

H. A. Krüss

National Socialist Commissar and Compromised Internationalist¹

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In 1939 Hugo Andres Krüss stood at the height of his career and as a leading figure in German librarianship. Entering his fifteenth year as head of the Prussian State Library (Preussische Staatsbibliothek, hereafter Staatsbibliothek), he enjoyed international recognition. Within a year he had assumed an official role administering libraries in the occupied Western territories. This paper contrasts his career as an internationalist with the complex mixture of professional ideals, political convictions, national imperatives, and opportunism represented in his wartime actions.

Early Career

Born in Hamburg in 1879, H. A. Krüss studied physics, chemistry and mathematics and then began a career in public service as a member of the German commission at the 1904 St. Louis World's Fair.² Forty years later he wrote, "This year spent abroad in my youth was determinative for my future life in many ways."³ Shortly after his return to Germany Krüss began working in the Ministry of Culture. After a brief term in the Ministry of the Interior, in 1920 he moved to the Ministry for Science, Art and Education where he rose in rank and responsibility. He

¹ An earlier version of this paper was presented in Strasbourg, France, at the conference "Livres et bibliothèques scientifiques dans les territoires occupés et annexés par l'Allemagne nationale-socialiste," 21 November 2008.

Note that quotations in German and French appear in the author's translations in the text with the original in italics in the corresponding footnote.

² Sources for the basic facts of Krüss's life and career are: Alexandra Habermann, Rainer Klemmt, and Frauke Siefkes, *Lexikon Deutscher wissenschaftlicher Bibliothekare 1925-1980* (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1985), 175-76; Hermann Fuchs, "In memoriam H. A. Krüss," *Zeitschrift für Bibliothekswesen und Bibliographie*, 1 (1954): 110-23; and the personal information form that Krüss completed on 3 June 1940, a copy of which is in the manuscript collection of the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin [hereafter SBB], Acta PrStB I 3³ (Krüss), Bd. 2: Folder "1928-1933"

³ "Dieses, in jugendlichem Alter im Ausland verbrachte Jahr ist für mein weiteres Leben in vieler Hinsicht bestimmend gewesen."

Cited by Werner Schochow, "Hugo Andres Krüss und die Preußische Staatsbibliothek," *Bibliothek: Forschung und Praxis*, 19 (1995): 8.

participated in founding the Notgemeinschaft der deutschen Wissenschaft (Emergency Organization for German Science)⁴ and he became a trustee of the Amerika-Institut in Berlin.⁵ He married Anna Doty of Chicago.

While his responsibilities in the ministry had acquainted Krüss to some extent with library issues, it surprised many in 1925 when he was named Generaldirektor of the Staatsbibliothek. At his installation Krüss highlighted the international significance of libraries, lamenting that it had not yet been possible to knit back together

the threads of international scholarly cooperation torn apart by the war....[The libraries] are also in a broader sense one of the most important sources from which a profound influence on these issues should proceed. No understanding of the other without knowledge of the other.⁶

This strong commitment to internationalism and consummate skills as an administrator came to typify Krüss's career. He traveled widely, becoming for many the face of German librarianship. At the American Library Association's fiftieth anniversary conference in 1926 he spoke about the Staatsbibliothek and about German interest in international cooperation, amplifying his remarks in a Chicago radio address: "[International cooperation] should be based on the peculiar efficiency and power of initiative of each individual nation that has something valuable to offer the community of nations."⁷ Before the Hungarian Academy of Sciences the following year, Krüss spoke of the global potential for enriching knowledge:

However different the ways may be in which new scholarly knowledge is gained, it enters the whole body of knowledge which cannot be divided nationally, but is the common property of all humanity.⁸

⁴ Kurt Zierold, *Forschungsförderung in drei Epochen* (Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1968), 16-19.

⁵ Folder "Amerika-Institut," 1921-1925, SBB, Acta PrStB: Archiv A-16.

⁶ "die durch den Krieg abgerissenen Fäden internationaler wissenschaftlicher Zusammenarbeit....[Die Bibliotheken] sind auch im weiteren Sinne eine der wichtigsten Stellen, von denen eine tiefgehende Einwirkung auf diese Dinge ausgehen soll. Kein Verstehen des Andern ohne Wissen vom Andern." "Umschau und neue Nachrichten," *Zentralblatt für Bibliothekswesen*, 42 (1925): 581.

⁷ Krüss, "Bericht über meine Tätigkeit an der 50-Jahrfeier der 'American Library Association' in Atlantic City vom 4. bis 8. October und an der von der Association für die ausländischen Delegierten veranstalteten Studienreise vom 9. bis 22. October 1926," SBB, Acta PrStB I 3³ (Krüss), Bd. 1: Folder "1925-1927," fol. 95. Also see a published version of the Atlantic City address: Krüss, "The Prussian State Library," *Library Journal*, 51 (1926): 1005-10.

⁸ "Wie verschiedenartig aber auch die Wege sein mögen, auf denen eine neue wissenschaftliche Erkenntnis gewonnen ist, sie geht ein in den Gesamtbau der Wissenschaft, der nicht national aufgeteilt werden kann, sondern Gemeingut der gesamten Menschheit ist." Krüss, *Deutschland und die internationale wissenschaftliche Zusammenarbeit* (Budapest: Königlich Ungarische Universitätsdruckerei, 1928), 5.

He was among the founders of the International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA) in 1927—indeed, at that meeting he and Carl Milam of the American Library Association are credited as the “two outstanding personalities [who] had distinguished themselves by their exceptional tact and skillful negotiating.”⁹

Krüss also contributed to an active German presence in another arena, the International Committee on Intellectual Co-operation created by the League of Nations in 1922. In 1926 he became an associate member of its Sub-Committee for Bibliography, whose members also included Marie Curie and Albert Einstein,¹⁰ and later joined other working groups. Implicit in Krüss’s internationalism, particularly in his work with the League of Nations, was a nationalist’s pride in regaining a German place at the table in international scientific and cultural affairs.

The Third Reich

For H.A. Krüss, the ambassador for German librarianship, the events of 1933 brought increasingly trying international encounters. While many of his colleagues were early members of the NSDAP, Krüss joined the party quite late, in April 1940.¹¹ In the autumn of 1933 he attended the American Library Association annual conference and an IFLA council meeting in the United States. The level of press attention to his visit took him by surprise. Reporters met his arrival in New York with questions about book burnings. According to *The New York Times*:

Professor Kruess said that he was eager “to spike the rumor” that the library or any other important library had lost valuable works in the “burning of Jewish books.”

“At the time of the burning of the books, as it was called,” he said, “a decree was issued that no books in any of the principal libraries were to be molested. That decree has been meticulously observed. I told my chief aide, who is a Social Democrat, that if any one came to the library to get any books the offenders were to be kicked on the shins and put out.”¹²

Krüss soon found it necessary to claim that he had been misquoted.¹³

⁹ Joachim Wieder, “An Outline of IFLA’s History,” in Willem R. H. Koops and Joachim Wieder, eds., *IFLA’s First Fifty Years* (München: Verlag Dokumentation, 1977), 14.

¹⁰ International Committee on Intellectual Co-operation, *Minutes of the Seventh Session* (Geneva: League of Nations, 1926), 4.

¹¹ Personal information form (Note 2).

¹² “Denies Nazis Rename Mendelssohn Room,” *The New York Times*, 7 October 1933, 13.

¹³ Krüss letters to *The New York Times*, 8 October 1933, and *The New York Herald Tribune*, 7 October 1933, both in SBB, Acta PrStB, Handakte Krüss, Nr. 62, VI. The *Times* dutifully printed a correction under the headline “Dr. Kruess Denies Order,” *The New York Times*, 10 October 1933, 12.

Encountering questions everywhere, Krüss drafted several position statements. One argued that “drastic measures” had to be taken to reduce Jewish influence in Germany to correspond to their proportion of the population because “certain professions were just overcrowded by Jews.” Yet, he claimed, “we do not lack feeling for the tragedy of many individual cases affected by such measures.”¹⁴

The fine line between nationalist and international perspectives that Krüss attempted to walk grew even thinner. On his voyage home he received a cable from the Foreign Office: “would be grateful if upon arrival you conferred with the foreign office before any further journey because of consequences of Germany’s withdrawal from League of Nations”¹⁵ Krüss was dictated language for letters of resignation from all League of Nations bodies. But on the same day, without carbon copies to the Foreign Office, he also wrote private letters to the presidents of the Committee on Intellectual Cooperation and the International Educational Cinematographic Institute, expressing the hope that his friendships with committee members would continue. In turn he received letters of regret from committee colleagues and others in international library circles. In a typical response he assured William W. Bishop, director of the University of Michigan Library and IFLA president, “in the library sphere there remains the broadest scope for continued collaboration, even outside the League of Nations, and so my relations with you and the other friends in America remain completely unaffected by the events in Geneva.” And he found occasions to remain in contact, sending the Committee a letter of condolence when Madame Curie died in 1934.¹⁶

Krüss remained active in international library activities throughout the 1930’s. He attended the second IFLA congress in Spain in 1935 and general council meetings through 1939. Krüss’s report on the 1935 meeting mentioned with pride that Germany’s “meticulously prepared draft” for international interlibrary loan guidelines formed the basis for the principles adopted.¹⁷

Krüss served as an advisory editor of The University of Chicago’s *Library Quarterly* from its inaugural issue in January 1931 until January 1943 when his name disappeared without comment.¹⁸ And he continued to be a popular speaker at international conferences. He

¹⁴ SBB, Acta PrStB, Handakte Krüss, Nr. 62, VI.

¹⁵ “wäre dankbar wenn sie nach ankunft vor etwaiger weiterreise wegen der sich aus austritt deutschlands aus völkerbund ergebenen folgen im auswärtigen amt vorsprechen wollten.” SBB, Acta PrStB, Handakte Krüss, Nr. 62, VI, folder, “Völkerbund Internat. Arbeit 1933/34”

¹⁶ “auf dem Interessengebiet der Bibliotheken bleibt ja der weiteste Spielraum für weitere Zusammenarbeit auch ausserhalb des Völkerbundes, und so werden meine Beziehungen zu Ihnen und den übrigen Freunden in Amerika durch die Vorgänge in Genf ganz unberührt bleiben.” SBB, Acta PrStB, Teilnachlass Krüss, Archiv A-16.

¹⁷ “sorgfältig bereitete Entwurf”

Krüss, “Bericht über den zweiten Internationalen Kongress für Bibliothekswesen und Bibliographie in Madrid und Barcelona,” 22 June 1935, SBB, Acta PrStB I 3³ (Krüss), Bd. 2a: Folder “1934-1939,” 79, p. 5.

¹⁸ *The Library Quarterly*, 13 (1943), No. 1.

addressed the 1937 World Congress of Universal Documentation in Paris on “The Mastery of Knowledge,” ranging eloquently across Western intellectual history with facile quotations in French and English and urging both national responsibility and international cooperation.¹⁹

One senses the conflicted position of Krüss the internationalist at the July 1939 IFLA general council meeting. President Marcel Godet of Switzerland spoke bluntly about ideologies dividing the library world. German and Italian delegates were said to have stiffened as he declared that “subordination of intellectual activities to political goals introduces an element of disunity into a world of disinterested research.” In response Krüss quoted British colleague and IFLA co-founder Arundell Esdaile who said the organization had “done a great work in bringing the profession into a fellowship—a fellowship which, I may say, is a haven of peace in a stormy world.”²⁰

War

The outbreak of war brought significant new challenges for German libraries. In an interview with the *Völkische Beobachter* in November 1939 Krüss spoke of the need to protect the library by moving treasures to safekeeping and preparing the reading room for blackouts, but he also addressed issues with international dimensions. He lamented the decrease in international interlibrary loan and he warned that acquisitions of foreign material must not be curtailed as in the First World War: “That is a warning to us to apply all necessary means to prevent such scholarly isolation today.”²¹

Meanwhile on 15 May, as the Dutch army surrendered, Krüss wrote to the Education Ministry (Reichsministerium für Wissenschaft, Erziehung und Volksbildung, hereafter RMWEV) recommending creation of a unit headed by Dr. Adolf Jürgens of the Staatsbibliothek to oversee libraries in Belgium and the Netherlands: “Supervision of the libraries in the occupied area by a library office [is] an absolute necessity for the preservation and safeguarding of the cultural property in question, for which Germany has assumed responsibility in the occupation.”²²

¹⁹ Krüss, “Die Beherrschung des Wissens,” in *Congrès Mondial de la documentation universelle. Compte rendu des travaux* (Paris: Secrétariat, [1937]), 31-33.

²⁰ “subordination des activités intellectuelles aux buts politiques ... introduit dans un monde de recherches désintéressées ...un élément de désunion” *Actes du Comité international des bibliothèques, 12^{me} Session, La Haye-Amsterdam, 10-12 juillet 1939* (La Haye: Nijhoff, 1940), 12, 17.

²¹ “Das ist eine Mahnung an uns, heute einer derartigen wissenschaftlichen Isolierung mit allen Mitteln vorzubeugen,” “Bibliothekswesen im Krieg,” *Völkische Beobachter*, 26 November 1939. Copy in SBB, Acta PrStB, Teilnachlass Krüss, Archiv A-16.

²² “Die Überwachung der Bibliotheken im besetzten Gebiet durch eine bibliothekarische Stelle [ist] eine unbedingte Notwendigkeit zur Bewahrung und Sicherung der in Frage stehende Kulturwerte, für die

But Krüss soon intertwined a less benign purpose in his proposal—the return to Germany of library collections removed to France and Belgium through spoliation in earlier wars. After German troops had entered Paris he learned that Staatsarchiv director Ernst Zipfel had been appointed “Commissar for Archival Protection in the Western Theater.” Zipfel informed Krüss of his intentions:

It is obvious that as far as possible I must endeavor to take advantage of the military situation for the advantage of German archives. I am therefore resolved to press ahead vigorously with the demands that the German side must make of the archives of these countries.²³

Beyond surveying German archives for documentation of legal claims, he would inquire “which acquisitions beyond that they consider desirable for political, scholarly, or archival reasons.”²⁴ On 19 June Krüss asked the RMWEV to grant him parallel responsibility for libraries.²⁵

By 2 July when he was appointed “Commissar for Securing Libraries and Administering Book Stock in the Western Theater”²⁶ Krüss had prepared himself for action. He had already met with one of Zipfel’s deputies on 22 June to learn more about the twin aims of the archival protection unit, to assure him that a library protection unit would cooperate closely, and to inform him of preparatory work underway in the Staatsbibliothek for repatriation of library collections. In his first ten days as Commissar Krüss’s diary records that he consulted with staff about securing libraries and met with retired manuscript librarian Hermann Degering “about the return of manuscripts from Belgium and France.”²⁷

In this same period he chose Dr. Ernst Wermke of the Breslau city library as his liaison officer with the military occupation in Paris.²⁸ And he sent a form letter to 150 German libraries asking

Deutschland mit der Besetzung die Verantwortung übernommen hat,”

Krüss to RMWEV, 15 May 1940, Bundesarchiv Berlin-Lichterfelde [hereafter BArch], R4901/13701, fol. 4.

²³ *“Es liegt auf der Hand, daß ich dabei bestrebt sein muß, die Gunst der militärischen Lage soweit wie möglich für die Belange des deutschen Archivwesens auszunutzen. Ich bin deshalb entschlossen, die Forderungen, die von deutscher Seite an die Archive jener Länder zu stellen sind, mit allem Nachdruck zu betreiben.”*

Zipfel to Krüss, 17 June 1940, BArch, R4901/13701, fol. 5a.

²⁴ *“welche Erwerbungen sie darüber hinaus aus politischen, wissenschaftlichen oder archivalischen Gründen für wünschenswert halten,”*

ibid.

²⁵ Krüss to RMWEV, 19 June 1940, BArch, R4901/13701, fol. 6.

²⁶ Rudolf Kummer to Krüss, 2 July 1940, BArch, R4901/13701, fol. 11.

²⁷ *“über Rückgabe von Handschriften aus Belgien u. Frankreich,”*

2 July 1940 – 11 July 1940 in: “Daily News 1940,” SBB, Nachlass Krüss, Erg. 2, Kasten 2.

²⁸ Krüss to Oberkommando der Wehrmacht, 11 June 1940, BArch, R4901/13701, fol. 45.

for help in identifying two categories of books and manuscripts in France and Belgium: German library property illegally removed in the past which might be reclaimed; and valuable items that had been acquired legally, but which might be desirable as reparations in a peace treaty.²⁹ Krüss seemed to perceive no conflict between protecting libraries and contemplating removing treasures from them. In a letter to the RMWEV at the end of July he indicated that with the survey underway he could turn to the second part of his responsibility, learning the condition of French and Belgian libraries and the measures necessary to secure them. He planned a fact-finding trip to the occupied territories, accompanied by Joseph Becker and Ernst Fuchs of the Staatsbibliothek staff.³⁰

Krüss also regarded Jewish and Masonic collections very differently from state and public libraries. Just before his appointment he accepted for the Staatsbibliothek some 4,000 volumes in Hebrew and Yiddish seized from the rabbi in Jędrzejów, Poland, and offered by the Generalgouvernement occupation authorities. In late July he confirmed receipt of the shipment: “with sincere thanks.”³¹

Krüss’s schizophrenic position is evident in his early contacts with Reichsleiter Alfred Rosenberg, propaganda minister Joseph Goebbels, and their staffs. On 24 July he met with Herbert Gerigk whom Rosenberg had sent to clarify their respective roles. Gerigk informed him that Hitler had authorized Rosenberg to secure in western archives material that was desirable for Germany and to seize politically undesirable literature in Masonic lodges and elsewhere. He claimed it was expressly Hitler’s will “that no illegal actions be taken with respect to the enemies’ cultural property, and that Reichsleiter Rosenberg’s units followed this principle.”³²

By Krüss’s account, in his August meeting with Rosenberg the Reichsleiter emphasized that there was no conflict between their assignments since he was primarily interested in confiscating libraries of Freemasons, Jews, and “certain private libraries of undesirable persons” to develop the libraries of his Institute for Study of the Jewish Question in Frankfurt and other institutes. His interest in French public libraries, he assured Krüss, was only very general.³³

²⁹ Krüss, 10 July 1940, BArch, R4901/13701, fol. 26.

³⁰ Krüss to RMWEV, 31 July 1940, BArch, R4901/13701, fol. 42-44.

³¹ Dr. Drescher to Staatsbibliothek, 25 June 1940; Krüss to Amt des Generalgouverneurs, 1 July 1940; and Krüss to Drescher, 27 July 1940, all in SBB, Acta PrStB VII 1^m. For details of the Staatsbibliothek’s recent efforts to identify in its collections these books, as well as others taken from Jewish owners, see Barbara Schneider-Kempf, “Preußische Staatsbibliothek, Reichstauschstelle und Raubgut,” in Regine Dehnel, ed., *Jüdischer Buchbesitz als Raubgut* (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 2006), 333-34.

³² “*dass gegenüber dem feindlichen Kulturbesitz keinerlei illegale Handlungen vorgenommen wurden und dass nach diesem Grundsatz auch von der Dienststellen des Reichsleiters Rosenberg verfahren werde,*”

Krüss, note, 24 July 1940, SBB, Acta PrStB VII 1^m.

³³ “*gewisse Privatbibliotheken unerwünschter Personen,*”
Krüss, note, 7 August 1940, SBB, Acta PrStB VII 1^m.

However, Rosenberg's own notes reveal a less accommodating position: "I am having lists compiled in Paris of state and private libraries that are in dispute to submit to the Führer for decisions whether or not they are to be confiscated by order now, or through peace treaty, etc."³⁴

Krüss, Fuchs, and Becker visited Paris together from 23 August through 2 September. They met with German military and foreign service officials including Ambassador Otto Abetz and with Dr. Karl Epting who headed the Deutsches Institut. They toured the Bibliothèque Nationale and the Sorbonne and conferred with their librarians as well as meeting with French "documentalists" whom Krüss knew.³⁵ Together with the army high command they framed a Bibliotheksschutz (archival protection unit) as part of the Schule und Kultur division of the military government. Immediately on his return to Berlin Krüss named ten librarians to become counselors in the military administrations in Paris and Brussels. These included Dr. Wermke, who would serve as leader, and Dr. Fuchs who had stayed on in Paris.³⁶ The unit began its work on 1 October.³⁷

A week after returning to Berlin Krüss reported to the RMWEV regarding the compilation of lists of German books and manuscripts in French and Belgian libraries. Initial research had concentrated on material taken during the Wars of the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Era, beginning with lists from the World War, now verified, corrected, and expanded on the basis of his survey. After meeting with Goebbels in August he had expanded the project's scope to include works destroyed or removed from Germany since 1500. He had also developed a new scheme of three categories—extraordinarily valuable, less valuable, and limited to local importance—each subdivided by the strength of Germany's legal claim. He remarked that by now some of these titles were in libraries overseas, especially in America, "where they are beyond our reach," and noted that a review of English catalogs would only yield titles to which Germany had no legal claim. The newly-established Bibliotheksschutz was poised to conduct further research onsite in occupied territory.³⁸

Krüss met with Goebbels again in mid-September to report on the Paris trip and the survey, now being amplified through onsite research by Bibliotheksschutz staff. Goebbels supported Krüss's

³⁴ "ich lasse in Paris Aufstellungen über strittige staatl- u. private Bibliotheken machen, um dem Führer zur Entscheidung vorzulegen, ob sie durch Anordnung jetzt, durch Friedensvertrag usw. zu beschlagnahmen sind, oder nicht."

Alfred Rosenberg, manuscript notes, August 1940, Archives du Centre de Documentation Juive Contemporaine, Paris, CXLIV-394.

³⁵ 21 August 1940 – 4 September 1940 in: "Daily News 1940," SBB, Nachlass Krüss, Erg. 2, Kasten 2.

³⁶ Krüss to Oberkommando der Heeres, Berlin, 9 September 1940, BArch, R21/10647, fols. 98-99.

³⁷ "Die öffentlichen wissenschaftlichen Bibliotheken Frankreichs mit besonderer Berücksichtigung des besetzten Gebietes," [ca. April 1941], p. 38, SBB, Acta PrStB, Handakte Krüss, Nr. 49.

³⁸ "wo sie sich unserem Zugriff entziehen,"

Krüss, "Vorläufiger Bericht über den Stand der Vorarbeiten für die Rückforderung deutschen Bibliotheksgutes," 9 September 1940, SBB, Acta PrStB VII 1^m.

view “that I could not consider it right to demand unlimited return of German cultural property beyond the obvious recovery of illegally removed property.” Krüss argued that exemplars of German culture fulfilled a useful function abroad and that French state and public libraries should increase their German holdings. While he believed the book confiscations already carried out in Paris represented the justifiable seizure of intellectual weapons from Freemasons, Jews, and emigrants who were making war on Germany, to proceed similarly in state libraries, especially the Bibliothèque Nationale, would be impermissible.³⁹

At this early date Krüss was clearly well-informed regarding the nature of confiscations that the Einsatzstab Reichsleiter Rosenberg (Reichsleiter Rosenberg Taskforce, hereafter ERR) had already undertaken in Paris. On 16 September ERR staff member Dr. Wilhelm Grau reported to the military administration the confiscation of material from fifteen locations since 22 July, including three Jewish organizations, three Masonic lodges, the Theosophical Society, six properties of the Rothschild family, and two bookstores owned or managed by Jews.⁴⁰

Krüss was also well aware that in June the ERR had seized the Bibliothèque Polonaise with its 130,000 volumes. As Commissar and as head of the Staatsbibliothek he was in the midst of wrangling over its disposition. At the request of the military administration the secret field police had sealed the library and halted the ERR’s packing activity pending adjudication of ownership among claimants that included the publication department of the Foreign Office, the Staatsbibliothek, the Secret State Archives, the Ostinstitut in Kraków, and the ERR. Krüss and Legationsrat Paul Roth of the Foreign Office corresponded and telephoned back and forth through September and October, each upholding his institution’s claim and insisting that the other bore responsibility for resolving the issue. They finally agreed to propose administering the Polish library jointly, only to find that Hitler himself had awarded it to the ERR.⁴¹

The Germans made bold propaganda claims for the constructive work of the Bibliotheksschutz unit. A February 1941 article in *Pariser Zeitung*, the newspaper published by the occupation forces, maintained:

³⁹ “dass ich es nicht für richtig halten könne, das deutsche Kulturgut über die selbstverständliche Rückforderung unrechtmässig entführten Kulturguts hinaus unbegrenzt zurückzuverlangen,” Krüss, “Aufzeichnung über die Besprechung mit Herrn Reichsminister Dr. Goebbels,” 18 September 1940, SBB, Acta PrStB VII 1^m.

⁴⁰ Patricia Kennedy Grimsted located copies of this document, “Beschlagnahme von Bibliotheken und Archiven,” in the BArch, B 323/261, fols. 268-69 and in the United States National Archives, College Park, RG 260, Records of the Munich Central Collecting Point, Restitution Research Records, Box 452. The latter is reproduced in Patricia Kennedy Grimsted, F.J. Hoogewoud, and Eric Ketelaar, *Returned from Russia: Nazi Archival Plunder in Western Europe and Recent Restitution Issues* (Builth Wells, United Kingdom: Institute of Art and Law, 2007), 138.

⁴¹ Krüss letters of 21 September, and 11 and 15 October; Roth letters of 10 and 19 September, and 25 October, SBB, Acta PrStB VII 1^m

In the library sphere loyal collaboration between the German and French [cultural property protection] services has been manifest. The librarians confidently report their concerns to the German protection service which is always there to help where it can and where needed. This is the case with respect to reopening libraries, the protection of these buildings from seizure, providing fuel for heat, furloughs for interned librarians, the exchange of scholarly collections and the return of books and manuscripts loaned before the war, passes for librarians who must travel to the unoccupied zones, etc.⁴²

An internal German document on the state of French research libraries confirms that during its first six months the Bibliotheksschutz visited ninety-nine libraries and ten evacuation sites to survey the state of collections, buildings, and operations under wartime conditions. While expressing considerable sympathy for French colleagues and their efforts, the report betrays less benign activity as well:

Insofar as evacuated books were needed for the work of the Bibliotheksschutz unit or German scholars and there were no misgivings regarding repatriation they were at least brought back to their original locations from the evacuation sites in the occupied territories.⁴³

A report on the first year of operations by the smaller Bibliotheksschutz unit for Belgium and northern territory France described similar activities, albeit on a more modest scale and hampered by fuel shortages. Dr. Heinrich Schreiber noted the activities of the ERR, “which employed considerable force against libraries that were Jewish or enemies of the people, whereby encroachments in the protection of scholarly libraries became unavoidable.” After the Bibliotheksschutz washed its hands of protective oversight by agreeing that such interventions could proceed if approved by the military administration, “the department [could] carry out its actual program fairly independently.”⁴⁴

⁴² *“Une collaboration loyale s’est manifestée dans ce domaine des bibliothèques entre les services allemands et français. Les bibliothécaires exposent leurs soucis en toute confiance au service de protection allemand, et celui-ci ne manque pas d’apporter son aide là où il le peut et lorsque cela est nécessaire. Il en est ainsi dans la question de la recouverture des bibliothèques, de la protection de ces édifices contre les saisies, de la fourniture des moyens de chauffage, des congés aux bibliothécaires prisonniers, de l’échange de collections scientifiques du retour des manuscrits et des livres prêtés avant la guerre, des laissez-passer pour les bibliothécaires qui ont à se rendre en zone non occupée, etc.”* “L’Allemagne protégé les œuvres culturelles en France occupée,” *Pariser Zeitung*, 12 February 1941 (copy in SBB, Acta PrStB VII 1^m).

⁴³ *“Soweit das geflüchtete Buchgut für die Arbeiten des Referates Bibliotheksschutz oder deutscher Gelehrter benötigt würde und seiner Rückführung keine Bedenken entgegenstanden, ist es wenigstens aus den Flüchtlingsdepots des besetzten Gebietes an den ursprünglichen Ort zurückgebracht worden.”* “Die öffentlichen wissenschaftlichen Bibliotheken Frankreichs mit besonderer Berücksichtigung des besetzten Gebietes,” [ca. April 1941], p. 39, SBB, Acta PrStB, Handakte Krüss, Nr. 49.

⁴⁴ *“der unter Einsatz erheblicher Machtmittel gegen Bibliotheken jüdischem und volksfeindlichen Charakters vorgingen, wobei Eingriffe in das Gebiet der wissenschaftlichen Bibliothekspflege nicht zu vermeiden waren.”* “das Referat [konnte] sein eigentliches Programm ziemlich selbstständig durchführen.”

Krüss received personal expressions of thanks from his colleagues for French books distributed to German university libraries. Dr. Josef Rest, director in Freiburg, wrote to Krüss with gratitude “that we have received so many of the books confiscated in Paris” and with appreciation for Fuchs “who has undertaken the trouble of sorting and allocating for us in Paris.”⁴⁵

Rather than take a stand himself, Krüss sometimes passed responsibility to others on the basis of competence. Thus he directed to Rosenberg’s staff a query from the head of the army archive in the Netherlands, “since it is a library confiscated from a Jew...and the matter falls within your sphere.”⁴⁶ And when the RMWEV forwarded him an inquiry from the Reichsstatthalter in Vienna, Baldur von Schirach, about returning Mozart manuscripts from the West, Krüss responded that the matter should be handled by Dr. Gerigk of Rosenberg’s staff whom the Propaganda Ministry had put in charge of music.⁴⁷

In November 1941 Krüss traveled to Strasbourg with a delegation from the RMWEV for the formal opening of the “Reichsuniversität Straßburg.” Immediately after his return to Berlin he spoke with Dr. Wermke about efforts to reduce or dissolve the Bibliotheksschutz.⁴⁸ Krüss appealed to the army command to permit the unit to continue for at least a year its work on lists of books to return to Germany, as well as preparing photocopies for German scholars and for the war effort, “since the necessary access to French property would never have been possible at other times and will largely be difficult after the occupation of French territory ends.” The Generalquartiermeister responded that the military administration was undergoing general reductions in personnel and that for the present the librarians’ “scholarly research and surveys” must be deferred so that they could assist with supervision of French archives. Krüss sent a copy to Wermke, asking to be informed of any direct effort to merge the Bibliotheksschutz into the Archivschutz so that he could “protest energetically.”⁴⁹

Schreiber to Krüss, 28 February 1942, “Bericht über die Tätigkeit de Referats Bibliotheksschutz beim Militärbefehlshaber in Belgien und Nord-Frankreich vom 1. Oktober 1940 – 6. September 1941,” SBB, Acta PrStB VII 1^m.

⁴⁵ “*daß wir von den in Paris beschlagnahmten Büchern so viele erhalten haben*”
“*der sich in Paris für uns der Mühe des Aussonderns und Zuteilens unterzogen hat.*”
Rest to Krüss, 4 March 1941, SBB, Acta PrStB VII 1^m.

⁴⁶ “*da es sich um eine bei einem Juden beschlagnahmte Bibliothek handelt und die Angelegenheit...in Ihrem Bereich fällt.*”
Krüss to Stabsleiter Urban, 22 February 1941, SBB, Acta PrStB VII 1^m.

⁴⁷ Krüss to RMWEV, 17 February 1941, SBB, Acta PrStB VII 1^m.

⁴⁸ Entries for 21 November 1941—29 November 1941 in: “Daily News 1941,” SBB, Nachlass Krüss, Erg. 2, Kasten 2.

⁴⁹ “*da die notwendige Zugänglichkeit des französischen Besitzes zu anderer Zeit nie hat ermöglicht werden können und auch nach Abschluß der Besetzung des französischen Gebietes weitgehend erschwert sein wird.*”

The Bibliotheksschutz staff in Paris and Brussels continued to refine and expand its documentation of library materials whose repatriation Germany might demand. The archives of the Staatsbibliothek hold a bound, typescript volume of 91 pages entitled “Looted books for which to search in the libraries of France and Belgium.” The undated list is arranged alphabetically by city.⁵⁰ In the autumn of 1943 Fuchs became concerned when he heard indirectly that the Archivschutz had already finalized its list of archival materials for potential return and submitted it to the Foreign Office and the embassy in Paris for comment and possible action.⁵¹ Krüss assured him that the issue of politically significant archives was completely separate and might have few implications for the eventual return of library materials. At the same time Krüss sought and received confirmation from the Foreign Office that evaluation of the archival list had not proceeded beyond the earliest stages.⁵² Krüss never forwarded the list of nearly 2,500 books and manuscripts, chiefly from the Bibliothèque Nationale, delivered to him in January 1942.⁵³

Early in 1944 when the military administration, amid further personnel cuts, again proposed closing the Bibliotheksschutz in France Krüss defended its continued existence with schizophrenic logic. His first argument was the importance of gathering French book stock for rebuilding German libraries. “Dr. Fuchs is entrusted with buying whatever is somehow available in the French book market.” Fuchs could not do this as effectively as a civilian because “in all previous experience his position as a military administrator and his uniform have been decisive.” Only secondarily did Krüss mention the ostensibly prime purpose of protecting French libraries which he said would become increasingly critical with the likelihood of renewed fighting on French soil.⁵⁴

Krüss to Generalquartiermeister, Oberkommando des Heeres, 6 December 1941; Generalquartiermeister Eduard Wagner to Krüss, 14 December 1941; and Krüss to Wermke, 19 December 1941; all in SBB, Acta PrStB VII 1^m.

⁵⁰ “Entführtes Buchgut das in den Bibliotheken von Frankreich und Belgien zu suchen ist / Verschollenes und deutschem Zugriff entzogenes Buchgut,” SBB, Acta PrStB VII 1^m.

⁵¹ Fuchs to Krüss, 20 October 1943, SBB, Acta PrStB VII 1^m.

⁵² Krüss to Fuchs, 26 October 1943; Krüss to Legationsrat Roth, 26 October 1943; and Gesandter Werner von Barga to Krüss, 10 November 1943; all in SBB, Acta PrStB VII 1^m.

⁵³ See Fuchs, “Bericht über Tätigkeit des Referates Bibliotheksschutz in der Militärverwaltung Frankreich, 1940-1944,” p. 13 and Anlage 2, BArch, R4901/13727.

⁵⁴ “Dr. Fuchs ist damit betraut, auf dem französischen Büchermarkt das zu kaufen, was irgendwie greifbar ist.”

“nach allen bisher gemachten Erfahrungen sein Stelle als Militärverwaltungsrat und die Uniform dabei entscheidend sind.”

Krüss to Militärverwaltungschef Dr. Franz Albrecht Medicus, 17 January 1944, SBB, Acta PrStB VII 1^m.

The Bibliotheksschutz was dissolved de facto when it ceased operations on 21 August 1944 just before the liberation of Paris.⁵⁵ Fuchs's final report to Krüss, dated 20 September, detailed the full range of the unit's activities including protection and supervision of French libraries, the compilation of the list of books for potential repatriation, and ambitious book acquisitions on behalf of the Staatsbibliothek and the Reich library exchange office. Buried deep within the 28-page report is a claim that, in the face of repeated charges in the foreign press of library looting by the Wehrmacht one could counter "that thanks to the activities of the Bibliotheksschutz unit not a single book, not a single page of a manuscript was confiscated in French libraries and brought to Germany"⁵⁶

In transmitting the report to the Ministry Krüss emphasized this as a particularly significant accomplishment, but he added a telling qualification: "from the libraries looked after by the unit."⁵⁷ And in a statement written soon thereafter for the national radio network it became "from the state libraries looked after by the unit,"⁵⁸ and in the copy Krüss kept for his own files the word "state" is underlined, for he knew full well that the protected collections did not, of course, include the many Jewish and Masonic libraries where he had given Rosenberg a free hand from the outset, nor the Bibliothèque Polonaise that Rosenberg's staff removed to Germany.⁵⁹

One remarkable story stands in contrast to Krüss's mixed record as a protector of libraries.⁶⁰ He employed twenty-three French librarians and archivists held as prisoners of war. They worked in the Staatsbibliothek's bindery, cataloged its ex libris collection, and assisted with the international incunabula catalog, *Gesamtkatalog der Wiegendrucke*. Krüss took a highly personal interest in these men and they ultimately attained status as civil employees. In

⁵⁵ Fuchs to Krüss, 21 August 1944, SBB, Acta PrStB VII 1^m.

⁵⁶ "dass dank der Tätigkeit des Referates Bibliotheksschutz nicht ein Buch, nicht eine Seite einer Handschrift in den französischen Bibliotheken beschlagnahmt und nach Deutschland verbracht worden wäre."
"Bericht über Tätigkeit des Referates Bibliotheksschutz," p. 13, BArch, R4901/13727.

⁵⁷ "aus den vom Referat betreuten Bibliotheken"
Krüss to RMWEV, 9 October 1944, BArch, R4901/13727.

⁵⁸ "aus dem von ihm betreuten staatlichen Bibliotheken"
Krüss statement for "Prof. Karg vom Reichsrundfunk," 17 October 1944, SBB, Nachlass Krüss, Erg. 1, Folder "Lebenslauf."

⁵⁹ See the accounts by Sem C. Sutter, "Polish Books in Exile. Cultural Booty across Two Continents, through Two Wars," in Jonathan Rose, ed., *The Holocaust and the Book: Destruction and Preservation* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2001), 143-61; and Michael Burleigh, *Germany Turns Eastwards: A Study of Ostforschung in the Third Reich* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 227-35.

⁶⁰ See the very thorough history, Ulrike Hollender, *Un havre de paix. Die kriegsgefangenen französischen Offiziere an der Preußischen Staatsbibliothek in Berlin 1941-1945* (Berlin: Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin Preußischer Kulturbesitz, 2002).

assessing his motives some have pointed to his need to staff the library and the desire of German Francophiles to convince the French of German cultural superiority.⁶¹ But if one has followed Krüss through his earlier career, his abiding commitment to international librarianship is also unmistakable here.

In Conclusion

How are we to evaluate the final phase of the career of this German internationalist? Krüss did not speak directly for himself on this subject during the war and did not commit personal thoughts to the diaries that he titled “Daily News,” a headline record of his activities. He had no opportunity after the war to justify himself. At the end of April 1945 Krüss poisoned himself in the basement of the Staatsbibliothek. While he may have expressed some self judgment in this act, fear of facing another overwhelming change as a lonely widower in ill health was also part of the equation.

Werner Schochow has noted that “the immediate post-war period—without adequate sources and uncertain in the evaluation—simply ignored Krüss....Even later—until recently—people preferred to avoid this man.”⁶² One exception was Krüss’s subordinate Hermann Fuchs in his 1954 memorial tribute, (obviously with strong self-interest in portraying the Bibliotheksschutz in the best light). He described Krüss as a heroic figure. “His greatest concern was to banish the dangers to libraries and librarians arising from the course of the war and from the undisguised tendencies of National Socialism and not to allow the connection to the librarians of these countries to be severed.”⁶³ Fuchs’s tone prompted Emil Gratzl of the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek to write to Georg Leyh, retired director of the Tübingen University Library, “I read the obituary for Krüss, I will confess to you, with some discomfort. The hagiographic tone—what you call froth—and, additionally, its purpose provoked and greatly disturbed me.”⁶⁴

⁶¹ See, for example, Christian Hänger and Andrea Süchting-Hänger’s review of Hollender’s book in *Bibliothek: Forschung und Praxis*, 27 (2003): 242-43.

⁶² “die unmittelbare Nachkriegszeit, ohne hinreichende Quellengrundlage und unsicher in der Wertung, hat Krüss schlicht ignoriert....Auch später, bis in die jüngste Zeit, hat man Lieber einen Bogen um diesen Mann gemacht.”
Werner Schochow, *Die Berliner Staatsbibliothek und ihr Umfeld* (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 2005), 214.

⁶³ “Es [war] seine größte Sorge, die den Bibliotheken und Bibliothekaren aus dem Gang des Krieges und den unverhüllten Tendenzen des Nationalsozialismus erwachsenden Gefahren zu bannen und die Verbindung mit den Bibliothekaren dieser Länder nicht abreißen zu lassen.”
Fuchs, “In memoriam,” (Note 2), 120-21.

⁶⁴ “Den Nachruf auf Krüss habe ich gelesen, wie ich Ihnen gestehen will, mit einigem Mißbehagen. Mich hat der hagiographische Ton, das was Sie das Schaumige nennen, und zu dem sein Ende, wie ich zugebe, herausfordert, doch stark gestört.”
Gratzl to Leyh, 7 October 1954, SBB, Nachlaß Leyh, K. XXXIV; published in Schochow, *Die Preußische Staatsbibliothek, 1918-1945* (Köln & Wien: Böhlau, 1989), 119-21.

While much source material from the war years still requires closer reading, it is clear that Krüss's wartime behavior deserves a split judgment. That the career of this internationally minded librarian ended in a mixture of successes, futile gestures, and shameful compromises is another of the countless library tragedies of the Nazi period.