

Washington Research Opportunities in the Period of World War II¹

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Library of Congress

THIS summer Edward Mead Earle wrote in the *American Historical Review*: "The real problem of the historian of contemporary affairs is not that he will be bedeviled by what he does not know by reason of paucity of evidence, but rather that he will be overwhelmed by the sheer mass and richness of the documentation at his disposal."² If confirmation and corroboration of Mr. Earle's statement is needed, this paper, dealing only with some specialized documentation available in Washington, will provide it.

At the time when the topic of my address was suggested, it seemed that a discussion of research potentialities in Washington based on primary sources of foreign origin on the World War II period would have to concentrate on holdings of the Library of Congress and the National Archives, although the principal deposits of these materials had been made known in the spring of 1953 by the *Guide to Captured German Documents*, a publication of the War Documentation Project about which I shall say more later on.³

Since the program of this meeting went to press, an unexpected windfall has enhanced the research possibilities in the greater Washington area to a degree which could hardly have been hoped for only a few weeks ago.

Three years ago, at the 1950 Chicago meeting of the American Historical Association, Kent Robert Greenfield, Chief Historian of the Army, discussed a Department of the Army statement which made accessible to qualified scholars for unofficial research the World War II records of the War Department and the Army. Today it is my privilege to give due publicity and emphasis, in an unofficial capacity, to a similar step for which American and foreign

¹Paper read at the meeting of the American Historical Association in Chicago, December 29, 1953.

²*American Historical Review*, 58:947 (July 1953).

³*War Documentation Project Study No. 1: Guide to Captured German Documents*, prepared by Gerhard L. Weinberg and the WDP staff under the direction of Fritz T. Epstein. (Air University, Human Resources Research Institute, Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama, Research Memorandum, vol. 1, no. 2, Dec. 1952. 90 pp.)

scholars have long been waiting. Recently, by administrative declassification actions, restrictions on German materials, estimated as between 5,000 and 6,000 linear feet, have been lifted. These documents are kept at the Departmental Records Branch in Alexandria, Va., which is included in the greater Washington area.

For some time historians have known that the Army has in its custody large quantities of captured German documents, concentrated in the Departmental Records Branch under the authority of the Adjutant General's Office. In general terms it can be said that in both quantity and quality they surpass most of the materials which so far have been available at the Library of Congress and the National Archives.

The declassification action of the Army, opening up a wide new field to intensive private historical research, proves that the high-level administrators of the captured German documents are convinced that the time has come to remove certain security measures and give historians the opportunity to examine and to exploit these materials. This action of the Army considerably alters and widens the research potentialities in the Nation's capital. Under the changed circumstances the emphasis of this paper will, therefore, be put on the recently declassified and hitherto unknown materials rather than on pertinent holdings of the Library of Congress and of the National Archives, most of which have been listed in detail in the previously mentioned *Guide to Captured German Documents*. The Captured Records Section, formerly the German Military Documents Section, of the Departmental Records Branch will in my opinion rank in the future as a treasure house, second to none, of unrestricted German documentation.

As the result of an agreement between the United States and British Armies the German Military Documents Section was activated on July 14, 1945, and put under the authority of the War Department General Staff. Since June 1, 1947, it has operated under the authority of the Office of The Adjutant General. The declassified material comprises four different types: German military records; records of German civilian agencies, including the records of several Reich ministries; records of the National Socialist Party; and miscellaneous records of German cultural and political organizations. I should like to say a few words about each of these four groups.

Military records

The declassified German Army materials belong either to offices under the authority of OKW (Oberkommando der Wehrmacht),

the High Command of the Armed Forces, or to those under the OKH (Oberkommando des Heeres), the High Command of the Army. I shall mention only a few of the more important collections of both record groups. Often the name of an office conveys an idea of the type of documentary materials that researchers can expect in the relevant record group.

Among the declassified records of the Armed Forces High Command are the papers of the Office of the Deputy Chief of the Armed Forces Operations Staff (Stellvertreter, Chef Wehrmachtführungstab). They include German plans of operations for invasions of southern France, Luxembourg, Belgium, the Netherlands, England, Spain, the Balearic Islands, the Balkan States, Crete, Norway, and Poland. Drafts of the armistices between Italy and France and between Germany and Yugoslavia, material pertaining to problems of German administration of the eastern territories, correspondence concerning the capitulation of Germany, and a study of politics in the so-called Protectorate, Bohemia and Moravia, are also included. Other declassified documents are folders of the Armistice Commission (Waffenstillstandskommission), which include a considerable amount of material on the French armament industry and French supplies, as well as correspondence, 1940-44, about the German-French and the Italian-French armistices.

The attention of economic historians is called to the records of the Armed Forces Economic Office (Wehrwirtschaftsamt), with reports on foreign economy, reports on loot taken from occupied territories, and war production; and the records of the General Armed Forces Office (Allgemeines Wehrmachtsamt), with reports on malfunction of equipment. These two collections, if combined with the archives of certain corresponding offices of the Army High Command, especially with the records of the Inspector General of Armored Troops (Generalinspekteur der Panzertruppen) and with the records of the Reich Ministry for Armaments and War Production (Reichsministerium für Rüstung und Kriegsproduktion), make possible the writing not only of the history of German armament and equipment but also of a comparative study of the armament race on the basis of prewar doctrines concerning war in the future. It must be stressed that the records of the various German military and civilian agencies concerned with economic matters, such as the Armed Forces Economic Office, the Reich Ministry of Economics, and the Reich Ministry for Armaments and War Production, contain immense collections of materials on practically every aspect of economic life in Europe, Africa, Asia, and Aus-

tralia. These economic records contain German estimates of the accessibility to Germany of strategic commodities and estimates of the economic war potential of other countries.

Of the other two branches of the German Armed Forces, the Navy and the Air Force, only documents of those sections of their High Commands that formed part of the High Command of the Armed Forces are now open in Alexandria. They include documents of the Air Force Operations Office (Operationsabteilung der Luftwaffe) and of the Navy Operations Office (Operationsabteilung der Marine); the latter contains correspondence on the French fleet in Toulon and on operational and tactical questions of the war in the North Sea.

The German Air Force documentation in Washington, the Von Rohden collection in the Library of Congress, will be mentioned later. The records of the German Navy, the Tambach archives (named after the place near Coburg where they were found by the Allies), containing material on a century of German naval history (1848-1945), have not yet been declassified. The Office of Naval History has microfilm copies and a few duplicates of most of the post-1919 records. The original documents were classified by, and are in custody of, the British Admiralty.

Records of Civilian Agencies

The names of the declassified records of civilian agencies indicate the content of their archives. This is true for the Reich Ministry for Public Enlightenment and Propaganda, the Goebbels Ministry, the Reich Ministry for Armaments and War Production, the Speer Ministry, the Reich Ministry of Economics, and the Reich Ministry of Posts and Telegraphs.

The captured German records constitute a valuable source of information concerning civilian affairs and military-government matters on the European continent during World War II. The records of the Reich Ministry of Economics, for instance, illuminate the organization of military government in German-occupied areas, German utilization of industrial facilities in Eastern Europe, and the German economic exploitation of France, Belgium, and the Netherlands. Among the records of the Reich Ministry for Armaments and War Production of particular interest are documents of the ministry's Eastern Economic Staff and Economy Commands. The Economic Staff records include evaluations made by the Germans of their occupation policies and procedures after they evacuated Russian areas, together with recommendations as to policy changes to be made in case of reoccupation of these areas.

The NSDAP records

The declassified Nazi Party records in Alexandria include record groups of the majority of its organizations, with the notable exception of the Schutzstaffel (SS) and those institutions that were under Himmler's authority as the Reich Leader of the SS and Chief of the German Police (Reichsführer SS und Chef der Deutschen Polizei). One major activity of the SS, however, the repatriation and the resettlement in Germany and occupied territories of "ethnic" Germans from Eastern Europe, under the guidance of the SS, can be studied in the documents of the Office of the Commissioner for the Strengthening of Germanism (Reichskommissar für die Festigung des deutschen Volkstums). With regard to the police functions of the SS it is noteworthy that all the papers dealing with the July 1944 plot against Hitler, including the People's Court (Volksgerichtshof) proceedings and the reports of the Security Police (Sicherheitsdienst), have been declassified.

The records of the office of Alfred Rosenberg in his capacity as the Führer's Deputy for the Supervision of Ideological Education (Beauftragter des Führers für die Überwachung der gesamten geistigen und weltanschaulichen Erziehung) comprise not less than 30 linear feet.

Miscellaneous records

Several record groups of considerable political and cultural significance form part of the declassified miscellaneous documentation. German economic history, especially the history of the German labor movement, will profit from exploiting the records of the Federation of German Trade Unions (Allgemeiner Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund), 1925-33, and the records of the Rheinmetall-Borsig Co. Cultural institutions the history of which can now be explored are the German Academy (Deutsche Akademie, München), 1922-45, the Academy for German Law (Akademie für Deutsches Recht), and the German Institute for Relations with Germans Abroad (Deutsches Auslandsinstitut, Stuttgart).

Non-German Documentation

Although during the war the Germans systematically traced and confiscated military and political records in conquered countries, little of such non-German documentation has fallen into the hands of the Western Powers. With the exception of the Document Collection Center South, in Munich, all the great German depositories for captured documents (the Document Collection Center East, in Danzig-Oliva; the Document Collection Center West, in

Berlin-Wannsee; and the Document Collection Center Southeast, in Vienna) were located in territory which the Russians occupied. The Archives Commission of the German Foreign Office was for a time in possession of large groups of documents of the foreign ministries of Norway, the Netherlands, Belgium, France, Yugoslavia, and Greece; but most of them were lost in the bombing attacks on Berlin. German wartime publications of captured documents are listed in an appendix to the *Guide to Captured German Documents*, in an attempt to provide a bibliographical listing of records that have been destroyed.

For the convenience of those who intend to use the German materials in Alexandria, I may add that to obtain access to the declassified records an application should be sent to the Chief of Information of the Army, attention Public Information Division. Noncitizens must use different channels. The records can be used only in the Alexandria depository; their loan will not be permitted. Detailed descriptions of the declassified records will be published.⁴ Most of the declassified records have not been translated into English.

I shall now turn to the Library of Congress and to the National Archives. Knowledge of their holdings of captured foreign documentation is greatly facilitated by the *Guide to Captured German Documents*. The Human Resources Research Institute at Maxwell Air Force Base has distributed copies of the *Guide* to all major libraries and to those Government agencies that might be interested. During the 18 months that have passed since the completion of the *Guide* certain changes in the holdings of the Library of Congress and of the National Archives have taken place — additions as well as removals — which I shall mention. Important as these changes are, they do not basically alter the picture as presented in the *Guide*.

THE WAR DOCUMENTATION PROJECT

The *Guide* was prepared by the staff of the War Documentation Project. This Project was initiated in the summer of 1951 as an interdepartmental enterprise to catalog and investigate the vast masses of captured German documents that came into the possession of the United States Government during and after the Second

⁴ See Adjutant General's Office, Administrative Services Division, Departmental Records Branch, *General List of Seized Records Available for Unofficial Research* (Reference Aid No. 15, Washington, Feb. 1954. DRB Publication No. 54-1, 7 pp.).

World War. The surveying phase of the Project was jointly supported by the Departments of the Army and the Navy and by the Department of State; it was completed in June 1952. In its present, second phase the Project in a systematic manner exploits, under the auspices of the Human Resources Research Institute, certain parts of the documentation that were surveyed during the first phase.

The War Documentation Project has appreciated the privilege of making known to the general public for the first time the unclassified documentary holdings of the following American institutions: the Library of Congress, the National Archives, the Hoover Institute and Library, and the Yiddish Scientific Institute and Library.

THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

The *Guide* shows that the extensive foreign documentary holdings on the period of the Second World War in the Library of Congress are divided between the main collection and various special collections. These holdings are partly based on materials collected in Washington for the war-information purposes of Government agencies. The Interdepartmental Committee for the Acquisition of Foreign Publications brought to Washington materials from enemy, neutral, and allied countries. Especially noteworthy groups of the Library's World War II collection are remarkable runs of the underground press of France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Norway, and Denmark, and thousands of German posters and leaflets, many of them in foreign languages, which are of great value for a study of German psychological warfare.

The Manuscripts Division and the Aeronautics Section of the Science Division must be singled out as the most representative among the Library's divisions with large document holdings. Groups of German captured documents began to drift into the Library shortly after the end of the war from various sources, such as the War Department, the Department of State, and the Library of Congress Mission to Germany.

Of first importance among the German holdings of the Manuscripts Division are the so-called Himmler files. They consist of photostatic copies of the 1938-44 files of one of the offices under Himmler's jurisdiction, and are labeled: "Reichsführer SS. Persönlicher Stab, Schriftgutverwaltung." This group is supplemented by another set of photostats in the Hoover Library. In the Himmler files much material is to be found on enforced migrations and population movements, which were one of Hitler's fallacious means

of "correcting" history and which cruelly boomeranged against the Germans in the postwar wave of expulsions. The Himmler files are also an important source for the study of antipartisan warfare in the East and in the West, efforts of German authorities to use anti-Soviet national movements in the German interest, the resettlement of Germans brought to the Reich from countries of Eastern and Southeastern Europe, and the recruiting of foreign legions of the Waffen SS.

Next in importance to the Himmler files the papers of Fritz Wiedemann should be mentioned. As Captain Wiedemann he was Hitler's superior officer in the first World War. Later he became Hitler's personal adjutant, and between 1938 and 1941 he served as German Consul General in San Francisco. Among his papers, drafts of reports on his mission to London in July 1938, when he had an important conversation with Lord Halifax, have been found; they will be published in the *Documents on German Foreign Policy*.

The largest German record groups in the Manuscripts Division are the Deutsches Auslandsinstitut papers and the Rehse collection. The latter is a private collection which had become part of the Nazi Party's main archives. Detailed descriptions of both record groups are to be found in the *Guide*.

Certain German Air Force documentation, chiefly concerning the German aircraft industry, which came to the Library after the war from the United States Air Force, has recently been transferred to the Departmental Records Branch in order to have it filed with other materials of the same type. During the last war materials relating to German aviation were assembled by the Air Documents Research Center of the United States Air Force in Europe and were later transferred to Dayton, Ohio, for cataloging and analysis. From German Air Force documentation in British custody several former high-ranking German Air Force officers, under the guidance of Maj. Gen. Von Rohden, prepared for the United States Air Force a summary "History of the German Air Force During World War II." A copy of the "History," draft memoranda of the "Project Von Rohden," and the supporting German documentation were presented to the Library of Congress by the Air Force.

The German documents in the Aeronautics Section and basic American materials — such as the papers of Gen. Billy Mitchell, General of the Air Force Henry H. Arnold, and Gen. Carl Spaatz, United States Air Force Chief of Staff — which have been de-

posited in the Manuscripts Division — will make the Library of Congress one of the future centers of research on air warfare.

The Library of Congress has also become the depository for portions of confiscated German aeronautical libraries, including those of the German Air Ministry and of the German Academy for Aeronautical Research. Such of these materials as were not duplicates of works already in the Library of Congress have been incorporated in the general collections of the Library; duplicates have been made available for exchange.

The Prints and Photographs Division has received several unusual collections. Of great interest to historians of German culture and art are between 6,000 and 7,000 photographs of the so-called "Führerprojekt" which after 1943 attempted to photograph all immovable works of art that might be endangered by anticipated Allied bombing. This project was not confined to the Reich proper; it also covered objects of art in Alsace-Lorraine, Austria, Estonia, Latvia, Czechoslovakia, and Poland.

The Goering albums in the Library of Congress; and a photograph collection on Hitler, 1920-44, made by the Heinrich Hoffmann Press Illustration Service, and the Ribbentrop albums in Alexandria, are probably the most exhaustive photobiographies of our times.

The Law Library in the Library of Congress contains records of the trials of war criminals in Germany and Japan. I will have a few words to say later on the Nuremberg documentation in the greater Washington area. The Law Library has also received, through the courtesy of the Finnish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, an English translation of the proceedings of the Finnish War Guilt Trial, which was held in Helsinki between November 1945 and February 1946.

THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES

The *Guide to Captured German Documents* lists for the National Archives two important record groups — materials of the former German Ministry of Foreign Affairs and of the Potsdam Heeresarchiv.

Since 1951 the Department of State has transferred in two installments to the National Archives a large number of rolls of microfilm prepared by the German War Documents Project. They contain German Foreign Ministry records of World War I and of the period of the armistice and the Peace Conference up to the signing of the Versailles Treaty. These films throw new light on

peace mediation and peace moves during the First World War.

Official and personal papers of some of the outstanding German military leaders in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries formed until recently part of the World War II collection of seized enemy records. These papers had been evacuated during the war from the Heeresarchiv Potsdam. The *List of File Microcopies of the National Archives*, published in 1950, contained descriptions of the Gröner and Von Seeckt papers, but not long ago the papers of the German military leaders were transferred to the Departmental Records Branch in Alexandria; they are now no longer open to the public. The National Archives closed this special collection in order to avoid possible future legal complications under copyright law.

Another important group of German documents, declassified by the State Department and now available at the National Archives, are the Stresemann papers. Since all the biographers of Stresemann have concentrated on his role as the outstanding Foreign Minister of the Weimar Republic, the Stresemann files deserve close scrutiny as material for German internal history and for a better understanding of Stresemann as a party leader.⁵

I want to conclude my remarks on Washington foreign research materials in the field of recent history by briefly discussing two large unrestricted accumulations of captured documents scattered in the Library of Congress, the National Archives, and the Departmental Records Branch — namely, Japanese records in the greater Washington area and the so-called Nuremberg documentation.

JAPANESE DOCUMENTATION

The Japanese documentation consists of the following three large groups: the microfilmed archives of the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, kept at the Library of Congress; the records of the Japanese War and Navy Ministries from 1867 to 1945, kept at the National Archives; and the records of the International Military Tribunal for the Far East in Tokyo, kept in the Law Library of the Library of Congress and at the Departmental Records Branch. It is not yet sufficiently recognized how much important documentation on international policies in the 1930's and for the last war is included in the proceedings of the Tokyo tribunal.

A little more should be said about the Japanese Foreign Ministry Archives Microfilming Project. The Library of Congress, through the cooperation of the Department of State and the Office of the

⁵ The Stresemann papers have been analyzed by Hans W. Gatzke; see his article "The Stresemann Papers," in *Journal of Modern History*, 26: 49-59 (Mar. 1954).

Supreme Commander of the Allied Powers in Japan, completed in June 1951 a project for microfilming selected archives of the Japanese Foreign Ministry, 1867-1945. The project produced 2,116 rolls of negative microfilm comprising 2,100,000 frames of film. The films were declassified by the State Department before the materials were released to the Library of Congress for general use. All of the negative films are now in the Library's Photoduplication Service. Positive reproductions of 50 rolls have been made. These positive films are in the Japanese Section of the Orientalia Division.

In 1948 a large collection — more than 300,000 pieces of Japanese material — was transferred to the Library of Congress by the Washington Document Center. Since the end of World War II the Library has acquired so much Japanese material, both by purchase and by transfer from other Government agencies, that in November of 1953 it was estimated that, even if there were no new acquisitions, 125 years would be required for the present staff of the Japanese Section to catalog the existing backlog.

The archives of the German-Japanese Association (*Deutsch-japanische Gesellschaft*) are now accessible at the Departmental Records Branch.

So much for Japanese documentation.

THE NUREMBERG DOCUMENTATION

The so-called Nuremberg documentation in Washington comprises the records of the International Military Tribunal and the series of 12 cases tried after the IMT trial. It includes tens of thousands of German documents collected by the prosecution and by the defense. Between 1945 and 1948, 61,000 documents were filed for official registration in the Nuremberg central documents room by Allied investigators. The total of documents reproduced for all the trials amounted to more than 750,000 mimeographed pages.

Innumerable Nuremberg documents have never been printed and are available only in mimeographed or typewritten form. The rapid deterioration of unprinted Nuremberg trial materials deposited in archives and libraries in this country and abroad is a matter of grave concern. A new process, however, for regenerating photostats that have faded away has been developed by German chemical research and successfully applied to large holdings of Nuremberg trial materials kept at the Nuremberg State Archives.

Lester K. Born, coordinator of microproduction projects of the Library of Congress, has investigated the possibility of microfilming the essential documentation connected with the Nuremberg trials. This could probably be done only as a cooperative project of American and European archives and libraries. Dr. Born estimates that an absolute minimum of two and a half million pages would have to be microfilmed, even after the elimination of the substantial quantity of material that has been printed in its entirety or so fully as to render further reproduction unnecessary.

Since the completion of the Nuremberg trials criticism of the methods of collecting documentary evidence and of analyzing the documents has been mounting. In a rather sweeping statement Robert M. W. Kempner, former United States Deputy Chief of Counsel for War Crimes in Nuremberg, has called the Chief of Counsel's office "the world's greatest institute in European foreign relations and history, and of German government, military, and business administration." In my opinion the Nuremberg proceedings have rather impaired the prestige of historical research than increased it. A constant battle was fought at Nuremberg between the defense and the prosecution over the use of historical documentation, and a German lawyer bitterly complained (I quote from the record of the Weizsäcker trial):

The prosecution does not submit its documents in order to establish the actual facts and the historical truth, but makes its selection of the documents purely from the point of view of their suitability to point an accusing finger against the defendants.

The fervor of the defense to find facts that might lead to exoneration and to furnish such material evidence was as great as the passion of the prosecution to submit incriminating material. It is true, in the words of the Prosecution Counsel, that the "growing source book of history has been the backbone of the Nürnberg story." But it is also evident that today the scholar in his search for the historical truth must approach and use the Nuremberg documents more objectively than did the prosecution and the defense 7 and 8 years ago.

This brings to an end my rapid survey. In closing I wish to express my profound gratitude to those administrative officers of the Library of Congress, the National Archives, and the Departmental Records Branch who have facilitated in every way possible the preparation of this address. I know that nothing will give them greater pleasure than to welcome and assist qualified scholars who wish to make use of these valuable materials.