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OFFICE OF STRATEGIC SERVICES
ART LOOTING INVESTIGATION UNIT
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U.S. ARMY

DETAILED INTERROGATION REPORT NO. 10

15 August 1945

Subject: KARL KRESS

J. S. Plaut
J. S. PLAUT
Lieutenant, USNR
Director

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By *CHIEZ* NARS, Date 22 MAY 1975

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KARL KRESS

Note: KRESS was interrogated at Bad Aussee, Austria, on 20 - 21 July 1945. This report is supplementary to Consolidated Interrogation Report # 1, "Activity of the Einsatzstab Rosenberg in France," dated 15 August 1945.

I. PERSONAL

Born 6 February 1900 at Dotzheim, Kreis Wiesbaden, Germany, Service in the German Army (100,000 Mann-Heer) from the end of World War I until June 1930. 1931, appointed, on the basis of long military service, technical assistant to the State Art Collections at Kassel. Duties primarily as photographer. 1939, called to active duty with the Luftwaffe as photographer, and assigned to a photographic unit as technical director, with the rank of Stabsfeldwebel (Staff Sergeant). The unit was transferred to St. Germain-en-Laye (Paris) in June 1940.

II. ACTIVITY WITH THE EINSATZSTAB ROSENBERG

In the autumn of 1940, KRESS was ordered by his CO, Major Graf von KANITZ, to proceed to Paris with three assistants for the purpose of photographing art objects. He stated that he came to the Jeu de Paume for the first time as a Luftwaffe NCO. On his arrival, he met Drs. SCHIEDLAUSKY, WIRTH and JERCHEL, and was assigned the task of photographing a large number of paintings. Von BEHR, recognizing that KRESS was a professional art photographer, immediately initiated an attempt to have him transferred to the Einsatzstab for duty. In 1941, KRESS was ordered to the Hauptbildstelle (Central Photographic Unit) in the Reichsluftministerium (Air Ministry), and then transferred to the Einsatzstab. He was returned to Paris from Berlin, and put to work in the Jeu de Paume. At this time, he stated that he met and worked under Drs. LOHSE and KUNZE.

Some time later, he was ordered to Salonika in order to accompany a certain Professor DOELGER to Mount Athos for the purpose of making cultural propaganda photographs. The work, including finishing, took approximately six months, and KRESS stated that DOELGER subsequently published a book about Mount Athos. After completing this mission, KRESS returned to Paris and resumed work under LOHSE.

His work was handicapped, in that Corporal SIMOKAT, who appeared to be favored by LOHSE, had been installed as chief photographer. During this period, KRESS did little photography, but set himself the task of compiling an orderly set of negatives, inasmuch as he had found the files in a state of disorder on his return from Greece. During this period also, he spent more time in the photographic section of the Amt Rosenberg in Berlin than with the Einsatzstab in Paris. In 1943, he was sent to Riga and Kiev on short photographic missions, and also worked in the Einsatzstab deposits at Neuschwanstein/Fussen and Chiemsee. KRESS states that in 1944 SIMOKAT was returned to active military duty, and that SCHOLZ, a nephew of Bereichsleiter Robert SCHOLZ, became the leading Einsatz-

stab photographer. He was responsible to Dr. BORCHERS of the Arbeitsgruppe Louvre.

KRESS stated that, shortly before the heavy air raid on Berlin began, he was given the responsibility of assembling the entire Einsatzstab file of photographic negatives and moving it to Neuschwanstein/Füssen for safekeeping. Subsequently, he was ordered to move the entire file to the Einsatzstab center at Schloss Kogl/St. Georgen. Shortly before the American entry into the area, the files were once again moved from Kogl to Füssen, as it was feared that the Russians would take Kogl. The final transfer of material was undertaken by LOHSE, acting under SCHOLZ' orders. KRESS stated that he made a number of short trips to Paris in 1944, in order to bring photographic material from the Luftwaffe unit station to Germany. In addition, he was given the assignment by Dr. Robert SCHOLZ of bringing from von BEHR's Dienststelle Westen household effects (china, linen, silver, etc.), confiscated in the M-Action, to Germany for the use of Einsatzstab personnel.

KRESS was sent to the Alt Ausee deposit in 1945 by SCHOLZ, and was made a prisoner of war at the time of the American entry. He has continued to work in the capacity of photographer, under the supervision of G-5, Monuments, Fine Arts and Archives Branch, Third U.S. Army.

III. EINSATZSTAB AND RELATED PERSONNEL

(Note: For KRESS' observations on Einsatzstab personnel, see Consolidated Interrogation Report # 1, "Activity of the Einsatzstab Rosenberg in France," Chapter VI.)

KRESS submitted information on the following individuals:

- (a) Stabsführer Gerhard UTIKAL
- (b) Dr. Bruno LOHSE
- (c) Hauptstellenleiter Hermann von INGRAM
- (d) Walter Andreas HOFER

IV. SUMMARY

French sources have indicated that KRESS was involved in individual thefts under the guise of formal Einsatzstab confiscation. KRESS stated that he received as personal compensation from von BEHR certain household goods, including a coffee set and a tea set, which he had requested for his family after they had been completely bombed out. KRESS affirmed that his activity with the Einsatzstab was confined wholly to the photographing of works of art in the Jeu de Paume, and that he never accompanied Einsatzstab personnel to private dwellings, either prior to or in the course of confiscation operations. He claims that he owns no works of art whatever, and that he engaged at no time in the traffic of objects of art. KRESS is a "little man" with a weak personality. It is conceivable that he engaged in some petty thievery, but it is not likely that he was involved in any large-scale, illegal transfers of art objects. No action is recommended; however, KRESS was released prematurely from interrogation, in deference to G-5, MFA & A, 3rd Army, to do urgent photographic work. In view of his close relationship to UTIKAL and other key E.R.R. personnel, he is wanted for further interrogation by this unit.