

„The West” Versus „The East“ or the United Europe?

The different conceptions of provenance research, documentation and identification of looted cultural assets and the possibilities of the international co-operation in Europe and in the world.

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Session 1.

The problems of provenance research in the countries of the so-called former Eastern Bloc and (in the countries) of the Western Europe.

"Provenance research and perseverance: the testimony of an archivist"

Subject: archival restitution, archival transfer (post WWII period), prospects for further (provenance) research, Belgian sources.

Work in progress

Since the early 1990s elaborated research on looted WWII cultural assets has mainly focused on the war period and the immediate post-war years. The purpose was obvious and practical: documenting and facilitating restitution claims. When we examine archival restitutions so far we can conclude that the results achieved are important.¹

Researchers often actively participated in restitution operations following the opening of the Moscow archival depots. They provided practical support and documented some of the restitution operations. Concrete results were achieved, by making lots of new source materials available for historical research in the countries to which they returned .

For Belgium for example, an extensive 15.000 files of military records -returned from Moscow- are available now at the Documentation Centre of the Royal Army and Military History Museum. Equally important historically are the over 2.000 files of Masonic records and hundreds of files of Belgian socialist organisations.²

As researchers we should persist in our quest, reflect critically on these accomplishments and seek facts and insight without immediate result in mind. In doing so we can activate and continue extensive research and better understand mechanisms and historical patterns of archival policy.

In this respect provenance research for archives³ should be considered as 'work in progress'. Up to now the 'intermediate decades' of Cold war are relatively poorly documented. Due to lack of source materials the period between the end of the Second World War and the fall of the Iron Curtain remains underexposed. Some partial information pops up in archival inventories. Transfer of material

¹ P. Grimsted, F.J. Hoogewoud, E. Ketelaar (ed.), *Returned from Russia/ Nazi Archival Plunder in Western Europe and Restitution Issues*, Leicester, Institute of Art and Law, 2007.

² J. Lust, J. and M. Vermote, 'Papieren Bitte! The Confiscation and Restitution of Belgian Archives and Libraries (1940-2003)'. In: P. Grimsted, F.J. Hoogewoud, E. Ketelaar (ed.), *Returned from Russia*. op.cit., p. 190-224.

³ Remark that the notion provenance research in an archival context differs from the reconstruction of the history of ownership of works of art (in view of allocation). In an archival context the concept refers to the principle of provenance: the basic archival principle that records/archives of the same provenance must not be intermingled with those of any other provenance; frequently referred to as "respect des fonds" (see: <http://www.ciscra.org/mat/termdb/term/275>).

to other archival repositories is clearly listed for example in many inventories of the former Central State Special (Osobyi) Archive⁴, that was the top secret repository in Moscow where the Soviet captured records were centralised.

As an example of this we found out that the correspondence of the King of Belgium with Emile Vandervelde – leader of the Belgian Workers' party- found its way to the KGB archive. Access to Lubjanka was manifestly impossible to us.

Such examples demonstrate the relevance of archival provenance research to follow the large archival redistribution operations that took place in the post war period, involving lots of Soviet archival institutions. However, data on these operations are rather scarce.

What were these transports about? What were the underlying motives for these transfers? What criteria were used? The picture concerning these archival 'realignments' is still very incomplete. According as to the 'internal' (re-)distribution of archives, within the former East Bloc and into the Soviet Union itself, there is no clear sight on the scope and the circumstances of these events. In the context of further research these phenomena surely deserve full attention.

It is important to observe that the internal administrative records of the institutions involved in the transfers (archive services which 'exported' documents as well as those that received them) contain key information about these 'archival rearrangements' / transactions.

Such internal records of specific archives (many of which are now open for research) can reveal some answers to questions about the logic behind restitution, about the criteria and the actors.

Presumably, they also contain many missing puzzle pieces. They may provide more details about these events and point out new research areas. As Patricia Grimsted has shown policy statements and instructions preserved in the Glavarkhiv files contain most relevant information concerning these issues.⁵

In general about this research topic we should also consider the fact that as a result of restructuring the link to the past may have been broken in many Russian archival institutions. Consequently, knowledge obtained from the administrative archives of these institutions is sometimes insufficient.

Besides, by now, we know that the story is far more complicated. In addition to the records or fonds that were transferred from the former Osobyi to other institutions (as mentioned above) there is the phenomenon of the archival materials that were directly integrated in the holdings or individual collections of other Russian archival institutions. Several specific repositories or specialized agencies received 'trophy' archival materials upon arrival in the USSR depending on subject matter or research priorities.⁶

It is not within the scope of this contribution to try to reconstruct the whole picture, but we should bear that in mind in the context of further research of the dispersal and migration of specific groups of records. To give an idea of the nature and the scope of these direct transfers let us indicate exemplarily the fact that the Central State Historical Archive in Leningrad (TsGIAL, now RGIA), and the Central State Military History Archive (TsGVIA, now RGVIA) also received their share of historical trophies appropriate to their 'profile'. Many earlier historical 'trophies' were delivered to the Central State Archive of Early Acts (TsGADA, now RGADA), including the Hanseatic municipal archives from Bremen, Hamburg, and Lübeck.⁷ Literary 'trophies', including many papers of Russian émigré writers

⁴ On the processing and the Central State Special Archive (Tsentral'nyi gosudarstvennyi osobyi arkhiv) see: P. Grimsted, 'From Nazi Plunder to Russian Restitution'. In: P. Grimsted, F.J. Hoogewoud, E. Ketelaar (ed.), *Returned from Russia*. op.cit., p. 88-95.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p.103, note 85.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 91. The example of the Reichsicherheitshauptamt illustrates the fact that records that were first handled by Soviet security agencies could (partly) end up at the Special state Archive (TsGOA, fond n° 500).

⁷ Never open for public research in the USSR, most of those archives were returned to Germany in a final Soviet restitution shipment in 1990.

were acquired by the Central State Archive of Literature and Art (TsGALI, now RGALI), while other archival trophies went to many different libraries and museums.⁸

Next to that –as already mentioned- some of the original holdings and captured records of the former Osobyi archive were transferred to other repositories. For example, much of the documentation from European Communist and Socialist organizations and the personal papers of their leaders were transferred to the Central Party Archive (TsPA, now RGASPI), while records of Russian émigré groups and individuals were transferred to TsGAOR SSSR (now GARF).

A Polish example

At a conference in Strasbourg in 2010 I presented the example of the Daniszewski papers; an exceptional well preserved fond that provides a unique insight in an exceptional redistribution operation.⁹

The restitution by Poland of the so called ‘Dutch collection’ to the Netherlands in 1956 in the midst of the Cold War was indeed a unusual and remarkable gesture.¹⁰

The reconstruction of the story behind this move puts the Commission Daniszewski into the picture. This Polish governmental commission examined from 1954 on the circa 500 crates of foreign archival material that was earlier transferred from Krakow to the Foreign Ministry in Warsaw: in all 48 tons of paper, probably originating from the ERR depots in Ratibor.

In a secret note (dd. February 1955¹¹) Prof. Dr. Daniszewski, director of the Institute of Party History, reported to the Secretary of the Central Committee of the Polish Communist Party. The main task of the commission was the “equitable” distribution of the archival holdings among different institutions in the former communist countries. Given the political importance of this exercise Polish politicians as well as Russian specialists participated in the commission.

Finally a proposal concerning the distribution of the materials was formulated and presented for decision to the Central Committee of the Party.

Daniszewski suggested to split the archival records and library materials and to return a substantial part of it to the Netherlands. The selection criterion was defined as follows: “materials relating to Holland and written in Dutch”. In this way, the archives of the Dutch Social Democratic Workers Party (Sociaal-Democratische Arbeiderspartij – SDAP), the Labour Youth Movement (Arbeidersjeugdcentrale) and the Dutch Labour Office (Nederlands Arbeidssecretariaat) were selected – among other archives – to be returned to the Netherlands. It was an unusual proposal in the midst of the Cold War, but it was approved by the Polish authorities: 192 crates of archival material was shipped from behind the Iron Curtain to the Netherlands in 1956.¹² A large number of these materials could be (re-)integrated into the collections of the Amsterdam International Institute

⁸ P. Grimsted, *Russia's "Trophy" Archives – Still Prisoners of World War II?*. Budapest: Open Society Archive, Central European University, 2002.

Electronic edition.: <http://www.osa.ceu.hu/files/2002/RussianTrophyArchives/RussianTrophyArchives.html> and: <http://bg.convdocs.org/docs/index-143709.html>.

⁹ M. Vermote, ‘La Commission Daniszewski et le retour de Pologne de la 'collection hollandaise': du transfert d'archives dans le bloc de l'Est (1945-1991). In: A. Sumpf, V. Laniol (ed.): *Saisies, spoliations d'archives et de bibliothèques et logiques de restitution au XXe siècle*, Rennes, 2012, pp 301-312.

¹⁰ See: J. Stepień, ‘Losy akt Międzynarodowego Instytutu Historii Socjalnej w Amsterdamie w świetle informacji komisji powołanej do zbadania « archiwum holenderskiego » z lutego 1955r’. In: *Teki Archiwalne*, seria nowa t. 3(25), Warszawa, 1998, pp. 317-324.

¹¹ Note from T. Daniszewski to the Central Committee of the Polish Communist Party, Warsaw, 25 February 1955 (Archiwum Akt Nowych - Warsaw, Papers Daniszewski , n° 471/10).

¹² M. Huninck, *De papieren van de revolutie. Het Internationaal Instituut voor Sociale Geschiedenis 1935-1947*, Amsterdam, 1986, p.157.

of Social History from which they had been seized.¹³

For another substantial part professor Daniszewski proposed a reasoned distribution of well-defined sets of materials across a number of institutes or party bodies: the History Department of the Polish Communist Party, the Polish Institute of Social Sciences, the Polish Academy of Sciences, the People's Library, the Polish Institute, the Moscow Institute of Marxism-Leninism, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the German Democratic Republic (Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands, SED) and the Central Committee of the Czechoslovak Communist Party.

If we examine the distribution of these materials closely, we observe that the larger part of them remained in Poland. Polish librarians were offered the first choice and could select some exclusive printed material, that is 17th and 18th century publications labelled as 'rarities'. We observe a clear example of compensation for cultural losses suffered. The note says that the 'Russian comrades' selected archival materials relating to the Second International and the correspondence of Karl Marx, Paul Lafargue, August Bebel, Wilhelm Liebknecht, Karl Kautsky and other 'big' names. In doing so, neither the subject of those materials was not taken into account, nor the origin of the records (a fundamental archival principle). The same approach was handled concerning files which were intended to be transferred to the German Democratic Republic and Czechoslovakia and that contained materials relating to these countries (not: from this countries).

An annexe to the Daniszewski report, containing a survey list of the original archival records, reveals the entirety of what has been designated as the 'Dutch collection'. Seventy archive groups are listed and an explanation is provided for some important ones, such as the archives of the Socialist Labour International (three crates), Gottfried Salomon (one crate), the anarchists Max Nettlau (five crates) and Charles Hetz (one crate), and the staff member of the International Institute of Social History (IISH) Hans Stein (one crate). The 'Dutch collection' also contained a large and remarkable collection of periodicals (over 2000 titles) and a rich collection of announcements and placards of the early labour movement and the Paris Commune (1871).

The restitution operation in the summer of 1956 may surely be considered a compromise between the political point of view of non-restitution and the opposite approach of scientists who were in favour of a broad policy sending captured displaced foreign archival material home. But it should also be seen as an indicator of the degree of independence of Polish institutions (at that moment) vis-à-vis the Soviet Union.

But above all, this story of the Daniszewski Commission highlights the phenomenon of 'internal' archival transfers, that is, within and between former East Bloc states.

The former Osobyi archive in Moscow – an archival treasure trove

The former Special (Osobyi) archive in Moscow surely deserves our close attention in this respect. This real 'Aladdin's cave' of archival treasures was the logistic centre of important redistribution operations.

In a discussion –in August 1945- prior to the establishment of this archival institute it was the initial idea to organize a temporary storage (of at most five years) of the documents that could hardly be considered as Russian state-owned.¹⁴ But finally the creation of a special department of the State Archives was decided. Use of the records was exclusively reserved to intelligence services and the Ministries of Defence and Foreign Affairs. Archives that were considered as 'non-operational' for security work could be transferred -in whole or in part- to other archival depots. This explains the distribution of the material over several repositories. The fact that the former Osobyi archive

¹³ Ibid., p.156-158.

¹⁴ P. Grimsted, 'From Nazi Plunder to Russian Restitution'. In: P. Grimsted, F.J. Hoogewoud, E. Ketelaar (ed.), *Returned from Russia*. op.cit., p. 88, note 27.

functioned far away from historians in absolute secrecy explains the lack of adequate inventories. The archival fonds were never processed for research and many of them were not identified by provenance. Files were often inappropriately grouped together out of their order of creation. Others records were split out of their original archival context.

As a result, next to significant centralization there was extensive dispersal of captured records. Including some vast restitution operations that were carried out in the post Stalin period.

After a rather isolated restitution in 1947 to Lithuania¹⁵ ('internal' – within the Soviet Union) there was a wave of restitution operations to Eastern-bloc countries during the Krushchev era. From 1956 on a large part of captured German archives went home; a first load as part of an important restitution operation including books and the art works plundered from the Dresden Gallery. This operation was followed by further transports to East-Germany (1957, 1959) and transfers to Yugoslavia (1956), Poland (1956, 1961 and 1963) and Moldavia (1960).

In the '60 there were remarkable acts of restitution to France. In 1966 for example the Soviet ambassador in Paris transferred to General De Gaulle 93 boxes of archival materials. This surely made French specialists suspicious that there may well have been more archives of French provenance still hiding in the Soviet Union. Of a smaller dimension were the archival restitutions to Romania and Norway.¹⁶

Overall the Soviet government transferred more than two million archival files to the German Democratic Republic (including many secret files from the administrative records of the RSHA (RGVA-fond 500) that were transferred to the Stasi or the Party Archive in the GDR). During the late 1980s, some forty additional tons of records, including military records going back to the nineteenth century were returned to East Germany. Most of the archival materials from German Masonic lodges (including those from West Germany) were turned over to the GDR during the Soviet period. In all more than one third of the German fonds that were originally stowed at Osobyi were transferred (228 of a total of 622 fonds).¹⁷

For Poland we come to the same conclusion, although the numbers are less important (71 fonds of a total of 153). But the number of fonds involved in such operations does of course not reveal the importance of restitutions.

Soviet authorities officially expressed their "strict adherence to legal international norms".¹⁸ In the spirit of the international archival resolutions (from the ICA Round table meetings in Warsaw (1960)¹⁹ and Cagliari (1977) the Soviet Union stated that it was "helping other countries reunify their national heritage".²⁰ Soviet-era internationalist archival restitution policy was applicable only to Eastern-Bloc countries. From 1991 that policy was completely abandoned and archival claims and restitutions would take a completely different track.²¹

The Soviet-period restitution operations considerably changed the profile of the Osobyi holdings. The

¹⁵ In 1947 six archival fonds went back to Vilnius: Council of Russian teachers in Latvia (n°553), Association of school-leavers of the Russian Gymnasium (n°555), Russian Charity Association (n°556), Association for the Assistance of the Russian Employees of the Trade Industry (n°557), Russian Association for Information (n°718), Russian Association Rozmisl (n°719).

¹⁶ S. Panwitz, 'Die Geschichte des Sonderarchivs Moskau', in: *Bulletin des Deutschen Historischen Instituts Moskau* (2008, n°2), p.15.

¹⁷ Figures based on an overall numeric fond list of the former Osobyi archive (Excel document edited by the author).

Cf.: <http://www.sonderarchiv.de/fondverzeichnis.htm>

¹⁸ P. Grimsted, 'From Nazi Plunder to Russian Restitution'. In: P. Grimsted, F.J. Hoogewoud, E. Ketelaar (ed.), *Returned from Russia*. op.cit., p. 103, note 84.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 102, note 78.

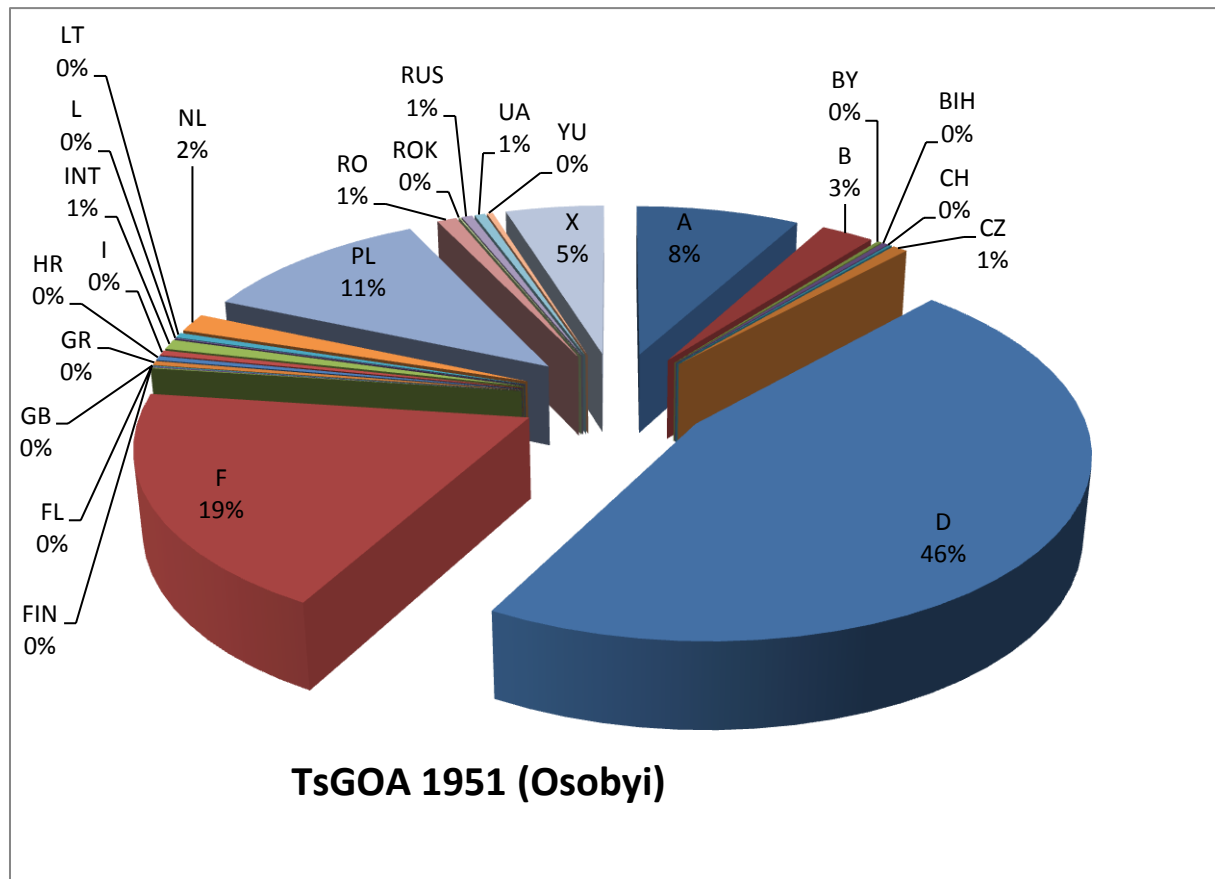
²⁰ Ibid., p. 103, note 81.

²¹ Ibid., p. 104.

comparison I want to present is incomplete and only evaluative. Because it can -at the moment- only be based on the number of funds (while the volume involved would give an additional perspective).

Based on my current research²² we come to an overall total of 1352 trophy archival fonds. This is not an absolute figure: it is indicative.

But the indications (including country of origin) are useful for presenting a chart of the composition of the original collection of the Ososbyi archive. In the meantime this has become a virtual reality.



A: Austria, B: Belgium, BY; Belarus, BIH: Bosnia and Herzegovina, CH: Switzerland, CZ: Czech Republic, D: Germany, F: France, FIN: Finland, FL: Liechtenstein, GB: United Kingdom, GR: Greece, HR: Croatia, I: Italy, L: Luxembourg, LT: Lithuania, NL: Netherlands, PL: Poland, RO: Romania, ROK: Republic of Korea, RUS: Russia, UA: Ukraine, YU: (former) Yugoslavia, INT: international, X: unidentified

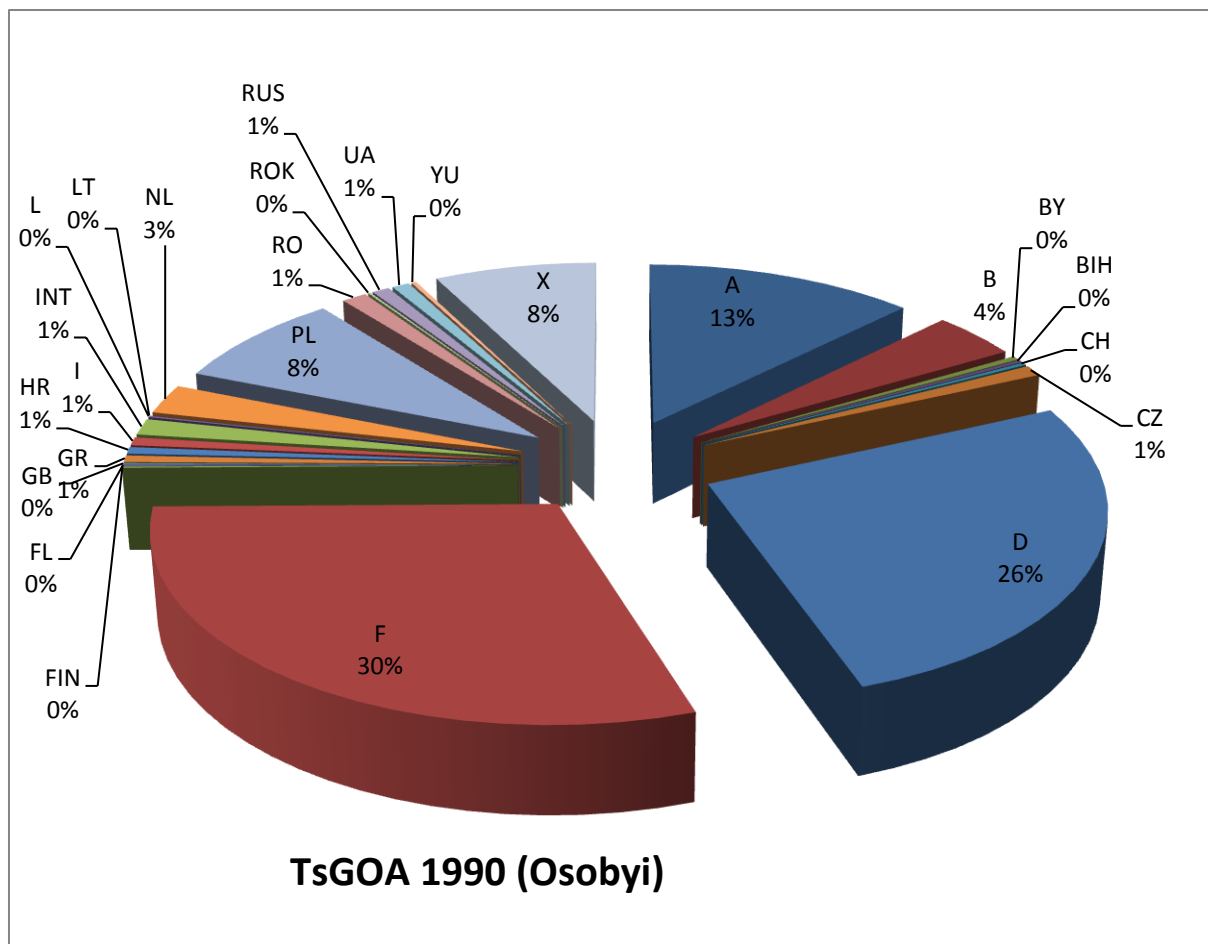
Remark that this picture does not show the totality of the archival Soviet war bounty, as it does not take into account the (earlier mentioned) 'trophy' archival materials were not transferred to the Osobyi archive but were directly integrated in the collections of other Russian archival institutions.²³

After the extensive archival restitutions from the Soviet Union, mainly to Eastern European countries (in line with international archival principles²⁴), we see in 1990 the following image – according to country of origin (with a total now of 861 fonds).

²² And many sources revealed in Patricia Grimsted's writings. I thank Patricia Grimsted for sharing her extensive knowledge and for the valuable advice in finalizing my contribution

²³ Ibid., p. 91.

²⁴ Ibid., pp. 102-104.



A: Austria, B: Belgium, BY; Belarus, BIH: Bosnia and Herzegovina, CH: Switzerland, CZ: Czech Republic, D: Germany, F: France, FIN: Finland, FL: Liechtenstein, GB: United Kingdom, GR: Greece, HR: Croatia, I: Italy, L: Luxembourg, LT: Lithuania, NL: Netherlands, PL: Poland, RO: Romania, ROK: Republic of Korea, RUS: Russia, UA: Ukraine, YU: (former) Yugoslavia, INT: international, X: unidentified

From 1990 on the Soviet-era archival restitution policy towards Eastern-bloc countries was abandoned completely, and archival claims and restitution developments took –as we know a completely different (ideological) track.

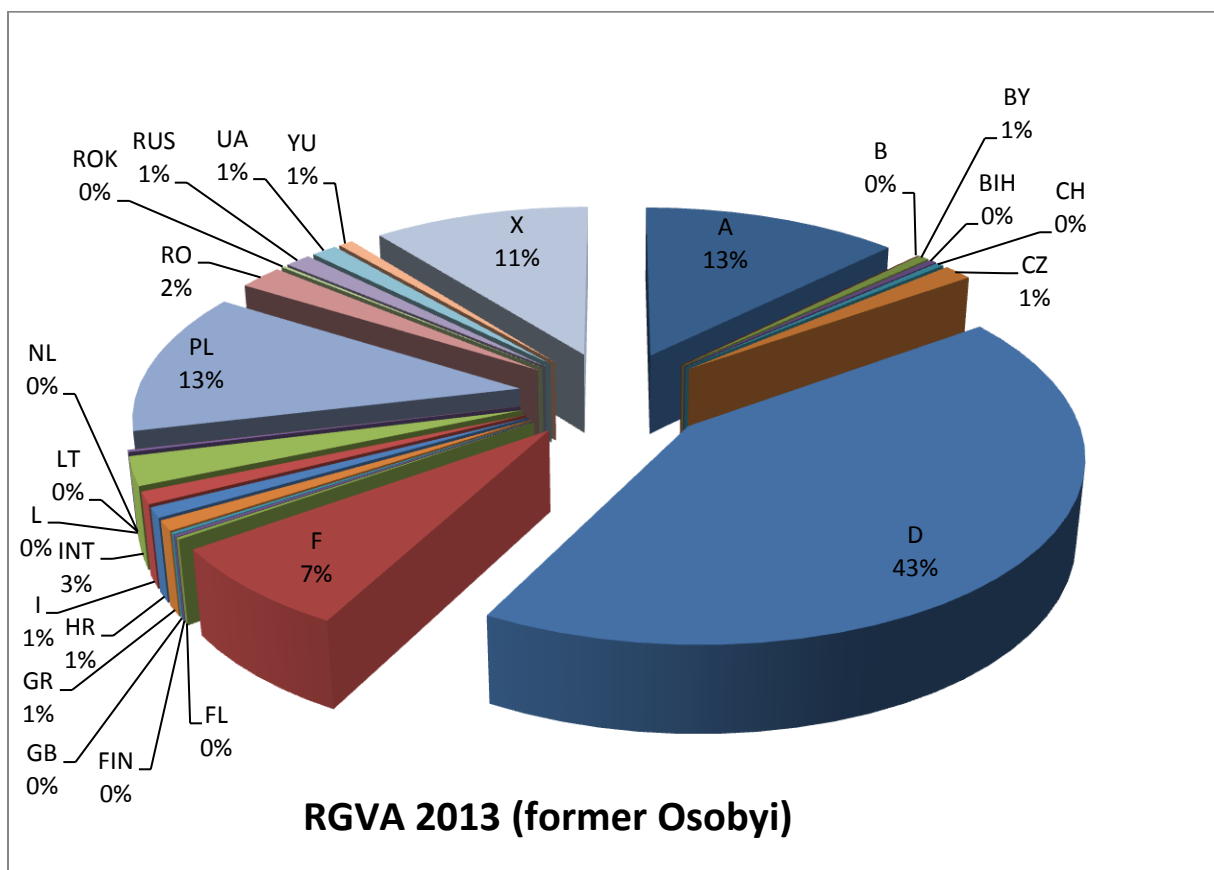
When the Osobyi opened its doors to researchers from around the world in 1992 under its new name, a steady process of restitution to Western European countries would start up. Most of these operations took almost a decade before coming to a tangible result. Since 1994 archives have gone home to seven countries – France (1993/94, 2000)²⁵, Liechtenstein (1997), Great Britain (2000), the Netherlands (2001), Belgium (2002) Luxembourg (2003) and Austria (2009). In 2007 the publication “Returned from Russia” made up an interim balance sheet. It gave full coverage of the restitutions to France, Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg. And also documented the return of the Austrian Rothschild archives to the Rothschild Archive in London (2004). An updated paperback edition of the

²⁵ But until today number of archival fonds from France still remain at the former Osobyi archive.

same publication sketches the situation in 2013.²⁶

In all cases negotiating the return home of the archives proved to be a slow process. The attitude of the Russian side was determined by the concept of 'exchange', implying that western archives should not be 'returned' without comparable 'return' from the receiving side.²⁷ The pronouncements (from the Soviet-era) concerning international law were disregarded. In official transfer documents for the captured records that went back home the term 'restitution' was not used.

When we draw the same current picture of the holdings of the former Osobyi archive (to be sure only tentative), we come to the following breakdown by country:



A: Austria, B: Belgium, BY: Belarus, BIH: Bosnia and Herzegovina, CH: Switzerland, CZ: Czech Republic, D: Germany, F: France, FIN: Finland, FL: Liechtenstein, GB: United Kingdom, GR: Greece, HR: Croatia, I: Italy, L: Luxembourg, LT: Lithuania, NL: Netherlands, PL: Poland, RO: Romania, ROK: Republic of Korea, RUS: Russia, UA: Ukraine, YU: (former) Yugoslavia, INT: international, X: unidentified

This indicative graphical presentations of the totality of the former Osobyi holdings on three key moments (1951, 1990 and 2013) provides only a general view of the impact of the archival restitution

²⁶ P. Grimsted, F.J. Hoogewoud, E. Ketelaar (ed.), *Returned from Russia/ Nazi Archival Plunder in Western Europe and Restitution Issues*, Leicester, Institute of Art and Law, 2013. For this edition Patricia Grimsted provided an afterword with an extensive outline of the situation to date.

²⁷ P. Grimsted, 'Afterword 2013'. In: P. Grimsted, F.J. Hoogewoud, E. Ketelaar (ed.), *Returned from Russia*. op.cit., p. A3.

policy of the Russian authorities. Notice that the estimated total number of fonds decreases from 1.352 over 861 to 557.

In this contribution I would like to focus on the significance and consequences of restitution operations and insist on the fact that not all of the transfers are sufficiently documented. This in combination with the fact that it is not obvious to keep a firm hold on archival entities represents a main obstruction to archival provenance research. Archival fonds can be merged or records dispersed. In the processes, many fonds were split up, and individual files broken out of integral groups of records.

Given the fact that many displaced archives whose potential return to their homelands remains unresolved, we need operative tools to get a good view on the complicated itinerary of the so called trophy archives. In this respect archival provenance research should be considered as 'work in progress'.

In a first necessary step a comprehensive list of all archival records kept at the former Osobyi archive will be indispensable, especially since Russian authorities only take into consideration archival claims based on information from the former Osobyi archive. The possibilities to formulate documented claims would gain substantial support by drawing up a documented register of all 'trophy archives' that ended up at this archival treasure trove.

It is clear that from the beginning the lack of a comprehensive list of fonds of the former Osobyi Archive has been a serious handicap to researchers. Osobyi archivists have published -with German funding- a guide in 2001²⁸, but the results (printed or online²⁹) proved incomplete and lacked essential information. Archival specialists from various countries (some in cooperation with Russian colleagues) have already surveyed records of specific national provenance and published important additional information.³⁰ But further documented provenance research will need more than a pure global overview of archival fonds. The merger of the now dispersed information is only a first step. The integration of additional metadata on the fond level will be necessary to come to an operational (authorized) reference list of all trophy archives edited according to international descriptive standards (ISAD).³¹

²⁸ *Ukazatel' fondov inostrannogo proiskhozhdeniia i Glavnogo upravleniia po delam voennoplennykh i internirovannykh NKVD-MVD SSSR Rossiiskogo gosudarstvennogo voennogo arkhiva*. Compiled by V.I. Korotaev, A.P. Naganov, et al. Edited by V.P. Kozlov and V.N. Kuzelenkov. Moscow, 2001. 331 p.

²⁹ See: <http://guides.rusarchives.ru/browse/guidebook.html?bid=123>. The guide is incomplete and has not been updated since 2001.

³⁰ See for example:

- K. von Jena W. Lenz, 'Die deutschen Bestände im Sonderarchiv in Moskau', in: *Der Archivar* 45 (1992), no. 3, pp. 457–67.

- G. Aly and S. Heim, *Das Zentrale Staatsarchiv in Moskau ("Sonderarchiv"). Rekonstruktion und Bestandsverzeichnis verschollen geglaubten Schriftguts aus der NS-Zeit*; Düsseldorf 1992 bzw. 1993.

- S. Panwitz, 'Sonderarchiv': <http://www.sonderarchiv.de/fondverzeichnis.htm>; contains a list of what in Soviet days was known as the German Division (fond n° 500-1528). With separate pages for literature, helpful annotations and links to online finding aids.

- G. Jagschitz and S. Karner, *Beuteakten aus Österreich: Der Österreichbestand im russischen "Sonderarchiv" Moskau*. Ed. Gollmann S.E.. Vienna, 1996.

- M. Sedláková, *Studijní pobyt v Moskvě 2002*, in: *Archivní časopis* 53 (2003), no. 1, pp. 26–29

- S. Coeuré, *La memoire spoliée. Les archives des Français butin de guerre nazi puis soviétique (de 1940 à nos jours)*. Paris: Editions Payot-Rivages, 2007

- See for France, Belgium and the Netherlands the accurate country listings in 'Returned from Russia'.

For a full and updated bibliographical references, see: <http://www.iisg.nl/abb/>

³¹ <http://www.ica.org/10207/standards/isadg-general-international-standard-archival-description-second-edition.html>

Conclusion

In conclusion we have to state that the fact that important archival restitution results have already been achieved, should not prevent us from evaluating our approach and deepening our research. It is clear that our quest is far from finished. Cooperatively with archivists from the countries whose archival material remain, the contribution of colleagues in the archival institutions concerned could be vital to opening new perspectives and to create possibilities for further research and international co-operation. Rosarkhiv and the archivists in the former Osobyi archive have failed to do so. Now the international community must take on the responsibility.

The enforcement of this steady process will depend on the joint efforts of archivists from East and West and will need to be based on international law and universal archival principles and practices. The main purpose of my contribution is to indicate the importance, the relevancy and the practical feasibility of such a joint scientific and archival task.

Epilogue

As an interesting supplement to my paper I can present a recent Belgian contribution to the opening of prospects for further research: a new inventory³² of the State Archive on the Office de Récupération économique, a service set up in 1946 to recover both economic infrastructure and looted cultural assets. These internal administrative records are available now for research in general (and art provenance research in particular).

The coordination of Belgium's post-war restitution policy forms the basis for the creation of the DER/ORE (Dienst voor Economische Recuperatie / Office de Récupération économique). The aim of this new agency was to trace and bring back to Belgium the considerable amounts of raw materials, products, machines, stocks, currencies and artworks that were lost or looted due to the war. It operated according to the basic principles of the right to restitution. This meant that restitutions were limited to identifiable goods that were taken from an Allied country by force or without payment during the occupation.

The procedure for the recovery of cultural goods was for the most part identical to the one used for economic goods. Yet, the Belgian cultural recovery actions turned out to be difficult due to insufficient insight into the full scope of artworks looting committed by the German occupant and the late resort to specialised investigators. Initially, the Service pour la protection du patrimoine culturel under the supervision of Leo van Puyvelde was the sole authority in charge of the recovery of looted artworks, but at the end of 1945, this mission was entrusted to the DER.

As the archival documents show (see inventory number 363), the relationship between both administrations was, to say the least, troubled. The same was true regarding the contacts between the culture office of the DER and the other Belgian administrations: relevant archives from German public authorities concerning looting of artworks in Belgium ended up at various public administrations (ranging from the Sequestration Office to the Military Prosecutor's Office). There also, the internal communication was not sufficiently organized.

Consequently, the restitution policy was deprived of its essence: Belgium only received 1,155 cultural goods from the Allied zones in Germany and Austria, compared to 30,207 goods for France and 6,891 goods for the Netherlands. Also, the DER had little interest in tracing looted archives or libraries (of which only 20% were recovered) and was more focused on the recovery of plastic artworks as they appeared to have more prestige and could be identified more easily. Once brought back to Belgium, the cultural goods could be restituted to their rightful owners, but the majority of them were ceded to Belgian cultural institutions or sold on auction for the benefit of the national treasury. All in all, some 90% of the recovered artworks were recovered for the benefit of the Belgian state: 639 paintings and archaeological artefacts were handed over against payment to 15 Belgian museums and cultural institutions, while a few thousands of unidentified cultural goods were sold on public auction between 1946 and 1954 or traded by the DER and the Land Registration and Estates Department (Administratie van Registratie en Domeinen/Administration de l'enregistrement et des domaines) in Brussels. From 1956 to 1962, the DER also maintained contacts with the German Bundesamt für Äußere Restititionen, which produced no more tangible results however.

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³² http://search.arch.be/nl/zoeken-naar-archieven/zoekresultaat/ead/index/eadid/BE-A0545_006785_006783_DUT