access there. Such legal issues are by the practice of the U.S. Army referred to the Judge Advocate General's Office in the Pentagon. The lawyers there ruled that since the records had been captured and held by the American Army, they were American records and should be sent neither to Vienna nor to Freiburg but to Alexandria, Virginia, where the U.S. Army kept its World War II records. In Alexandria, when the records arrived, they were incorporated into the Wehrkreis records since most American archivists in those days had been solidly indoctrinated by Dr. Ernst Posner, formerly of the *Preussisches Geheimes Staatsarchiv*, in the principle of organizing records by provenance.

The formal decision that the captured German records were now *American* had the enormously important implication that they were properly covered by the provisions of the 1943 Federal Records Act. Under the law, the National Archives, and when it was subordinate to the General Services Administration (GSA), that agency, would periodically submit to a joint Congressional Senate-House Committee what were called "Disposal Schedules." These disposal schedules would list what record groups were to be disposed of, how, and why. Some might be kept at the National Archives, some might be sent to a regional archive, some might be pulped, and some might be sent to the Federal Republic of Germany. Unless the joint committee objected—which to the best of my knowledge they practically never did—the U.S. government agency holding the records then disposed of them in accordance with the approved disposal schedule. It was under this procedure that the German records in Alexandria (including the Horse Draft Board papers) were shipped to Germany. It has always seemed to me that in Koblenz, Freiburg, or Berlin there ought to be a bronze plaque commemorating the Austrian horses who played such an important role in the return of the German records. Since the Conference Group for Central European History of the AHA not only sponsors the journal *Central European History* but is literally the successor of the AHA Committee for the Study of War Documents, this would be an appropriate project for the Conference Group.

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