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Frankfurt-Au-Main, Germany

18 April 1945

SUBJECT : Report of developments in removal of Treasure from Kaiseroda Mine at Merkers, Germany.

TO : Brig. General F. J. McSherry

1. The uncovering of huge sums of gold, foreign currency, loot and works of art from the mine at Merkers has focused attention on the German technique of secreting wealth by hiding in mines a vast amount of valuable property. The following is a report of the military operations leading up to the discovery of this wealth and the subsequent arrangements for protecting and transporting of this property. It also deals with the investigation of a number of other mines in the area which was made for the purpose of seeing to what extent the German program had been put into effect in the mines.

I. DISCOVERY, PROTECTION AND PRELIMINARY ARRANGEMENTS.

2. On April 4th, 1945 at 1100 hours the 358th Infantry Regiment of the 90th Division took the town of Merkers in the Regierungsbezirk of Eisenach.

3. United Nationals Displaced Persons were interviewed by CIC interrogation personnel of the 90th Division on 4 and 5 April. In the course of these interviews several displaced persons mentioned that there was German Reichsbank gold hidden in the Kaiseroda mine in Merkers. In all these instances the displaced persons interviewed acted rumors and none stated of his own knowledge that gold was present in the mine. Accordingly, no further action was taken by Captain Sims of the CIC.

4. At or about 1100 hours Thursday, 5 April, Sgt. Wall, of the Military Intelligence Team 404 G attached to the 358th Regiment, was in Bad Salzungen, which is approximately 6 miles from Merkers. He interviewed French displaced persons who had worked in the mine and who stated they had heard gold was stored in the mine. Captain Alfred T. Dengler, Military Intelligence officer of the 90th Division, arrived in Bad Salzungen and received a report of the information from Sgt. Wall. Captain Dengler proceeded immediately to G-2 Headquarters of the 90th Division and made his report. The G-2 report of the 90th Infantry Division of 1800, 7 April, stated "Merkers mine BG750, reported by 90th Division M I T, contains marks, gold, silver, paintings, jewels. There are approximately 500 kilometers of passages in ground".

5. On the morning of Friday, 8 April, the 90th Division

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Kaiseroeda mine at Merkers, Germany. 18 April 1945.

Command Post was located at Keiselbach, approximately 3 km. from Merkers. Military Government orders prohibited civilians from circulating in the area. Approximately 0845 that morning, two Military Police, Pfc Clyde Harmon and Pfc Anthony Kline, of the 12th Corps Provost Marshal Office, were guarding the road entering Keiselbach from Merkers. They saw approaching two women whom they promptly challenged and stopped. Upon questioning, these women stated that they were French displaced persons whose home was in Thionville, France. One of the women was pregnant and stated she was being accompanied by the other to see a midwife in Keiselbach. The women were taken to Pvt. Mootz, also of the XII Corps Provost Marshal, who questioned them again and thereupon decided to take the women back to Merkers.

6. Upon entering Merkers, Pvt. Mootz saw the Kaiseroeda salt mine. He asked the women what it was. They told him it was the salt mine to which the Germans had brought gold reserve and other valuable property from Berlin several weeks before. The women said the gold was stored in a mine 700 meters deep, that it had taken 72 hours to unload all of it, and that local civilians and displaced persons had been used to unload the gold. Pvt. Mootz reported the conversations to 1st. Sgt. Mathews retold the story to Col. Whitcomb, Chief of Staff, and Lt. Col. Russell, Military Government Officer, 90th Division.

7. Lt. Col. Russell proceeded immediately to the Kaiseroeda mine, arriving there at approximately 1300 hours. He summoned the displaced persons in the area and interviewed them as to their knowledge of gold stored in the mine. These people all confirmed the story. Next Lt. Col. Russell confronted the mine officials and they stated they knew gold was stored in the mine and stated that other mines in the area were used for storing valuables. They said that certain works of art were also stored in the Kaiseroeda mine and that Dr. P. C. Hare, curator and assistant director of the National Galleries in Berlin, was present to care for the paintings. Lt. Col. Russell also found a Sergeant Walter Farager of the British Army who had been a German prisoner since June 26, 1940. Sgt. Farager had been employed at the Merkers mine as an electrical and machinists assistant for the past year and had assisted in storing the gold.

8. At the request of Lt. Col. Russell, the 712th Tank Bn., Lt. Col. John Petrovsky, Commanding, was ordered to proceed to Merkers to guard the entrances to the mine. 90th Division Military Police were also dispatched to guard the mine. The battalion posted guards at or about 1600 hours. Lt. Col. Russell instructed the mine officials that they were under technical arrest to be confined to their homes. He then arranged for power and electricity to be started in the mine so the shafts could be entered the next morning.

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9. At this time it became known there were five entrances to the Kaiseroda mine and one tank battalion would not be sufficient to guard these entrances in addition to the one already discovered. Accordingly, Lt. Col. Russell requested reinforcements. At 2145 hours, 6 April 1945, the Command Post of the 357th Infantry Regiment, commanded by Lt. Col. John H. Mason in Leimbach, received orders to proceed to Merkers and relieve the 90th Division Military Police and reinforce the 712th Tank Bn.

10. On the morning of April 7, 1945, the Division Commander, General Ernest, ordered a reinforced rifle company from the 1st Bn. of the 357th Infantry to guard the entrance to the mine at Merkers. This company was reinforced with tanks, tank destroyers and jeeps mounted with 50 calibre machine guns used for AA defense. Reinforced rifle companies were also ordered to guard entrances at Kaiseroda and Dietlas. At or about 1100 hours another entrance to the mine was found at Statingsfeld by the 1st Bn. The 2nd Bn. had been in this area but had moved out on Division orders. Accordingly, the Anti-tank Company of the Regiment was dispatched to guard this entrance. The 1st Bn., Lt. Col. William E. DeNuy commanding, was given the job of guarding mine entrances at Merkers and Dietlas with elements of the 712th Tank Bn. The 3rd Bn, Major Merritt H. Warden Commanding, was given the job of guarding entrances at Kaiseroda.

11. New entrances to this mine and to other mines were found by members of the 357th Intelligence and Reconnaissance Platoon, Counter-Intelligence personnel and the CIC. At Leimbach, Runsbach and Springen guards were placed at these entrances immediately. At 1700 hours orders were received for the 357th Infantry Regiment to move out, the 1st Bn. was to pass to Division control to continue guarding the mine and 3rd Bn. guards were to be relieved by elements of the 1st Bn. This order was withdrawn at 1200 hours, 8 April 1945, by General Eddy, XII Corps Commander, who issued the order "Hold any movement, regiment is to be used to guard salt mine area in Merkers". At the time of the withdrawing order, 3rd Bn. guards had already been relieved by elements of the 1st Bn. and the 3rd Bn. had started to move. The battalion returned and took up its previous positions.

12. At or about 1000 hours, Saturday, 7 April 1945, Lt. Col. Russell, accompanied by the mine officials, Dr. Rave, Col. Joseph Tully, Asst. Div. Comdr., Maj. Joseph Erick, J.A.G., Infantry Division, and Sgt. Farager, as well as Signal Corps photographers entered the mine. Outside the door of the vault they found 550 bags of Reichsmarks which had been taken out for transportation to Berlin but the plan was interrupted due to the unexpected arrival of U.S. troops. Later interrogation revealed that this currency was needed to meet a Reichsmark currency shortage in Berlin which was caused by the bombing of a Reichsbank printing press in Berlin on

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3 February. There were indications that there were one million marks in each bag. Captain McNamara asked the mine officials if the stacks were the entire stock of Reichsmarks and they shrugged their shoulders. Sgt. Faraker stated there was 140 bags in a different passage in the mine and showed them the location. An attempt was then made to open the steel vault but the door was locked. The party then examined the works of art found in the different passages of the mine.

13. That afternoon Lt. Col. Russell and Captain McNamara interviewed Fritz Veick, an official of the Reichsbank, who came to Merkers for the purpose of removing the currency to Berlin. He stated he believed the Merkers mine contained all the gold of the Reichsbank and it was all in one room. Arrangements were made to open the vault the next day. At 1900 hours Lt. Col. Russell reported to XII Corps the information learned.

14. At 0800 Sunday, (6) April, 1946, a party consisting of General Ernest, 90th Infantry Division Commander, Lt. Col. Russell, Captain McNamara, photographers and reports, and elements of the XII Corps Engineers entered the mine. An attempt was made to gain entrance to the vault by digging but it was unsuccessful. Accordingly, at 1000 the Engineers were instructed to place an explosive charge and entrance was thereupon gained. In two corridors valises were examined which contained gold and silver articles. All of the bags and containers were marked and the gold bags were sealed. In order to examine the contents some of the seals were broken. There were two gold bars in each of the bags opened and from feeling the other bags it was estimated that all gold bags contained one or two bars each. At 1100 General Eddy, XII Corps Commander, Col. Leiber, Deputy Chief of Staff, XII Corps, and Col. Billings, G-5 Officer of the XII Corps, arrived to make an inspection of the mine.

15. Col. Licher was contacted in the mine by Col. Mason. Guard zones were assigned in addition to those previously provided and security patrols were placed on roads leading from Bad Salzungen to Yacha. Foot patrols were placed along a railroad in the vicinity of the mine. The 357th Regimental CP was moved from Leimbach to Merkers.

16. On the same morning, 8 April 1946, Col. Bernard Bernstein, G3C, Deputy Chief of Financial Branch SHAEF, saw in the Paris edition of the New York Herald Tribune the story about the gold and other treasure that had been found in the salt mine in Merkers, Germany. He immediately called Lt. Col. Tupper Barrett, Chief, Financial Branch, G-5, 12th Army Group, to see if he had any information on the subject. He was advised that Lt. Col. Barrett was forward at 25 Army and would be telephoned immediately about the matter.

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17. Col. Bernstein conveyed the information to Brigadier General McSherry, Deputy Chief of Staff, G-5, SHAEF, who thereupon stated that Col. Bernstein should go forward immediately to look into the matter. Col. Bernstein telephoned Lt. Col. Barrett at 3rd Army and discussed the whole situation with him and told him it was desired that Col. Bernstein go forward immediately and for Lt. Col. Barrett to make the necessary arrangements. Lt. Col. Barrett stated that Major Perera, G-5 3rd Army (who had been advised as soon as the report of the discovery was available) had gone to the mine early that day prior to Col. Barrett's arrival at 3rd Army.

18. At 1630 Col. Bernstein was advised by Col. Barrett by telephone that Col. Dalferes, G-5 3rd Army, agreed that he should go forward to Lucky Rear. At the same time he was given by Col. Barrett a preliminary report of contents of the mine, based on telephone information received from Major Perera that afternoon and also informed that complete guards had been placed and the preliminary inventory was being made by XII Corps Finance Officer. By the time transportation could be arranged it was 1800 and the pilot stated it was too late to go to Frankfurt, but he would take him to Rheims. He flew to Rheims and saw Brigadier General McSherry, Deputy Chief of Staff, G-5, SHAEF. General McSherry said the Supreme Commander had discussed the matter with General Crawford, Assistant Chief of Staff, G-4, SHAEF, and General Eisenhower wanted Col. Bernstein to go to the mine immediately and check the contents and arrange for the treasure to be taken away from the mine. General McSherry and Col. Bernstein discussed the details and problems involved.

19. The following morning General McSherry and Col. Bernstein discussed the matter further with General Lucius Clay and General Crawford. General Crawford stated that General Eisenhower wanted Col. Bernstein to go with Lt. Col. Morris, of G-4, SHAEF, to the mine and withdraw the contents. Plans for moving and the places where it could be moved were discussed. General Crawford suggested Fort Ehrebreitstein, which is across the river from Coblenz. At this time it was also agreed that Col. Bernstein was to have some discretion as to where the gold would be placed, with Col. Bernstein keeping Generals Crawford and McSherry advised. General Crawford said Col. Bernstein was to go directly to 3rd Army, get in touch with General Gay, Chief of Staff, and receive instructions from him.

20. Col. Bernstein and Lt. Col. Morris flew to Frankfurt in General Crawford's plane on Monday, 9 April 1945, and arrived at G-5 3d Army just before noon and had a discussion with Col. Dalferes, G-5 3d Army. Col. Bernstein and Lt. Col. Morris went to see General Gay and Col. Harkins, Deputy Chief of Staff, and during the dis-

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ussion General Patton joined the party. Many matters were discussed, including the reasons why the treasure should be moved. General Patton agreed to the moving of the treasure and urged that it be done as soon as possible because he didn't want to tie up a fighting regiment and tank unit any longer than necessary. Immediately after lunch the conference was resumed in the office of General Gay and the Chief of Staff dictated a letter to the Commanding General, XII Corps, (copy of which is attached) stating that Col. Bernstein was designated by General Eisenhower to take over the gold, silver and valuables stored in the mine and directing the XII Corps to assume the responsibility of guarding the mine and its contents.

21. Thereafter, Col. Bernstein, accompanied by Lt. Col. Morris, Lt. Col. Sorrett, Major Ferrera and Lt. Feary, made a preliminary inspection of the Reichsbank building in Frankfurt to determine the suitability of storing the treasure, which Col. Barrett had already visited earlier in the day. They then went to Fort Ehrenbreitstein to inspect the availability of that place for the holding of the gold and other treasure. Inspection of the fort showed that there was a vast amount of archives and treasure stored there. The archives and treasure had been placed there beginning in 1942 and were accumulating considerable dirt which must have been inevitably deteriorating. The storage spaces were not well guarded and were easily accessible. There was a guard of 12 men under a lieutenant in charge of the whole fort.

22. After the inspection of Ft. Ehrenbreitstein was concluded, Col. Bernstein was of the opinion that the place was not suitable as a depository for the gold and valuable art treasures which were to be brought from the mine in Merkers. In this connection, it should be noted that the treasures at Fort Ehrenbreitstein did not apparently include the great masterpieces.

23. At 0830 hours Tuesday, 10 April 1945, Col. Bernstein and party inspected the Reichsbank building. It was decided that the building was fully adequate for the storage purposes and for appropriate office space. Arrangements were made immediately for requisitioning the building and removing from the building all of the occupants and their possessions. Col. Bernstein phoned General McSherry and made a report covering the following points:

- a. General Gay's letter.
- b. The adequacy of the Reichsbank in Frankfurt.
- c. The inadequacy of Fort Ehrenbreitstein.
- d. The need for certain specialized personnel, the names of which were furnished General McSherry.

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- e. Brief statement of the contents of the Merkers mine and need for having both Property Control and Currency Section personnel of G-5 Financial Branch handle the job.
- f. The tentative plan to move the treasure beginning Friday or Saturday, 13 or 14 April 1945.
- g. That there was to be no publicity except the taking of official pictures.
- h. Col. Bernstein would leave for the Merkers mine immediately.

24. General McSherry approved of the entire plan, including the use of the bank at Frankfurt for storing rather than the fort. All appropriate contacts were made with G-4 and G-5, 3d Army, with G-4 SHAEP in Frankfurt and other parties to put in motion a plan for the requisitioning of the building, getting transportation for the move, etc.

25. Col. Bernstein and Lt. Col. Barrett drove to the Merkers mine, leaving Lt. Col. Morris behind with Lt. Feary to arrange the final details for the closing of the building and contacting the Engineers to put the building in shape. Later that afternoon Lt. Col. Morris left for XII Corps.

26. Col. Bernstein and Lt. Col. Barrett reported to the CP of the 387th Infantry Regiment at Merkers, met Lt. Col. John H. Mason, Commander, and were taken to the mine and shown the vault with the gold and money. Later in the afternoon and evening Dr. Vieck and Reimer of the Reichsbank, who had certain information concerning the gold, currency and other valuables, were examined extensively.

27. On the morning of 11 April, Col. Bernstein arranged with Lt. Col. Mason for setting up a Command Post for the Hq ETO with office space and facilities for billeting and messing the staff of officers and enlisted men being brought forward.

28. An inspection was made of the art treasures in the Merkers mine. Dr. P. K. Hare, assistant Director of the Berlin Museum, was present to furnish information. Col. Bernstein arranged for the movement of a number of cases which were found to be in a developing pool of water near one of the shafts.

29. After lunch an inspection was made of the mine in Menzengraben during the course of which the power failed and the party had to remain in the mine for five hours until the power was restored at 1930. An effort was made to inspect the mine in Renabach but a failure of power prevented access to the mine.

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30. After dinner Dr. Shave, librarian of the collection of books in the Ransbach mine was interviewed.

31. Col. Bernstein also arranged that evening for the division of personnel between Frankfurt and Merkers. During the day Lt. Stout, USNR, Monuments and Fine Arts Officer, G-5, 12th Army Group, reported for duty and at night the arrival of the men at Frankfurt was reported and Col. Bernstein directed the following to report to Merkers:

- a. Lt. Col. Omer Claiborne, OFA G-5, SHALP Mission to France and Chief, Currency Section for France.
- b. Lt. Col. Wm. Moore, OC, ECA Currency Section for Germany (12th Army Group Det).
- c. Lt. Comdr. Joel H. Fisher, Chief Freezing, Foreign Exchange and Property Control Section, Financial Branch, G-5 SHALP.
- d. Lt. Wm. A. Dunn, Financial Branch, US Group C.C.
- e. Lt. Benjamin Shilling, ECA Currency Section for Germany, (12th Army Group Det).
- f. Mr. A. St. Germain, Civilian, Officer of Guaranty Trust Co. New York, Paris Office, an expert gold trader.
- g. 4 enlisted men, ECA Currency Section for Germany, (12th Army Group Det).

The following were to remain behind in Frankfurt:

- a. Lt. Col. H. E. Cragon, Currency Section for Belgium and Luxembourg.
- b. Capt. John Love, Property Control Officer attached to G-5 Financial Branch, SHALP.
- c. Lt. Kelso, ECA Currency Section for Germany, (12th Army Group Det)/
- d. Lt. J. E. Feary, Finance Branch, G-5, 12th Army Group.
- e. 2 enlisted men, ECA Currency Section for Germany, (12th Army Group Det).

Maj. J. Fairfax-Cholmeley^e, British Army, Hq. Branch, Currency Section for Germany SHALP, was also directed to report to Merkers.

32. In anticipation of distinguished visitors on Thursday morning, arrangements were made to see that the mine and shaft functioned properly, that German civilians dealing with the contents of the mine were available and a memorandum showing the various mines and a very short statement of the contents was prepared. At 1000 there was a visit to the mine of Generals Eisenhower, Bradley, Patton, Eddy and other military personnel. They were shown both the art

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treasures and the gold and currency. Col. Bernstein furnished information relating to the treasures, how they came there, estimates as to value, etc., and also a plan for the movement of the treasure. The plans were orally approved by these General Officers. At the same time Lt. Col. Morris was at Lucky Forward completing arrangements for the transportation and guard, and arrangements were being made at the mine for putting it in the best shape possible for the move.

33. At 1330 hours, Comdr. Fisher, Lt. Col. Claiborne, Mr. St. Germain and Lt. Col. Moore with his staff of Maj. Fairfax-Cholmsley, Capt. Walitschek, Lt. Shilling and Lt. Dunn and four enlisted men arrived at the mine. Col. Bernstein immediately outlined the project and assigned responsibilities. Lt. Col. Moore was assigned to make arrangements for the transfer of the currency and gold with technical advice from Lt. Col. Claiborne. Mr. St Germain, with the assistance of Lt. Col. Barrett, immediately inspected the mine and made an estimate of the situation and after consulting with Lt. Col. Mason, of the 357th Infantry Regiment, outlined a plan for operations.

34. Commander Fisher was assigned to gather inventory of the other mines in the area and to analyze all the testimony developed in the interrogations with a view toward finding further gold and foreign currency deposits and also gathering financial and property control intelligence material. At the direction of Col. Bernstein, Lt. Herbert G. DuBois, Financial Branch, G-5 SHAEP, was brought forward to the mine area to assist Comdr. Fisher in this work.

35. That afternoon there was further examination of witnesses including ten officials and employees of the Wintershal A G mines who were required to furnish a list of the mines owned by Wintershal A G and the contents thereof. During the interrogation it was found that the Reichswirtschaftsministerium had issued a decree stating that certain mines and tunnels were to be made available for the storage of files, treasures and goods of all kinds and descriptions as well as for factories producing war material.

36. During the course of the next few days, Col. Bernstein interrogated various mine officials, Reichsbank officials, curators of art and officials of the Henschel Trust, all of whom were present in the area. Persons interviewed included Otto Reimer, Chief Cashier of Reichsmark Department of Berlin Branch of the Reichsbank, Albert Thoms, Manager of the Precious Metal Department and Fritz Vieck of this bank, Ernst Kuntzmann, Walter Fonicke, Dr. Woldemar Meyer, Hans Richter, George Peters, Dr. Seil, Maximilian Kathke, Herr Kurzel, Herr Enger, Johannes Boerner, Herr Rudolph, George Peters, Walter Kiegtach, and Dr. Schowe. On the basis of these interviews in-

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formation in connection with Reichsbank activities as well as specific information on the procedures used by the Germans to arrange for storage of property in the mines, together with the names of the mines, was developed. Lt. Comdr. Joel Fisher participated in several of the interrogations. Seven of these persons have been brought to Frankfurt for further questioning as voluntary informants.

II. REMOVAL, TRANSPORTATION AND STORAGE OF GOLD, FOREIGN CURRENCY
AND LOOT.

37. The movement of the gold, dies, presses, foreign currency, loot and 2½ truck-loads of works of art was effected in 20 hours beginning 0900 hours Saturday 14 April and ending 0700 hours Sunday 15 April. In this connection it is to be noted that the same operation took the Germans over four days to effect. The plans for the operation and their execution were under the direct supervision of Col. Bernstein with Lt. Col. Moore, assisted by Lt. Col. Mason and Morris, in charge of operations. Frequently during the course of the loading operations, it was found that the operations could be expedited by minor changes. All of the officers involved in this operation worked steadily during the 20 hour period constantly expediting and supervising. Thirty 10-ton trucks were used with two 10-ton trucks reserves.

38. In order to facilitate the loading operation a fleet of jeeps and trailers was lowered to the "Treasure Vault" mine level. Two jeeps at a time were used to withdraw the gold from the two entrances to the vault (the entrance which had been blown into the vault and the vault door). Shaft No. 2 which was large enough to carry a jeep trailer was found in non-working condition when the party arrived but was quickly repaired by 5 men from a nearby engineer regiment which was brought to the mine for that purpose. Loaded gold and bullion and coins were lifted in shaft No. 2 by means of detaching trailers from the jeeps. Shaft No. 1 was used for loading currency bags and miscellaneous objects. Here the material was unloaded from jeep trailers into mine carts and sent up the elevator. At the top of the shaft the carts were pushed to the end of the platform and loaded onto the trucks.

39. At the outset it was necessary to make a preliminary inventory. The day before any movement was made four teams were organized to make an inventory of the contents of the cave with the information shown on the tags. The teams were designated A, B, C, and D. The two teams working on gold bullion and coins consisted of one officer and two enlisted men. The other two teams consisted of one officer and one enlisted man. Each team started numbering

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the items they inventoried with no. 1, putting the team letter before the number, and continued consecutively until they finished their part of the inventory.

40. The following system of checking the treasure was devised. When the actual movement began one officer and one enlisted man was stationed at the inside of the door of the vault. The officer checked and called out the numbers as the treasure was taken out of the door and loaded on the trailer by the men of the 387th Infantry Regiment. The enlisted man at the door then wrote down this number on a sheet. This sheet was used as a tally-out or shipping ticket for each jeep load.

41. The regiment furnished officers to accompany each trailer load from the vault door to the truck to the top of the shaft. This officer signed the tally-out sheet and the enlisted man at the vault door made a register of these tally-out sheets. The escorting officer carried the tally-out sheet with him and passed it to the Currency Section officer who was stationed to supervise the loading of the trucks at the top of each shaft. An enlisted man from the Currency Section for Germany called the numbers off the items as they were put into the truck and the officer checked them off the tally-out sheet in order to verify that each item which left the cave was loaded on the truck. The truck loading officer then put on the tally-out sheet the truck and trailer number, the name of the driver and assistant driver and the special guard together with their serial numbers. The loading officer then initialled the tally-out sheet and it was returned to the cave by the escorting officer. The enlisted man at the cave entrance upon receipt of the tally-out sheet checked it with the register to verify that all tally-out sheets were returned and that all numbers were in order and all appeared to be correct.

42. The convoy departed promptly at 0800 Sunday, 15 April. It was operated by elements of 1st Bn. 474th Infantry Regiment, supported by elements of the 785th Military Police Bn., Co. B, 503rd Military Police Bn., one anti-aircraft platoon plus tactical air force elements, consisting of cub and fighter planes detailed by the Assistant Chief of Staff, G-3, 3rd U.S. Army.

43. The convoy moved without incident and arrived at Frankfurt approximately 1400 hours.

44. Col. Bernstein accompanied the convoy in the armored truck while Lt. Cole, Moore and Claiborne and Mr. St. Germain proceeded immediately to Frankfurt where they were joined by Lt. Col. Cragon, Capt. Love, Lt. Kelso and Lt. Feary and enlisted men. When the convoy arrived at the Reichsbank at Frankfurt a similar system of

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checking and unloading as well as stacking was instituted. This system had been devised under the general direction of Col. Bernstein in consultation with Lt. Col. Moore, Cragon, Claiberne and Barrett. Unloading started at 1800 hours Sunday 15 April and ended 20 hours later at 1100 hours 16 April.

45. The preliminary estimate of the amount of gold bars, gold coin, Reichsmarks and foreign currency stored in the Reichsbank at Frankfurt is annexed as Appendix '1'. A preliminary investigation of some of the valises stored in the vault, which are said to be looted taken by the SS, includes three large cases of gold and silver teeth fillings, valise after valise of silver tableware, watch cases, eye-glass spectacles, gold wedding rings, in addition to pearls, certain precious stones, etc. Inventories found in several of the valises indicate that many of these objects came from Poland and Holland. The valises were also found to contain varying amounts of foreign currency, including rubles, zlotys, French and Belgian francs and Italian money.

III. REMOVAL, TRANSPORTATION AND STORAGE OF OBJECTS OF ART.

46. The bulk of the objects of art in question were discovered at the Kaiseroda mine at Merkers. The remainder of the art objects, comprising 45 cases in all, were removed from the Fansbach mine.

47. From the very outset it was realized that the art objects in the Kaiseroda mine were of great value. This was due to the fact that a Dr. Have, from the Department of National Galleries in Berlin, was found at the mine. An interrogation led to the belief that it was essential to arrange for the removal and protection of said objects as soon as possible. This belief was confirmed upon the arrival of Lt. Stout (USNR) Monuments and Fine Arts Officer of G-5 12th Army Group. He made a spot-check of the boxes and cases and talked with Dr. Have and immediately came to the conclusion that they constituted great wealth.

48. Accordingly, detailed plans were promptly put into effect for the removal of the art treasures at the Kaiseroda mine and the 45 cases at the Fansbach mine. Transportation to take these art treasures to Frankfurt for storing at the Reichsbank was arranged by Lt. Col. Morris, of G-4 SHAEP.

49. In preparation for the move use was made of personnel from the 357th Infantry. Certain pictures, prints, etc., were removed from the mine on Sunday, 15 April 1945. Prior to arrival of the trucks they were stored in an adjacent building and upon the arrival of the trucks, on 17 April 1945, it was thereupon possible to load several trucks at one time without delay. Approximately 40 hours were taken

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to bring all of the art objects out of the mine and load them on the trucks. During the final day of loading approximately 100 prisoners of war were placed at the disposal of the officers supervising the move.

50. Each box, picture, case, etc., that was loaded upon the trucks was listed upon a Shipping Ticket. A separate Shipping Ticket was prepared for each truck and was signed by the officer who supervised the loading of the truck. The form (mimeographed at direction of Lt. Dunn (now Captain Dunn), provided such information as:

- Name of truck driver and serial number.
- Names of guards and serial numbers.
- Truck number.
- Key letter and number shown on each case, box, etc.
- Number of cases.
- Description.

51. Twenty-six ten-ton truck loads of art objects were removed from the Kaiseroda Mine at Merkers and the Ransbach Mine. Three truck loads accompanied the convoy which brought the gold, currency, etc., to Frankfurt and the remaining 23 truck loads moved as a special convoy on 17 April 1945, leaving Merkers at approximately 0900 hours and arriving at the Reichsbank building in Frankfurt at approximately 1500 hours the same day.

52. Unloading the art objects and storing them in rooms at the Reichsbank in Frankfurt required approximately eight hours time. The work was accomplished by prisoners of war who were supervised by officers and civilian personnel of SHALP and Finance Division, US Group CC. As each truck was unloaded at Frankfurt its contents were checked off against the Shipping Ticket prepared at Kaiseroda Mine for that truck and the officer who supervised the unloading signed the ticket.

53. In placing the art objects in the rooms of the Reichsbank, boxes, cases, etc., of each department of the National Galleries were separately stacked as far as facilities permitted. Paintings are protected by packing material which was secured at Merkers.

54. Technical matters, such as packing and storing paintings, prints, etc., was supervised both at Kaiseroda Mine and in Frankfurt by Lt. Spout. Organization of personnel, loading and unloading was done under the supervision of Captain W. A. Dunn, Finance Division, US Group C C.

55. It is to be emphasized that the task in question was chiefly concerned with transferring objects of great wealth to a

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Kaisersroda mine at Merkers, Germany. 18 April 1946.

place of safekeeping. Under present operational conditions it would be extremely difficult to place even an approximate evaluation upon these art treasures. The work of evaluation must of necessity be done by experts and will require reference to catalogues and individual examination. For this reason only a very few boxes were opened and this was done chiefly to confirm the information given by Dr. Rave. It is to be stressed that a considerable portion of these art treasures may have been looted by the Germans. The determination of whether a case or an individual object of art was looted will necessarily take time. Meanwhile the art is being held in custody by the Commanding General, European Theater of Operations and a further study will be made to determine the best way to make a preliminary inventory of this property.

56. A very tentative and incomplete inventory of the cases packages and other containers comprising the art objects removed is attached as Appendix '2'.

IV. PROPERTY STORED IN OTHER MINES.

57. The reconnaissance through the other mines in the Merkers area revealed huge quantities of property stored by the Germans in the area. It was found that these stores included Luftwaffe material, ammunition, contents of Libraries, art collections, files and records of such companies as the Henschel company of Berlin and Krupp works. A copy of a report of the property in the other mines is included as Appendix '3'. It was decided to take to Frankfurt the forty boxes belonging to the Krupp works and Krupp family, as well as two large boxes and several files of the Henschel Trust. These files and boxes appear to be excellent sources of information on certain German programs for secreting of foreign exchange assets abroad. They will be thoroughly analyzed in Frankfurt and a full report of their contents will be furnished when the analysis is complete.

58. It is to be noted that approximately thirty railway cars containing books and records of the Reich patent office in Berlin were stored in the mine at Heringen. The shaft of the mine is not operative but can be put into operative condition within 24 hours. This information was passed to Lt. Col. Morris, of G-4 SHAFF, and it is presently planned to send officers from G-5 to the mine with Lt. Col. Morris for the purpose of removing and transporting these records to Frankfurt where they will be stored in the Reichsbank and analyzed.

V. INDICATION OF OTHER GOLD AND FOREIGN CURRENCY.

59. Interrogations of German Reichsbank officers in the area, as well as mine officials, revealed information that gold had been secreted by the Reich and the Nazi party in other places including possibly:

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Halle
 Plauen
 Leipzig
 Wurtzburg
 Saalfeld
 Berlin
 Neubrandenburg

Neustrelitz
 Schwerin
 Weimar
 Schneidermuhl (Russian occupied)
 Stettin (Russian occupied)
 Frankfurt an Oder (Russian occupied)

60. It was also learned that just a few days before the entry of U.S. Troops into Merkers the Germans had transported over 165 bags of foreign currency to other areas in Germany including Halle, Nordhausen, Berlin and Leipzig.

61. On the basis of this information, Col. Bernstein prepared a staff study for the Chief of Staff of 3rd Army, setting forth this information and listing the eight targets in the U.S. Army area which should be examined immediately with a view toward detecting and safeguarding gold, foreign currency and loot. A copy of the staff study is attached as Appendix '4'. He recommended that an infantry regiment less one battalion plus one company of tanks, one company of tank destroyers and sufficient anti-aircraft protection to cover the area, be furnished. This organization would be broken down into a task force of ten teams for reconnaissance and two infantry rifle companies as holding forces to guard the gold and foreign currency targets. The remainder would be used to guard the mine entrance in the Merkers and surrounding area.

62. General Gay stated he was interested and agreed with the need for a further investigation. However, he pointed out it would be impossible to make available the 3rd Army personnel for the needed reconnaissance in the various areas. He stated he would be prepared to furnish one platoon for reconnaissance in the 3rd Army area. It later developed that the platoon furnished by the 3rd Army was not motorized and therefore would not be suitable to do the reconnaissance work and following up leads in the 3rd Army area. Accordingly, Col. Bernstein released the platoon as unsuitable for the contemplated operations.

63. In the intensive work of exploitation of the Merkers find now going on, the latest discovery has uncovered a series of account books which Thoms, Manager of the Precious Metal Department of the Reichsbank, has just described in an interrogation (which is still continuing) on these records, as the running inventory of the gold bars and gold and silver coins held by the Reichsbank in Germany for its own account and the account of others. It is interesting to note that Thoms in a previous interrogation had informed Col. Bernstein that these records had been returned to Berlin. These books give the assay office number, the bank number, the gross

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Kaisersode mine at Merkers, Germany. 18 April 1945.**

weight, the fineness and the fine weight of each bar held at either Merkers or Berlin. One book lists the bars by branch which were dispersed to approximately 18 branches of the Reichsbank in Germany in July and August 1943. These books should be useful as a check-list against which the discovery of the Reichsbank gold can be controlled and may materially assist in the location of all of the hoards of the Reichsbank gold. Information on the Reichsbank holdings of gold and silver coins is given in another set of books. Also secured were several sacks of assay certificates of the gold bars which had been smelted at the Prussian State Mint.

64. On the basis of the foregoing information, Col. Bernstein is making plans for additional reconnaissance parties to locate other gold and foreign currency, special attention being given to those areas which are considered as key targets based on information secured from the developments which have taken place. Col. Bernstein is planning to personally lead a small reconnaissance party in jeeps which is scheduled to depart at 0800 hours 19 April 1945 and included Comdr. Fisher and Lt. DuBois.

65. As stated in this report and appendices it appears that the Germans hid their assets in mines and other secret places in Germany, presumably with the intent of maintaining a source of financing of pro-Nazi activity. Many of these caches have not yet been uncovered and should be ferreted out as soon as operations permit. It would appear necessary that some procedure be established for analyzing and utilizing the property and records found in the Merkers area and those uncovered in the future. Intelligence reports indicate that just as the Germans secreted assets and valuable property within Germany, they also made elaborate arrangements for secreting assets in neutral and other nations of the world. Every step should be taken in Germany to obtain information of the assets secreted both inside and outside Germany so that these assets cannot be used to perpetuate Nazism or contribute to the rebuilding of Nazi influence.

B. BERNSTEIN
Colonel, GSC
*HALF

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By W.D. NARA Date 12/13/76

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Appendix 3

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By authority of CALA
By JOHN A. BAUERMEISTER

2nd Lt. Inf. JB
21 OCT 1945

SUBJECT: Report of contents of mines in Merkers area.

TO : Brig. General McSherry.

1. The uncovering of the gold treasure of foreign currency, loot and works of art in the Merkers area has focused attention upon the German technique of secreting wealth by hiding various properties in mines. In connection with the removal of the gold and other valuables from the Kaiseroda mine, a reconnaissance was instituted to determine the various types of properties which were looted in other mines in the Merkers area. The following is a summary of the information uncovered. It is based on information obtained through interrogation of the various mine officials and custodians of the property, through direct scrutiny and observation by members of the 357th Infantry Regiment, 90th Division, other 12th Army Group personnel, G-6 STAFF, and personnel of other units guarding the representative mines.

2. Most of the mines covered by this report are located within the area covered by the attached map. The location of mines not in the map area is also indicated on the map.

3. As the information reported herein became known immediate contact was made with the appropriate staff officers at 3rd Army so as to advise them completely of the type of material being uncovered in the area. Colonel Bernstein contacted G-2, G-3, G-4 and G-5 as well as the Chief of Staff, Deputy Chief of Staff, G-2, G-5 and of the 12th Corps. All of these staff officers stated that they were not interested in the contents of the mine as their contents were not needed in support of current military operations. Interrogation of the officials of the Wintershall mine revealed that Wintershall has other mining interests in other areas of Germany including the Hartz mountain area. The Wintershall officials stated that they know that the mines in some instances were being used as ammunition factories and in other instances for storage purposes. They are presently engaged in preparing a report showing the location of these mines and giving such information as they may have with respect to non-mining activities carried on in the mines.

Honsbach Mine at Honsbach, inspected 13-14 April.

The location of this mine can be obtained from the map listed as Appendix '1'.

General Conditions: The workings are somewhat over 800 meters below ground level and consist of large open chambers with connecting passageways. The bulk of the holdings placed there consist of books

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from the Berlin library, total number estimated at 1 1/2 to 2 million volumes. There is also a large set of maps together with a general library of reference maps; seven additional packages of maps and geographical reference books were sent by mail to Ronsbach but arrived too late to be put with the rest. They were taken from the Postoffice at Phillipetal and held by a Frauline Naumann, an assistant in the Berlin Library, living there as a refugee. These packages were spot checked on 12 April.

Paintings: In addition to books is part of the painting collection from the Berlin museums which reached the mine by mistake in direction. They consist of 45 cases each holding 5 to 15 paintings. All are works of importance, probably the most valuable being in case No. 10 containing two Holbeins, one Durer and a rare work by the Italian 15th century painter Domenico Veneziano. Seven of these cases have been rifled, according to report, by Russian and Polish laborers who had entered the mine by ladder prior to occupation of this area by U.S. forces. Some of the paintings were still out of the cases but no loss and no appreciable damage had been done. (This set of holdings was later removed with those from Merkers)

Miscellaneous holdings: An extensive collection of musical and theatrical scores and scripts had been deposited here from the Berlin State Theater and also a number of theatrical costumes. A set of "archives" reported to have been left by a German Captain named Trahnorf early in April or late in March was located. These are in three small wooden boxes and 175 thin paper boxes. Spot check showed them to consist of ringback letter files with papers from the Oberkommando des Heeres. This office is understood to be connected with the Wehrmacht Ministerium. These papers were chiefly connected with supply and instructions of a general kind. There were no indications of a date later than 1942 or of tactical information. It was said by the librarian from Berlin, Dr. Schawe, that Capt. Trahnorf had been an officer of the G.K.K. and that he is now a prisoner of war. No other papers were found in the mine.

Sachsen-Weimar Mine at Unterbrasilzbach

A list of property together with its location in the mine and names of owners of said property is enclosed as Appendix '2' together with the chart of the mine as Appendix '3'. For location of the mine refer to map at Appendix '1'. Mine was searched on 14 April by personnel of the 357th Infantry Regiment who checked this report and verified the information stated therein. On 17 April the 38 boxes belonging to the Krupp Co. and Krupp family were removed from the mine and taken to Frankfurt for further perusal and analysis. It was found that shaft at Sachsen-Weimar was in good working condition and it would take approximately one hour for the chief engineer, Maximilian Pothke, who has his residence on the premises, to get power, electricity and light in operation in the mine.

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~Halligenroda Mine at Haritzsch

Attached hereto at Appendix '4' is a list submitted by mine officials of articles stored by Reichwirtschafts Ministerium at this mine. Page 2 of Appendix '5' contains list of other articles listed by these officials as being in the mine. It was found that the mine was accessible and can be operated by giving one hour notice to the chief engineer who is on the premises.

Wintershall Mine at Haritzsch

The chief engineer, Erick Gutzke, lives across the street from the mine and is available. A list of articles in the mine and owners of said articles as submitted by mine officials is at Appendix '6'. Refer to map at Appendix '1' for location of mine and to chart at Appendix '7' showing layout of mine. The premises appear to be in excellent condition and were not damaged by warfare. The lift can be put into operation in a few hours. Particular questioning was along the lines of the patent records listed by Dr. Reil. The Berlin patent office has approximately 1,000 employees of whom 30 worked at this mine. There are 320,000 books stored in the mine which would occupy approximately 30 railway cars. From 12 to 20 of the patent office employees are presently living in the area around the mine. None are directors but are officials at a lower level. None of the patent employees were interrogated due to fear pertinent questions might arouse suspicion and key records might be removed by these employees. The records are believed to contain patents issued up to a year ago. One director left recently but no records have been removed since they were originally brought to the mine.

Kaiseroda Mine at Markers

This is the mine from which the gold, currency and works of art were recently removed. There are five separate entrances to the main mine which all lead to the same underground system. These entrances are in area covered by map at Appendix '1' and are located as follows:

- 3 at Markers
- 1 at Dietlax
- 1 at Kaiseroda
- 1 between Leimbach and Bad Salzingen known as the Bad Salzingen shaft

Personnel of the 387th Infantry Regiment searched this mine several times. In addition to the works of art, currency and gold, they found on the main floor dynamite in 4 rooms which were used regularly for the storage of explosives. The rooms contained from 300 to 600 boxes of dynamite, 60 pounds in each box. They also found 8 rooms filled with electric and machine parts used for

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maintenance of the floor and two runnels which could not be explored due to heavy concentrations of poison gas. In a search of the 2nd floor, located 200 meters below the main floor, they found 617 boxes of dynamite (60 pounds in each box) in one room which had apparently been used regularly for the storage of explosives. They also found 4 room filled with electric and machine parts but could not reach the ends of the tunnels due again to the presence of poison gas. Attached hereto as Appendix '3' is list of the contents of the mine with statement of the owners which was submitted by the mine officials.

Heiligensroda Mine at Springen

The property located in this mine as reported by the mine owners together with the list of the respective owners is included in Appendix '5'. A chart of this mine is included as Appendix '9'. The area around this mine was occupied chiefly by displaced persons although there were a few soldiers present. A British sergeant, prisoner of war of the Germans, who had been working in the mine for 13 months, was interviewed and stated that he had been all through the mine. He said there was a very large supply of German air force uniforms and a number of these uniforms have already been removed by displaced persons who were seen wearing them on the premises. The British sergeant also stated that there is machinery for the manufacture of motors of airplanes. He stated that there is machinery for this purpose in the mine. He had no knowledge of technical plans stored at the bottom of shaft 2. Shaft 1 at this mine can be put into immediate operation by an engineer who lives about 8 kilometers from the mine. Shaft 2 was damaged and is not in operation. Access to the first level of shaft 2 can be gained through shaft 1 but in order to get to second level of shaft 2 it is necessary to use approximately 80 yards of ladders which may not be in good condition. According to the engineer who was interviewed, shaft 2 could be put into operation in about an hour if the engineer was instructed to obtain necessary personnel in the area to repair the lift. During the course of a later interview at the Kintershall mine at Heringen, the chief engineer there stated he thought the technical plans in the Heiligenroda mine were mining plans.

Abterode Mine at Abterode

For location of this mine refer to map at Appendix '7'. A number of displaced persons were at this mine and two U.S. soldiers were stationed as guards. They were from the 3662nd Ordnance Bn. Co. 14th Bn. They stated 3 engineer officers from the 3rd Army had been able to enter the mine with a cable and pulley. Large quantities of ammunition and machinery for making parts for airplanes and tank engines were discovered.

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~~CONFIDENTIAL~~Alexanderehall Mine at Herka

For location of this mine refer to map at Appendix '1'. This mine was guarded by soldiers from the 3552nd Ordnance and also by 851st Ord. Heavy Auto Maintenance, 326th Bn. They stated their outfits were endeavoring to put the mine into operation because they thought some of the machinery in the mine might be useful. It was not damaged but required steam power for electricity to operate the same. From examination of the equipment and parts above ground it appeared that 75mm shells and 4.2 mortar shells had been assembled or manufactured there. A German civilian lives across the street from the mine and speaks excellent English. He wore a military Government armband. He stated ammunition was manufactured and stored at the mine; also that considerable medical supplies and hospital equipment were stored as well as chemicals for poison gas. He also stated that a passageway 3 1/2 miles long connects this mine to the Abterode mine.

Herfa-Nauroda Mine at Herfa

Refer to map at Appendix '1' for location of mine and to chart at Appendix '10' for layout of mine. The buildings were occupied by the 79th Replacement Bn. Both shafts are badly damaged and the lifts are not in operation. When the U.S. troops captured this area the engineers dropped explosive charges into the shaft because they suspected enemy soldiers to be present. Some of these charges may not have exploded and care should be taken in entering the mine for this reason. In addition to two shafts with lifts there is another shaft with step ladders. A few soldiers were able to get to the bottom of the mine using these ladders. However, several were insured slightly when the ladders broke. A wire and cable arrangement was rigged up to extricate them from the mine. This equipment may still be available. The soldiers found very large quantities of ammunition stored in the mine. There were also elaborate streets and alleys and complete facilities such as a restaurant, rest rooms and dispensary. The mine was not thoroughly explored by these soldiers due to lack of time and fear of mine duds.

Kaiseroda Mine at Dietlas

For location of this mine see map at Appendix '1'. Appendix '8' contains a list of property with owners as submitted by mine officials. The shaft is not in operation and was reached through an underground passage from that portion of the mine at Herka. There were double doors at the entrance to the Dietlas area which were closed with heavy padlocks and the key was said to be in Weimar. The doors were forced open and were found to be the only means of access to a chamber 40x50x10 feet.

The following is a survey of the articles and their apparent

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owners:

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Weimar - 33 wooden cases about 3½ x 1½ x 2½ feet. Marked with the word Weimar and numbered consecutively. Evidently the contents of the Goethe collection. Some cases were marked to indicate contents. Others marked with rooms of house.

Staatsarchiv Weimar - 113 boxes 1 x 1 x 1½ feet. More than 1,000 folders on shelves containing records with dates from 12 century.

Staatsarchiv Meiningen - 18 drawers taken from cabinets and stacked and covered. Papers in the drawers dated from 1833 to 1931.

Staatsarchiv Korbach - Records in letter files. No count.

Private possessions - Plates, studies and photographic equipment belonging to W. Hape with a few modern paintings. Two boxes marked with name of Hugo Gugg.

B. BERNSTEIN
Colonel, OSC

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