

The University of Cracow Library under Nazi Occupation: 1939–1945

Marek Sroka

This article examines the short but dramatic period of Nazi occupation of the University of Cracow Library. It explores Nazi policies toward Polish cultural and educational institutions, especially in the General Government and its capital, Cracow. It examines the ideological goals and Germanization policies of the *Staatsbibliothek Krakau* as expressed by the governor-general, Hans Frank, and carried out by the library director, Gustav Abb. The article discusses Gustav Abb's tenure in the library and his sometimes ambiguous attitude toward the Polish personnel and the library's Polish collection. Also discussed are the role of Edward Kuntze, the prewar library director, and clandestine activities of the Polish staff.

Introduction

One of the most traumatic periods in Polish history was the experience of World War II, which for Poland began on 1 September 1939 with the Nazi invasion. While Hitler's immediate aim was to conquer the Polish territory and incorporate it into German *Lebensraum* (living space), the ultimate goal of the invasion and subsequent occupation was the destruction of the Polish state, its people (particularly Polish Jews), and its culture.

After defeating the Polish armed forces in a fearsome *Blitzkrieg* (lightning war), the Germans proceeded to organize their administration in the occupied territories. Cracow, the old capital of Poland, was chosen as the administrative center of a newly formed *Generalgouvernement* (General Government), the part of Poland not annexed into the Third Reich. Hans Frank, a senior Nazi lawyer, *Reichsrechtsführer* (Commander of Law in the Third Reich), founder and first president of the Academy of German Law, was appointed governor-general by Hitler. Frank established his residence at the old royal castle, once occupied by Polish monarchs. It was a symbolic act, as it meant transforming Cracow and the rest of

Poland into Hitler's new kingdom. Frank also changed the historical Polish name of the castle, *Wawel*, into German. From that time onward it was to be called *Krakauer Burg* (Cracow's castle).¹

Nazi officials made it clear that Poland was of use to them "only as a reservoir of labour."² German administrative units were instructed to engage in "a hard racial struggle (*Völkstumskampf*) which will not permit any legal restrictions."³ This struggle would be fought primarily against Poland's political, cultural, educational, and religious elite and their institutions. Hans Frank, echoing Hitler, put it very bluntly: "What we have now recognized in Poland to be the elite must be liquidated."⁴ He was also expressing the will of his *Führer* when he said that the Polish people were "to become a society of peasants and workers" with no "cultured class."⁵ In May 1940 Heinrich Himmler, *Reichsführer SS* (Commander of the Nazi special police force), suggested that "for the non-German population of the East [of Europe] there is to be no higher school than the four-grade elementary school."⁶ A similar view was expressed in a report compiled by two NSDAP (Nazi Party) officials, E. Wetzl and G. Hecht, proposing that Polish high schools, colleges, and universities be closed and the teachers forbidden to practice their profession. The report also suggested that cultural censorship be introduced, affecting not only Poland's educational institutions but also the Polish press, theaters, and even cabarets. Any references to Polish language, literature, history, and culture would not be tolerated.⁷ The only kind of information allowed was Nazi propaganda. Possession of radios by Poles was not allowed. Radio sets were confiscated and replaced with a network of loudspeakers displayed in public places. These loudspeakers broadcast official news bulletins and communiqués of the Nazi authorities. Publication of pre-war newspapers was prohibited. The only kind of press allowed by the authorities was Nazi newspapers, some of them also published in Polish.

The new Nazi *Kultur* (culture) spread racial hatred and justified the looting or destruction of Polish books and art collections. In the years 1940 to 1943, Hans Frank's *Hauptabteilung Propaganda* (Department of Propaganda) compiled lists of Polish books considered "hostile" and "dangerous" to Germany, which were therefore judged *unerwünschten* (undesirable).⁸ These lists contained 3,224 "undesirable" titles. The complete works of as many as sixty-eight authors were totally banned, including all authors of Jewish origin.⁹

Poland's art collections also suffered terrible losses. The Nazis seized a great number of works of art from private and state collections. Ironically, the Nazis used two museum buildings in Warsaw and part of the Jagiellonian Library to store the looted items. By the end of 1942, Frank claimed that 90 percent of the art works in the General Government territory had been "safeguarded."¹⁰ Officially, the works were

captured for their protection, but in fact they were eventually taken to Germany, where they ended up in the hands of the highest Nazi officials, including Hitler himself who, for example, gladly accepted thirty drawings by Dürer from the Czartoryski and Lubomirski collections.¹¹ The Nazis wanted, primarily, to secure works of art they considered “Germanic” and to “return” them to the Reich.¹² They dismantled the high altar of St. Mary’s Church in Cracow and shipped it to Berlin. The altarpiece was carved by the Nuremberg artist Veit Stoss (Wit Stwosz) in Cracow in the years 1477–1489. It had been commissioned by the city council of Cracow, and the sculptor used many Cracow inhabitants as models for his work.¹³ Fortunately, after the war the altar was found in Nuremberg and returned to Cracow. The Nazi authorities, however, did not limit their looting activities only to “Germanic” art. Governor-General Hans Frank furnished his many private residences with appropriated art works. His private collection of paintings (looted from Cracow and Warsaw) included works by such prominent artists as Belotto, Leonardo da Vinci, Raphael, and Rembrandt.¹⁴ Cracow was, by no means, the only target of Nazi plundering squads. Looting took place all over Poland and affected not only national museums (e.g., the Royal Castle in Warsaw, the National Museum in Cracow, or the Wawel Castle and Cathedral in Cracow), but also private collections.¹⁵

In the midst of these horrible events a quiet but determined resistance was growing to save as much as possible of Poland’s cultural heritage.¹⁶ Polish librarians played a vital role in this undeclared war. The University of Cracow Library was one of many sites where librarians carried on a struggle requiring perseverance and intelligence, but most of all great courage.

From Closing to Official Reopening: November 1939–April 1941

On the eve of the German invasion, the University of Cracow Library, the oldest Polish academic library, also known as the Jagiellonian Library (*Biblioteka Jagiellońska*), was one of the most important educational and cultural centers in Poland. Its collection consisted of 600,000 volumes and included a great number of invaluable manuscripts and incunabula.¹⁷

Edward Kuntze, the library director, predicting the inevitable outbreak of hostilities, decided to safeguard some of the most precious rare books and drawings. These were stored in the deep cellars of medieval buildings in the city’s center in the hope of withstanding German air raids. Fortunately, the city was not destroyed but had to surrender to the German forces on 6 September 1939. Many people believed that the Germans would graciously allow the University of Cracow and its library to reopen for the new academic year. That is why, when Bruno Müller, an

SS official, invited professors and fellows of the university and the polytechnic to his lecture, 183 of them showed up. Müller was expected to give a talk about the NSDAP (Nazi Party) policy toward science and universities. Instead, the invited scholars were arrested by the SS and sent to concentration camps in Sachsenhausen and Dachau. Several months later most of them were released, but 15 of them perished in the camps.¹⁸ The arrest on 6 November 1939, known as *Sonderaktion Krakau*, dashed any hopes of the Germans' willingness to sustain the Polish educational system. There was to be no Polish secondary or higher education. On the same day that the Nazis rounded up the professors, the university and its library were closed by the Gestapo.

In the following months the library was occasionally visited by Governor Frank's representatives, who would take books or drawings without leaving any receipts. Polish librarians were not allowed to come back to work. The only Polish staff worker whom the Germans tolerated was Jan Pietras (a stacks worker before the war). He lived close to the library and spoke fluent German, so he was frequently summoned by German officials for assistance in finding items stored in the library stacks. Pietras began to monitor patrons and borrowed items by writing reports for his prewar supervisor, Edward Kuntze. He would also visit Kuntze in his apartment to keep the latter informed about the Germans' activities in the library. Unfortunately, Pietras was not always allowed to accompany dishonest patrons, who took advantage of the absence of the personnel to steal books or drawings.

The situation changed in April 1940, when the Nazis decided that the library buildings should be turned over to a newly formed *Institut für Deutsche Ostarbeit* (The Institute for German Labor in the East), also known as *Ostinstitut*. Governor Frank appointed his close friend Wilhelm Coblitz head of the institute. The creation of the *Ostinstitut* was just another step, after the arrest of the professors, in a premeditated campaign of Germanization and the destruction of Polish culture and education. At first the Nazis planned to use part of the collection of the University of Cracow Library for the *Ostinstitut* and its new library.¹⁹ This plan, however, never materialized as the Nazi administration in Berlin decided to reorganize certain Polish libraries, including the Jagiellonian Library, and model them after German *Staatsbibliotheken* (state libraries). The libraries in the occupied territories were devised to serve future German research centers and universities.²⁰ By 1941 four *Staatsbibliotheken* had been created in the former Polish territory. These included libraries in Cracow, Warsaw, Lublin, and Lvov.²¹ The Nazis decided to gather major collections from local academic and research libraries in each *Staatsbibliothek*. The state library in Warsaw, organized and supervised by Wilhelm Witte, included the collections of the University of Warsaw Library, the National Library, and the Krasieńskich Library. The

state library in Lublin was created on the basis of the collections from the Catholic University of Lublin Library, the Jesuit College Bobolanum Library, and the H. Łopaciński Library. Finally, the Cracow State Library incorporated a great number of books from the Jagiellonian Library and several college libraries in Cracow, including the Mining and Metallurgy Academy, Polish Academy of Sciences and Letters, Art Academy, and Trade Academy.²²

The situation was much worse in the territories annexed into the Third Reich, where the Nazi authorities confiscated a great number of books from Polish libraries and stored them in warehouses. Such warehouses, euphemistically called *Buchsammelstellen* (collecting centers for books), were created in Katowice, Poznań, and other cities.²³ The books stored in those warehouses (about three million volumes in Poznań alone) were often damaged, looted, and abandoned.²⁴

The Nazi policy toward Polish libraries needed only to become more institutionalized. A special department within the General Government administration, *Hauptverwaltung der Bibliotheken* (Main Administration of Libraries), was created to deal with libraries. It was placed under the authority of the *Hauptabteilung Wissenschaft und Unterricht* (Main Department of Science and Education) in the Office of the Governor-General.²⁵ Gustav Abb was designated head of the Main Administration of Libraries in the General Government territory and director of the reorganized Jagiellonian Library, the *Staatsbibliothek Krakau* (Cracow State Library). After working as a department head in the Prussian State Library, Abb became the director of the University of Berlin Library.²⁶ In July 1940 he was sent to Cracow to help with the organization of *Staatsbibliotheken* in the General Government territory. Following the German invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941, Abb was also appointed the *Kommissar für die Sicherung der Bibliotheken und Betreuung des Buchgutes* (Commissary for the protection of libraries and welfare of books) in the “eastern territory.”²⁷ His jurisdiction extended not only to the former Polish territory but also to the conquered Soviet lands. The quick advancement of Abb’s career was due in part to his political servility. He was one of the first German librarians to join the Nazi Party.²⁸

The Germans decided to move the collection of the Jagiellonian Library from its old buildings, which were now occupied by the *Ostinstitut*, into a newly constructed library building. The building, completed on the eve of the Nazi invasion, was a state-of-the-art edifice and at “that time a top achievement of library architecture on the world scale.”²⁹ The war, however, had delayed the move into the new facility. Abb adopted the prewar moving plans, prepared by Edward Kuntze, and agreed to employ Polish personnel to do the job. The move began in August 1940 and ended in October the same year. A total of 643,937 volumes, including those hidden just before the war, were relocated to the new building.³⁰

Despite the circumstances Polish librarians were glad to see the collection being moved to a new and safer place, and they were also happy to be working again. As one of them put it, it helped them “to forget about the oppressive nightmare of the [Nazi] occupation, at least for a while.”³¹

The new library also received a great number of books from some of the University of Cracow departmental libraries and several college libraries in Cracow, including the Mining and Metallurgy Academy, Polish Academy of Sciences and Letters, Art Academy, and Trade Academy. These institutions of higher learning and their libraries had been closed by the Germans. Kuntze felt that the only way to save their collections from destruction was to incorporate them into a newly formed *Staatsbibliothek*. He was able to convince Abb that these collections could greatly enhance the quality of the new *Staatsbibliothek's* collection. Abb and Kuntze met for the first time when the former was working in the Prussian State Library. After that they met many times at various international conferences, including the IFLA conference held in Warsaw in 1936.³² It seems that Abb to some degree respected Kuntze and was at least willing to hear his prewar colleague's suggestions. Abb's permission to incorporate other collections into the *Staatsbibliothek Krakau* may have another explanation as well. He probably realized that he would not be able to run the new library efficiently without the experience and knowledge of Polish personnel and their prewar director, Edward Kuntze. The gesture of saving over 400,000 volumes certainly played well with the Polish staff who agreed to work under Abb in the *Staatsbibliothek*. Thus, the prewar collection of the Jagiellonian Library, totaling over six hundred thousand volumes, increased to over one million volumes.³³

The solemn opening ceremony of *Staatsbibliothek Krakau* (State Library of Cracow) took place on 4 April 1941. It was attended by such prominent officials as Governor General Hans Frank, the president of the Third Reich Academy of Sciences, Dr. Theodor Vahlen, and the directors of state libraries in Berlin and Vienna, Dr. Hugo Andres Krüss (Berlin) and Dr. Paul Heigl (Vienna).³⁴ Repudiating the library's centuries-old cultural and educational role in Polish history, the Germans renamed it another *Staatsbibliothek* in order to serve the purposes of the Nazi regime. Polish librarians could take some comfort in the fact that the library was not destroyed and that they were allowed to go back to work.

Staatsbibliothek Krakau: April 1941–January 1945

Goals of the Staatsbibliothek, Organization of Its Collection, and Germanization Policies

As previously mentioned, the creation of *Staatsbibliotheken* (State Libraries) was one phase of the plan to establish German schools, research

institutes, and universities in the territory of the General Government. Governor Frank made that very clear in a speech delivered at the opening ceremony of *Staatsbibliothek Krakau*. He said that “the university will arise out of the library.”³⁵ It will be “a large German research and educational establishment,” and therefore the German administrators of the newly created *Staatsbibliothek* should not think of themselves as “continuers of Polish librarianship.”³⁶ This view was echoed by the new library director, Gustav Abb, who in his speech called *Staatsbibliothek Krakau* “a new bulwark of German intellectual work in the outermost Southeast.”³⁷ In an article written shortly after the opening of the library, Abb mentions the plans for the creation not only of the German University in Cracow but also the German art academy, the observatory, and the school of biology.³⁸ All these institutions, along with the newly created *Institut für Deutsche Ostarbeit* (The Institute for German Labor in the East), were to be served by the *Staatsbibliothek Krakau*. Their establishment was prompted by, as Abb put it, “a strong *Kulturwille* (cultural will) of the government of the General Government.”³⁹

The philosophy of the new *Staatsbibliothek* as a German research and educational institution was strongly reflected in the organization of its materials, its internal policies, and collection development. Access to the library was limited to Germans, *Volksdeutsch* (German Nationals), and Poles working for German institutions.⁴⁰ These Poles had to obtain special permits from their employers to be allowed to use the library.

The prewar collection was reorganized so that it would demonstrate the German nature of the *Staatsbibliothek*. Polish books were taken out of the main reference collection and relocated to a remote place in the library. They formed a special reference collection named *Polen* (Poland) to be used by German scholars from the *Ostinstitut* (Institute for German Labor in the East). Another reference collection, compiled especially for German researchers, was called *Ostfragen* (Eastern Questions). It consisted mainly of German materials discussing Eastern European issues. *Staatsbibliothek Krakau* was not exceptional in banning some German authors whose works were considered “subversive” by Nazi standards. Following the policy of state libraries in the Third Reich, Gustav Abb forbade circulation of such books, even to German patrons.

Polish books were tolerated only for research purposes, but even that was not a guarantee of their safety. In 1944 Abb gave Helena Lipska, a Polish librarian working in the *Staatsbibliothek*, a document entitled *Verzeichnis der deutschfeindlichen Literatur* (List of Literature Hostile to Germany).⁴¹ The list included a great number of Polish authors whose books were considered “hostile” to the Third Reich. Lipska was ordered to locate those items in the card catalogue and report her findings to Abb. Lipska and others greatly feared that the listed books were to be destroyed. She immediately informed Edward Kuntze, her prewar

director, about Abb's intentions. Following Kuntze's suggestion Lipska sabotaged Abb's order by removing cards of the listed items from the main card catalogue. Later she reported to Abb that those items were missing or that the library had never purchased them.⁴² Fortunately, Abb never had time to carry out his agenda of weeding the collection of undesirable books, as the Soviet Army was advancing quickly from the east and the Germans were getting ready to evacuate from Cracow.

In addition to reorganization of the collection, classification and cataloguing procedures were also changed. Polish catalogue cards were replaced by ones brought from Germany. The new cards were already used in other *Staatsbibliotheken* (State Libraries). A new way of establishing call numbers was introduced. Periodicals and serial publications now had German letters "Z," for *Zeitschrift* (periodical), or "F," for *Fortsetzung* (continuation), as part of their call numbers.⁴³ The old Jagiellonian ex libris were removed from books, along with stamps bearing the old name of the library, *Biblioteka Jagiellńska*.

In 1942 Abb demanded that all Polish personnel speak and write exclusively in German. Those who did not know the language were required to learn it as soon as possible.⁴⁴ The new regulations and policies did not leave any doubt as to the future character of the library. It was to be a strictly German institution, administered by German librarians, with Polish personnel as support staff.

Staff

German authorities decided that in Poland, unlike some other occupied countries (e.g., Austria or France), newly created state libraries would be run by German administrators.⁴⁵ One reason could have been the lack of local librarians sympathetic to the Nazis. Another may have been the Germanization policies carried out on Polish territory, and later in the Soviet Union, that were much harsher and more brutal than the ones applied in Western Europe.⁴⁶ Such policies demanded complete loyalty and trustworthiness on the part of an administrator.

As previously mentioned, Gustav Abb, the former director of Berlin University Library, was appointed head of the administration of libraries in the General Government as well as director general of *Staatsbibliothek Krakau* (Cracow State Library). He was assisted in his work at *Staatsbibliothek Krakau* by several German librarians who took turns serving as his deputies in the years 1941 to 1944. Most of them came from the Prussian State Library in Berlin. These included Paul Brzoska, Dr. Ulrich Johanssen, Dr. Georg Hoedt, and Dr. Alexander Himpel. Dr. Hans Hofmann came from the Saxon Region Library in Dresden, and Dr. Alfred Bachmann from Poznań. Only Paul Brzoska stayed with Abb for

the whole period of the occupation.⁴⁷ Others, after working for a certain time, were either relocated to other libraries or drafted and sent to the front lines.

As far as Polish personnel were concerned, Abb agreed to rehire most of the employees, including the prewar director Edward Kuntze, who had worked for the library from 1926 until September 1939. Abb realized that it would be almost impossible to run a new library without the help of experienced staff who knew the prewar collection. Needless to say, Polish librarians did not exercise any control over library policies. They were treated at best as support staff. Polish employees were required to work eleven-hour shifts (with a half hour lunch break) for starvation wages.⁴⁸ However, they were still glad that they could work in “their” library and be close to the books they loved.

As their former director, Edward Kuntze was treated by the Polish staff with the utmost respect. Even Abb addressed him as *Herr Director* and sought Kuntze’s advice on many occasions.⁴⁹ The most experienced librarians allowed to work alongside Kuntze included Dr. Adam Bar, Dr. Aleksander Birkenmajer, Dr. Zofia Ciechanowska, Wojciech Gielecki, Helena Lipska, Dr. Wladyslaw Pociecha, Gustaw Schmagier, Kazimiera Tatarowicz, Marek Wierzbicki, and many others. The library also employed two University of Cracow professors, Kazimierz Nitsch, a famous Polish linguist, and Tadeusz Kowalski, an orientalist. Altogether, the Polish staff included eighteen librarians and fourteen stacks custodians and maintenance workers.

Collection Development, Circulation, and Reference Services

Despite the ongoing war Gustav Abb was able to build quite a substantial collection. It was his ambition to make the *Staatsbibliothek Krakau* one of the most important German libraries in the occupied territories. From the very beginning of the establishment of *Staatsbibliothek Krakau*, special importance was given to materials related to natural sciences, mathematics, geography, and medicine.⁵⁰ In the fiscal year 1940–41 the amount of money spent on book purchases was surprisingly high. The *Staatsbibliothek Krakau* spent 251,103 RM (Reichsmarks) on books, considerably more than what the Prussian State Library in Berlin spent (216,800 RM).⁵¹ One of the reasons for such high spending in the first year of the *Staatsbibliothek* was the absence of any budgetary restrictions. The situation changed in the following years when Abb had to get the library’s annual budget approved by the authorities and had to be more careful not to overspend.⁵² Although over the next three years less money was allocated for the library budget, the *Staatsbibliothek Krakau* purchased 26,161 volumes by the end of 1944.⁵³ The library also received

4,014 volumes in donations and 1,387 volumes as legal deposit copies.⁵⁴ At first, Polish librarians were able to order some Polish materials behind Abb's back. When Abb became aware of this, he introduced stricter control of acquisition procedures, announcing that no book could be ordered without his official approval.⁵⁵ As a result of this action, the library began to buy almost exclusively German-language materials.

In addition to collection development, changes were made in circulation and reference services. The library was mostly used by German civil servants and military personnel. From 1941 to 1944, 35,599 books were borrowed by 2,621 patrons, and the main reading room was visited by 28,828 patrons.⁵⁶ In the same period of time, 3,757 books and 109 manuscripts were sent to the library from other *Staatsbibliotheken* (State Libraries) through interlibrary loan.⁵⁷ The library also answered reference questions received from individuals and institutions.

Clandestine Activities

Although they were working for a German institution, Polish librarians did their best to continue their mission of serving the Polish people and their oldest university. They were never reconciled to the destruction of the Polish state and its culture. First of all, they were actively involved in the unauthorized lending of books and other materials to Polish patrons, who were forbidden access to the library and its resources by the German authorities. The main beneficiaries of this unauthorized lending were 136 faculty members and over 800 students of the underground university, which continued the prewar work of the University of Cracow.⁵⁸ This clandestine library functioned continuously until the end of the Nazi occupation. Unauthorized book lending was probably greater than official lending, but for security reasons no statistics were kept.⁵⁹

Some librarians were also active participants in the underground movement, which fought against the Nazi occupation. Edward Kuntze participated in the work of the Department of Education and Culture of the Polish Underground Government. The department, created in 1941, was responsible for establishing an underground elementary, secondary, and higher educational system in the Nazi occupied territories. The operation of the underground educational system in the Cracow area was highly successful, thanks to the support and help rendered by Kuntze and his Polish colleagues from the library. Kuntze was also involved in planning the organization of the future (postwar) libraries in Poland.⁶⁰

Dr. Adam Bar and Gustaw Schmagier worked for underground newspapers by writing or editing articles. They also collected underground publications, which they hid in various places in the library stacks. Adam Bar's personal collection of clandestine publications amounted to 467

titles.⁶¹ All those titles became part of the illegal collection of underground Polish publications. Some librarians were also involved in unauthorized cataloguing and bibliographic work. Marek Wierzbicki catalogued old Polish calendars, which was not allowed by Abb. Librarians from the cataloguing department were involved in registering legal deposit items for the purpose of a Polish national bibliography, publication of which had been suspended by the Nazis. The only kind of bibliographic work allowed by Abb was the compilation of the bibliography of *Generalgouvernement* (General Government).⁶²

For almost four years of the existence of *Staatsbibliothek Krakau*, Polish personnel quietly resisted the Nazis and their policies. The resistance increased in 1944 when, against Kuntze's strong objections, Abb decided to send the major part of the reference collection as well as most of the books bought by *Staatsbibliothek* to Germany (altogether about 25,000 volumes). Librarians, charged with the task of filling boxes with books, tried to sabotage Abb's orders. They hid a large number of books and stuffed boxes with old newspapers.⁶³ Despite those heroic efforts to save the collection, the Germans were still able to send a great number of books to Adelsdorf (Adelin) in Silesia. Fortunately, after the war the library was able to recover most of the books that Abb had evacuated from the library.

The clandestine activities performed by Polish personnel required a great deal of courage and determination. In the face of adverse and often dangerous circumstances they did their best to preserve the library as an important center of Polish educational and cultural life.

The End of Nazi Occupation

As the Soviet Army advanced into Poland, the Germans began to evacuate their offices and personnel from Cracow. In July 1944 they began to leave Cracow. The following month Gustav Abb said good-bye to his employees and went back to Germany. His offer of providing a secure place in Germany to anybody who would evacuate with him was rejected by Edward Kuntze, speaking on behalf of all of the Polish personnel.⁶⁴ The library was closed and put under the authority of Dr. Eichholz from the Department of Science and Education of the Office of the Governor-General. The main reading room was used as sleeping quarters for German soldiers. Other rooms were taken over by the army hospital. Part of the library was reopened in November, but not for long. The Soviet Army launched a new offensive in the beginning of January 1945. On 15 January 1945, after transferring his authority over the library to Edward Kuntze, Eichholz fled Cracow before the advancing Russians. On 18 January 1945 the Soviet army drove the German forces from Cracow. The war was far from being over, but for Cracow's residents

and their university library, the ordeal of Nazi occupation was finally ended.

Concluding Remarks

The Jagiellonian Library survived over five years of Nazi occupation with little damage to its collection and building. It was an exceptional case in a country ravaged by the war. Most Polish libraries suffered terrible losses. Of twenty-two million volumes in the prewar collections of all Polish libraries, only seven million escaped harm.⁶⁵ School and public libraries were hurt the most, as the total losses of their prewar collections amounted to between 92 and 93 percent.⁶⁶ Libraries in Warsaw and Poznań suffered the greatest losses. Many of them, including the National Library, Higher Military Academy, Polytechnic, Medical Society in Warsaw, and the Raczyńskich Library in Poznań, lost almost 100 percent of their collections.⁶⁷ In Warsaw almost 90 percent of all library buildings, including public, scientific, special, and academic, were destroyed.⁶⁸ During the Warsaw Uprising of 1944, Ludwig Fischer, governor of Warsaw, gave personal orders to set the Raczyńskich Library on fire. The building as well as 300,000 volumes of precious books were burned to the ground.⁶⁹ The failed Warsaw insurrection provided Hitler and his subordinates “with greater justification for the final destruction of Warsaw.”⁷⁰ The Polish capital was reduced to a pile of rubble. The libraries in Elbląg, Gdańsk, and Poznań were almost completely wiped out. The Nazis also destroyed 70 percent of all Jewish books in Poland during the war years.⁷¹

The Jagiellonian Library was spared because the Nazis turned it into the *Staatsbibliothek* that would support a future German university in Cracow. Also, Cracow was made into an important center of Nazi political, educational, and cultural administration of the territories of *General-gouvernement* (General Government). Unlike Warsaw, Cracow was not a scene of major military operations.

The library’s new management and its policies reflected very clearly that it was going to be a purely German institution. Despite these adverse circumstances, Polish personnel, under the undeclared leadership of Edward Kuntze, courageously served the underground university and supported or actively participated in the Polish underground movement. They did all they could to provide access to the collection by carrying out unauthorized book lending. Some of them were also involved in collecting underground publications, performing clandestine bibliographic and cataloguing work. Finally, they tried to sabotage those of Abb’s orders they considered especially harmful to the library. The Nazis did not have enough time to completely Germanize the library, and their

last-minute attempt at weeding the collection of “hostile” Polish books never succeeded. It should also be noted that Gustav Abb’s behavior was at times ambiguous. Some of his actions may suggest a strange incompetence or maybe halfheartedness in carrying out Nazi policies. Kuntze described Abb as “basically not a bad person, but selfish.”⁷² Abb seemed to respect Kuntze and genuinely sought the latter’s advice on many occasions. He agreed to Kuntze’s suggestion of incorporating hundreds of thousands of books from many of Cracow’s libraries into the collection of the *Staatsbibliothek*. He was probably aware of the clandestine activities of the Polish personnel, but he did not really do much about it. His only action was the warning that employees might be searched while leaving the building in order to prevent unauthorized lending.⁷³ On the other hand, Abb was able to present himself to Hans Frank and other Nazi officials as a loyal Party member. His good relations with the local and central Nazi administration enabled him to obtain large sums of money for the library. His ambition was the creation of a great state library that could compete with the Reich libraries. Under his administration the library purchased a large number of books; especially enriched was the science collection. Yet for Kuntze and other Polish librarians Abb was always a stranger, even though “civilized,” serving one of the most brutal and ruthless regimes. That is why they refused Abb’s offer of evacuation to Germany.

Shortly after the war the library was able to recover about 25,000 volumes that Abb had sent to Germany in the spring of 1944. A short but dramatic chapter in the library’s six-hundred-year history could finally be closed.

Notes

1. Stanisław Dąbrowa-Kostka, *W okupowanym Krakowie 6 IX 1939–18 I 1945* (Warszawa: Wydawn, Ministerstwo Obrony Narodowej, 1972), 13.

2. Jeremy Noakes and Geoffrey Pridham, *Documents on Nazism, 1919–1945* (New York: The Viking Press, 1975), 611.

3. *Ibid.*

4. Frank’s words as translated and quoted by Richard C. Lukas in *The Forgotten Holocaust* (Lexington, Ky.: The University Press of Kentucky, 1986), 8.

5. Frank’s words as translated and quoted by Hilda Uren Stubbings in *Blitzkrieg and Books* (Bloomington, Indiana: Rubena Press, 1993), 37–8.

6. Himmler’s words as translated and quoted by Ernst Nolte in *Three Faces of Fascism* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1966), 355.

7. *Okupacja i ruch oporu w dzienniku Hansa Franka 1939–1945, tom I 1939–1942* (Warszawa: Książka i Wiedza, 1970), 137–8.

8. Stanisław Pazyra, *Z dziejów Książki polskiej w czasie drugiej wojny światowej* (Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1970), 49.

9. *Ibid.*, 52. The policy of restricting “dangerous” Jewish publications was already in place in German libraries before the war. See Pamela Spence Richards, “German Libraries and Scientific and Technical Information in Nazi Germany,” *Library Quarterly* 55, 2 (1985): 151–73.

10. Czesław Madajczyk, *Polityka III Rzeszy w okupowanej Polsce* (Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1970), vol. 2, 122.

11. *Ibid.* See also The Polish Ministry of Information, *The German New Order in Poland* (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1942), 446–70 (about the pillage and destruction of Polish cultural possessions).

12. Jonathan Petropoulos, *Art as Politics in the Third Reich* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 108.

13. Michał Rożek, *Przewodnik po zabytkach i kulturze Krakowa* (Warszawa: Wydawn. Nauk. Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1993), 205.

14. Petropoulos, *Art as Politics in the Third Reich*, 227.

15. *Ibid.*, 106.

16. For a detailed account of the struggles of Warsaw librarians and museum workers see Stanisław Lorentz, *Walka o dobrą kulturę Warszawa 1939–1945* (Warszawa: PIW, 1970), vols. 1 and 2.

17. Maria Danilewicz Zielinska, “Okupacyjne losy Biblioteki Jagiellońskiej,” *Bibliotekarz* 7/8 (1993): 40.

18. Tadeusz Wroński, *Kronika okupowanego Krakowa* (Kraków: Wydawn. Literackie, 1974), 45.

19. *Okupacja i ruch oporu w dzienniku Hansa Franka 1939–1945, tom I 1939–1942*, 184.

20. Janusz Dunin, “The Tragic Fate of Polish Libraries after 1939,” *Solanus* 10 (1996): 7.

21. Gustav Abb, “Ein Jahr Staatsbibliothek Krakau,” *Zentralblatt für Bibliothekswesen* 60 (1944): 62.

22. Barbara Bieńkowska, *Straty bibliotek polskich w czasie II wojny światowej* (Warszawa: Ministerstwo Kultury i Sztuki, 1994), 112.

23. *Ibid.*, 20.

24. Dunin, “The Tragic Fate of Polish Libraries after 1939,” 6.

25. Abb, “Ein Jahr Staatsbibliothek Krakau,” 62.

26. Werner Schochów, *Die Preussische Staatsbibliothek 1918–1945* (Köln: Böhlau, 1989), 56.

27. Manfred Komorowski, “Deutsche Bibliothekspolitik in der Sowjetunion (1941–1944)” in *Bibliotheken während des Nationalsozialismus, teil I* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1989), 476.

28. Edward Kuntze, “Dzieje Biblioteki Jagiellońskiej pod okupacją niemiecką,” *Biuletyn Biblioteki Jagiellońskiej* 25 (1975): 51.

29. Jan Pirożyński, “The Jagiellonian Library in Cracow: the Past, the Present and Prospects for the Future,” *Polish Libraries Today* 2 (1993): 23.

30. Irena Bar-Święch, “Ludzie i zdarzenia w Bibliotece Jagiellońskiej podczas okupacji w latach 1939–1945,” *Rocznik Naukowo-Dydaktyczny WSP w Krakowie, Prace Bibliotekoznawcze t. 4* 110 (1987): 30.

31. Kazimiera Tatarowicz, “Przeniesienie zbiorów,” *Bibliotekarz* 8/9 (1948): 135.

32. Kuntze, “Dzieje Biblioteki Jagiellońskiej pod okupacją niemiecką,” 51.

33. Marian Friedberg, “Archiwa i biblioteki krakowskie” in Jan Dąbrowski, *Kraków pod rządami wroga 1939–1945* (Kraków: Tow. Miłośników Historii i Zabytków Krakowa, 1946), 111.

34. Gustav Abb, "Die Eröffnung der Staatsbibliothek in Krakau," *Zentralblatt für Bibliothekswesen* 58 (1941): 245.
35. *Ibid.*, 259.
36. *Ibid.*, 258–9.
37. *Ibid.*, 255.
38. *Ibid.*, 246.
39. *Ibid.*
40. For a detailed discussion of race categories used by the Nazis, see Norman Davies, *God's Playground: A History of Poland* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), vol. 1, 445.
41. Helena Lipska, "Biblioteka Jagiellońska w czasie okupacji 1939–1945," *Biuletyn Biblioteki Jagiellońskiej* 29 (1979): 142.
42. *Ibid.*
43. *Ibid.*, 136.
44. See texts of Abb's directives as published in Lipska, "Biblioteka Jagiellońska w czasie okupacji 1939–1945," 144.
45. Pamela Spence Richards, "Aryan Librarianship: Academic and Research Libraries under Hitler," *Journal of Library History* 19 (1984): 250.
46. Donald E. Collins and Herbert P. Rothfeder, "The Einsatzstab Reichsleiter Rosenberg and the Looting of Jewish and Masonic Libraries during World War II," *Journal of Library History* 18, 1 (Winter 1983): 28.
47. Bar-Święch, "Ludzie i zdarzenia w Bibliotece Jagiellońskiej podczas okupacji w latach 1939–1945," 47.
48. Kazimiera Tatarowicz, "Biblioteka Jagiellońska za okupacji" in *Ne cedat academia* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1975), 452.
49. Bar-Święch, "Ludzie i zdarzenia w Bibliotece Jagiellońskiej podczas okupacji w latach 1939–1945," 34.
50. Abb, "Ein Jahr Staatsbibliothek Krakau," 60–1.
51. *Ibid.*, 60.
52. Kuntze, "Dzieje Biblioteki Jagiellońskiej podczas okupacji w latach 1939–1945," 32.
53. *Ibid.*, 33.
54. *Ibid.*
55. Lipska, "Biblioteka Jagiellońska w czasie okupacji 1939–1945," 136.
56. *Ibid.*, 137.
57. Kuntze, "Dzieje Biblioteki Jagiellońskiej pod okupacją niemiecką," 38.
58. Władysław Szafer, "Uniwersytet Jagielloński w latach wojny 1939–1945" in *Kronika Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego za okres wojny 1939–1945* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, 1946), 21–2.
59. Stanisław Gawęda, *Uniwersytet Jagielloński w okresie II wojny światowej 1939–1945* (Kraków: 1986), 188. Edward Kuntze also claims that the unauthorized book lending was higher than the official one. See Kuntze, "Dzieje Biblioteki Jagiellońskiej pod okupacją niemiecką," 38.
60. Irena Bar-Święch, "Ludzie i zdarzenia w Bibliotece Jagiellońskiej podczas okupacji w latach 1939–1945," 35.
61. *Ibid.*, 41.
62. Tatarowicz, "Biblioteka Jagiellońska za okupacji," 456.
63. Lipska, "Biblioteka Jagiellońska w czasie okupacji 1939–1945," 140. See also Kuntze, "Dzieje Biblioteki Jagiellońskiej pod okupacją niemiecką," 44.
64. Kuntze, "Dzieje Biblioteki Jagiellońskiej pod okupacją niemiecką," 43.
65. Maria Kocójowa, *History of Polish Libraries* (Kraków: Universitas, 1993), 20.

66. Barbara Bieńkowska, "Report on the Losses of Polish Libraries in the Second World War." *Polish Libraries Today* 3 (1995): 30.

67. Bieńkowska, *Straty bibliotek polskich w czasie II wojny światowej*, 48. This is probably the most comprehensive study on the losses of Polish libraries during World War II.

68. *Ibid.*, 54.

69. *Ibid.*, 113.

70. Stubbings, *Blitzkrieg and Books*, 49.

71. See Jacqueline Borin, "Embers of the Soul: The Destruction of Jewish Books and Libraries in Poland during World War II," *Libraries & Culture* 28, 4 (Fall 1993): 445–60.

72. Kuntze, "Dzieje Biblioteki Jagiellońskiej pod okupacją niemiecką," 54.

73. Lipska, "Biblioteka Jagiellońska w czasie okupacji 1939–1945," 139.