

Sworn Statement in which Former Reichsbank Employee Albert Thoms Reports on the Bank's Receipt of Valuables Taken from Death Camp Victims (May 26, 1948)

Abstract

Albert Thoms headed the Department of Precious Metals at the Reichsbank, and in this capacity he was responsible for receiving shipments of gold and other valuables stolen by the Nazis. In May 1945, the American military discovered these shipments in the salt mines at Merkers, a village in Thuringia. After his arrest, Thoms served as a witness in the Nuremberg Trials in order to escape prosecution. He provided extensive testimony and worked together with the American occupation forces to uncover the Reichsbank's involvement in the distribution of Nazi loot.

In August 1942, Bruno Melmer, a captain in the SS Economic and Administrative Main Office [*SS-Wirtschafts- und Verwaltungshauptamt* or *WVHA*], began sending the Reichsbank jewelry, foreign currency, coins, and precious metals (including gold fillings and crowns) that had been taken from Holocaust victims in Eastern Europe as part of the "Action Reinhardt" in the death camps Belzec, Sobibor, Treblinka, and Auschwitz. The Reichsbank kept the currency; the jewelry was sent to the Municipal Pawnshop in Berlin, and the gold was melted down. Profits from the use or sale of looted goods were directed into an SS bank account, and a large portion of the melted-down gold was sold to Swiss banks to help finance the war. According to American estimates, the total worth of the Melmer shipments equalled approximately 36 million Reichsmarks. The SS was not the only organization to deliver looted valuables to the Reichsbank—but since its shipments were accompanied by detailed documentation, these were the ones that eventually provided unassailable evidence of the Reichsbank's involvement in the trade of personal possessions stolen from Holocaust victims.

In the 1990s, when it became known that gold looted by the Nazis could still be found in Switzerland, an investigation was launched. The investigation revealed that the registry of the Melmer deliveries, the so-called Melmer Notebooks, had apparently been destroyed during the 1970s in the Federal Republic. The investigation also revealed that most of the melted-down gold from crowns and fillings had not in fact been sent to Switzerland but sold by two German banks, Deutsche Bank and Dresdner Bank.

Source

Having been warned that I will be liable for punishment for making false statements, I, Albert Thoms, hereby freely and voluntarily state the following under oath:

During my tenure at the German Reichsbank in Berlin, the SS made a total of 76 deliveries of valuables under the name Melmer. I already described these deliveries in both an affidavit and in my testimony before the International Military Tribunal in Nuremberg on May 15, 1946. A portion of these 76 deliveries could no longer be utilized, since, on account of the circumstances of war, the valuables of the Reichsbank (gold, etc.) were evacuated and moved to a safe place. The whole move was recorded on pages 1–15 (which were specially numbered in red) of the receipt-book of the Reichsbank's purchasing office for precious metals. I acknowledge that the enclosed photocopies are legitimate copies of pages 14 and 15 of this book. The remaining Melmer deliveries (a total of 207 containers, which were also moved) were comprised of gold, foreign currency, jewelry, precious stones, pearls, ~~broken out~~ crowns for teeth and fillings. Since these deliveries could no longer be processed and sorted, they were brought to

the salt mines in Merkers in their original containers, i.e., boxes, packages, trunks, and other containers.

I have carefully read the above declaration, which consists of one page, have made the necessary corrections in my own handwriting, have initialed them, and hereby state under oath that the above is the whole truth according to the best of my knowledge and conscience.

Albert Thoms

Source of original German text: U.S. National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, MD, Record Group 238, Entry 171, Box 255, NI-15533.

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