

| The Fortunes of the Numismatic Collection of the National Museum in Warsaw during the Second World War

There are several articles and documents describing the pre-Second World War collection of the Numismatic Room of the National Museum in Warsaw (**fig. 1**), as well as the losses it suffered during the war. One of the first, written in November 1946, was a text commissioned by the Main Office of Museums and Protection of Antiquities. This study, “Zestawienie strat wojennych Muzeum Narodowego w Warszawie” [A breakdown of the wartime losses of the National Museum in Warsaw], included a list of losses in the coin collection. The curators – Anna Szemiothowa of the ancient coins department and Józef Jodkowski of the collection of Polish and foreign numismatics – assessed the state of the collections. Their study’s value lies in its initial assessment of losses prior to the recovery and return to the museum of some items through the national restitution campaign. Szemiothowa estimated that the antique coins department had lost 5,297 coins, while Jodkowski gauged the losses in the Polish and foreign coin collections at more than 98,000 items, or 99 per cent of the original number.¹ A large study outlining Warsaw’s cultural losses, which included the losses in the numismatic collection of the National Museum in Warsaw, appeared in 1948. In it, Szemiothowa² and Jodkowski³ discussed items recently regained in the restitution campaign. Szemiothowa then elaborated on the topic in a 1958 article.⁴ In 2000, Robert Pieńkowski summarized the most important materials to date,⁵ as did Janina Wiercińska most recently, in 2014.⁶ All these texts provide a fairly precise description of the structure and collections of the pre-war Numismatic Room of the National Museum in Warsaw. Thanks to them, we know, for example, that the

¹ *Zestawienie strat wojennych Muzeum Narodowego w Warszawie*, Central Archives of Modern Records, Ministry of Culture and Art 387/47, pp. 62–64.

² Anna Szemiothowa, “Gabinet numizmatyczny (Dział monet starożytnych),” in *Straty kulturalne Warszawy*, (Warsaw, 1948), pp. 186–206. *Prace i Materiały Wydziału Rewindykacji i Odszkodowań*.

³ Józef Jodkowski, “Gabinet numizmatyczny (Dział monet średniowiecznych i nowożytnych),” in *Straty kulturalne Warszawy* (Warsaw, 1948), pp. 207–17. *Prace i Materiały Wydziału Rewindykacji i Odszkodowań*.

⁴ Anna Szemiothowa, “Historia powstania Działu Numizmatyki Starożytnej Muzeum Narodowego w Warszawie,” *Rocznik Muzeum Narodowego w Warszawie*, Ann. 3 (1958), pp. 335–51.

⁵ Robert Pieńkowski, *Straty wojenne numizmatyki poniesione w latach 1939–1945 w granicach Polski po 1945 r. Raport wstępny* (Poznań, 2000).

⁶ Janina Wiercińska, “Kolekcja numizmatyczna dr. Władysława Semerau-Siemianowskiego w Muzeum Narodowym w Warszawie / The Numismatic Collection of Dr Władysław Semerau-Siemianowski in the National Museum in Warsaw,” *Rocznik Muzeum Narodowego w Warszawie. Nowa Seria / Journal of the National Museum in Warsaw. New Series*, 3(39) (2014), pp. 111–36.

room comprised an ancient coins department and a medieval and modern coins department. The former held c. 30,000 numismatic objects, most of them donations. These included the collection of Dr Władysław Semerau-Siemianowski (27,711 coins), who collected ancient coins in the forty years he spent living abroad to escape persecution by the Prussian partitioning power; the collection of Dr Ignacy Terlecki (1,751 coins); a perpetual deposit from the State Art Collections, which included over 3,000 Greek, Roman and Byzantine coins; the private collection of Professor Jan Lewiński (446 Greek and Roman coins); and other donations and minor purchases. The most valuable asset of the antique coins department were 361 gold items.⁷ The medieval and modern coins department comprised mostly perpetual deposits from the State Art Collections (together with the ancient coins, it totalled c. 33,000 coins and medals), and was one of the largest such collections in Europe prior to the Second World War.⁸ It was made up of the purchased or donated collections of Kazimierz Sobański (nearly 9,000 pieces), Józef Weyssenhoff (more than 1,000), Henryk Mańkowski (c. 1,500 medals), Stanisław Kosieradzki (c. 6,900 badges, tokens and religious medallions) and smaller deposits of both ancient and medieval and modern items from collectors including Józef Chojnowski, Waław Koczorowski and Joachim Lelewel, donations and purchases. The museum was also in possession of about 20,000 “coins in poor condition, defective duplicates.”⁹ The set also included collections of seals, badges and decorations, medals and religious medallions, and modern foreign coins. Jodkowski estimated that in September 1939 the department held over 100,000 numismatic objects.¹⁰

All these studies focused primarily on assessing the pre-war state of the National Museum in Warsaw's Numismatic Room (now the Department of Coins and Medals). This is explained by the fact that the texts written by Jodkowski and Szemiothowa were commissioned by the Claims and Restitution Department of the Ministry of Culture and Art, the unit charged with locating lost relics. But no study of the collection's fortunes during the Second World War was written then. Even Professor Stanisław Lorentz, director of the National Museum in Warsaw in 1936 to 1982 (with a wartime interruption), did not elaborate on the subject in his many reminiscences about his wartime involvement in saving Poland's cultural legacy. This explains why today there exists no exhaustive source on what happened to the Numismatic Room in the first months of the war. We only know from Szemiothowa's writings that, anticipating an inevitable conflict between Poland and Germany, Lorentz arranged for the most valuable items from the numismatic collection to be hidden. They were packed into “specially prepared sheet-metal boxes. These were placed in a concrete bunker prepared specially for this purpose and bricked in.”¹¹ But the Germans found this hiding place very quickly, in October 1939, and took out the precious objects. A January 1940 report by Professor Peter Paulsen, head of a special unit charged by the Ahnenerbe institute, which researched issues relating to race, with taking over museum, library and archival collections in occupied Poland, reads: “thanks to the arduous research

⁷ Robert Pieńkowski, *Straty wojenne numizmatyki poniesione w latach 1939–1945 w granicach Polski po 1945 r. Raport wstępny* (Poznań, 2000).

⁸ Jodkowski, op. cit., pp. 207–17.

⁹ Jodkowski, op. cit., p. 208.

¹⁰ *Zestawienie strat wojennych Muzeum Narodowego w Warszawie*, Archiwum Akt Nowych MKiS 387/47, pp. 62–64.

¹¹ Anna Szemiothowa, “Historia powstania Działu Numizmatyki Starożytnej Muzeum Narodowego w Warszawie,” *Rocznik Muzeum Narodowego w Warszawie*, Ann. 3 (1958), p. 345.

conducted in the National Museum [in Warsaw], it was possible to ascertain which art objects from the Museum, Castle, offices of the Council of Ministers, Łazienki Palace, Wilanów Palace, Krasieński Library and Zamoyski Library had disappeared, been destroyed, remained in place, or had been packed or hidden in cellars under concrete.”¹² This enigmatic wording summarizes the nature of the German authorities’ actions aimed at seizing the largest possible number of works of art in Polish museums and private collections. Yet Paulsen does not mention the key role his office played in this process. He, too, successfully intercepted many priceless objects, including some belonging to the Museum of the Army and the Krasieński and Zamoyski Libraries. But the National Museum in Warsaw’s numismatic collection fell to the competition. It was appropriated by the Army Group North, a cell of the office of the Special Delegate for Securing Artistic Treasures in the Occupied Polish Territories (*Sonderbeauftragter für den Schutz und die Sicherung von Kunstwerken in den besetzten Ostgebieten*).¹³ The group had been created by Field Marshal (later Reich Marshal) Hermann Göring in early October 1939. The text of its chief’s appointment read: “retired Secretary of State Dr [Kajetan] Mühlmann was appointed special plenipotentiary by the Chairman of the Council of Ministers for the Defence of the Reich, Prime Minister Field Marshal Göring to secure works of art in the occupied Polish territories. On the Field Marshal’s behalf, I ask that all military, civilian and party institutions support him in fulfilling his mission and provide him protection and assistance.”¹⁴ For official reasons, the special plenipotentiary’s activities were incorporated into the structure of the Generalgouvernement government. Mühlmann (**fig. 2**) headed the Office for the Maintenance of Old Art (*Amt für die Pflege alter Kunst*) with a monthly salary of 5,000 reichsmarks.¹⁵ The Austrian hurriedly began to prepare to execute the tasks entrusted to him. He formed two operations teams, which were to penetrate the occupied country so as to “secure” a maximum number of works of art, the South Group based in Krakow and the North Group based in Warsaw. Dr Gustav Barthel, director of the City Arts Collection in Breslau (*Städtische Kunstsammlungen Breslau*) headed the former, while Kajetan’s half-brother Dr Josef Mühlmann led the North Group, so it was he who directed the action of investigating art collections in Warsaw. Art historians, museum specialists, conservators and antiquarians – most of them, like Mühlmann, Austrians – were appointed to the two teams.

A July 1943 report from the Special Delegate for Securing Artistic Treasures in the Occupied Polish Territories describes the seizure of the National Museum in Warsaw’s numismatic collection. Kajetan Mühlmann wrote that “a total of 62 works of art [individual items as well as sets of antiquities – JRK] that were important to the Reich” were selected from the collections of the Warsaw museum.¹⁶ As for the numismatic items, Mühlmann noted that it was “a collection of gold and silver ancient, Polish and some foreign coins”¹⁷ (**fig. 3**). The “securing” of antiquities in the capital of the Generalgouvernement was established by a decree issued by

¹² Report of Professor Peter Paulsen, 4 January 1940, in Andrzej Mężyński, *Kommando Paulsen – październik-grudzień 1939 r.* (Warsaw, 1994), p. 51.

¹³ J. Robert Kudelski, *Zrabowane skarby. Losy dzieł sztuki na ziemiach polskich w czasie II wojny światowej* (Krakow, 2012).

¹⁴ Attestation signed by Dr Erich Gritzach, 9 October 1939, IPN Najwyższy Trybunał Narodowy (henceforth IPN NTN) 297, vol. 51, p. 154.

¹⁵ Decision of Dr Josef Bühler, 24 November 1939, IPN NTN 297, vol. 51, p. 155.

¹⁶ Report on the activities of Dr Kajetan Mühlmann, July 1943, IPN NTN 295, p. 152.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 154.

Governor Hans Frank dated 16 December 1939, which established that the “total public appropriation of works of art in the Generalgouvernement is being confiscated in order to fulfil the publicly useful missions.”¹⁸ The objects found in the hiding place prepared by Lorentz were transported to Krakow. The numismatic collection of the National Museum in Warsaw was then entered in a special catalogue of the most valuable antiquities (called First Quality), published in 1940 as *Sichergestellte Kunstwerke im General Gouvernement* [Secured art works in the Generalgouvernement]. The National Museum in Warsaw collection was assigned catalogue number 513 and described as “a collection of ancient and Polish coins and a collection of gold and silver foreign coins”.¹⁹ Catalogue number 512 included six boxes containing the property of the Numismatic Museum of the State Mint, encompassing ancient and modern coins and medals, with inventory documentation of the collection.”²⁰

The numismatic collection seized by the Germans from the National Museum in Warsaw, together with other works of art, was most likely held for the next few years in the cellars of the Jagiellonian Library building erected before the war. In the summer of 1944 Hans Frank himself decided what would happen to it next. Because of the fighting on the Eastern Front, Frank ordered that the most valuable antiquities appropriated in occupied Poland be prepared for evacuation. On 25 July 1944, the Russians occupied Lvov, the capital of the Reich’s Galicia District. On the same day, Dr Wilhelm Ernst von Palézieux, Frank’s advisor on architecture and the arts (who replaced Dr Kajetan Mühlmann in 1943) was sent to Lower Silesia to find a location to store the evacuated collections. The palace of Manfred von Richthofen in Seichau (now Sichów) was to serve as their main storage site. As the transports of art works arrived from Krakow, Palézieux spent a week in the aristocrat’s residence, receiving and storing them. After returning to Krakow, he was informed by the chief of the Chancellery of the Generalgouvernement, Dr Maximilian Meidinger, that more collections under the “protection” of the occupation government were being readied for evacuation to Lower Silesia. Palézieux opposed this plan, believing that they should remain in Krakow. But there was no negotiating with Frank. “Obeying the order, I packed about 5 crates of coins and 5 crates of etchings and expedited these things to Seichau myself... I learned later that these things had arrived at Seichau and were placed in the summerhouse, since they were too heavy [to lift]. I don’t know where the coin collections had come from, and it seems to me that there were 3 collections of coins, one belonging to the Polish State Treasury, and two private ones.”²¹ This information was not accurate. Archival documents indicate that the numismatic collections of the National Museum in Warsaw, the Potocki family (this collection was entered in the *Sichergestellte Kunstwerke im General Gouvernement* catalogue under the number 515 and stored in crates numbered BA 92 and BA 96) and at the State Mint (it is possible that the architect labelled them as belonging to the “Polish State Treasury”) were being kept in Krakow. We do not know whether the assets of the Numismatic Museum of the State Mint were included in one of the transports to Seichau. But we do know from the testimony at the post-war trial of Dr Ernst Boepfle – secretary of state in Frank’s government, who also acted

¹⁸ Governor’s decree, 16 December 1939, *Dziennik Rozporządzeń Generalnego Gubernatorstwa dla Okupowanych Polskich Obszarów*, no. 12 (1939).

¹⁹ *Sichergestellte Kunstwerke im Generalgouvernement* (Wrocław, 1940).

²⁰ Zbigniew Kazimierz Witek, *Dokumenty strat kultury polskiej pod okupacją niemiecką 1939–1944 z archiwum Karola Estreichera* (Krakow, 2003), p. 160.

²¹ Record of trial of Dr Wilhelm Ernst von Palézieux, 24 January 1948, IPN NTN 298, vol. 52, p. 33.

as the Plenipotentiary for Evacuating the Generalgouvernement Offices in Upper and Lower Silesia (Beauftragter bei dem Gauleiter in Ober- und Niederschlesien für die Rückverlegung von Dienststäben der Regierung des Generalgouvernements) – that in September 1944 he had inspected the items deposited in a warehouse in Brieg (now Brzeg). The detailed report from his inspection read that “on 17 September, a transport arrived from the State Mint in Warsaw, which included coins made out of ores, silver and precious metals etc.”²² However, the Polish judicial authorities interrogating Boepple did not ask him any details of what had happened to the State Mint’s numismatic collection. Perhaps it had been looted by German civil servants and soldiers. Already in a report he wrote for his superiors in September 1944, Boepple had acknowledged that the mint’s coins he had found in the warehouse in Brzeg were not secured. They were stored “in some shed at the train station, whose only lock was broken.” He continued: “I tried to arrange as quickly as possible for the most precious items to be taken care of because, in my opinion, breaking into the shed would have been child’s play. Silver bars and sacks of coins are open. The shed is also accessible through the porter’s lodge. I would be surprised if some of the items weren’t already missing.”²³ But it is conceivable that the State Mint and the Potocki collections landed in Lower Silesia. Palézieux admitted that he did not take part in packing the crates for evacuation. But as the transports were being prepared in Krakow, he met Dr Kajetan Mühlmann, as the latter “had brought down a car for evacuation, despite my advice. I could see the packed crates with prints and numismatics, whose contents I did not know precisely... These things were sent to Seichau in late August or early September 1944.”²⁴ Finally, “5 crates of numismatics and 5 packages of prints” reached Richthofen’s palace. Responsible for the safety of the collections during the transport were two men from the Chancellery of the Generalgouvernement, Nestler and Skowronek.²⁵ Once at the palace, Dr Eduard Kneisel, a conservator from the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna, who had worked with Dr Mühlmann almost since the beginning of the German occupation of Poland, assumed responsibility for their conservation.

Even though surviving documents indicate that the majority of the numismatic collections taken over by the occupation authorities in the Generalgouvernement went to Lower Silesia, precious coins and medals still remained in museums. German soldiers stole many of them, for example the items from the National Museum in Warsaw during the Warsaw Uprising of 1944. Stanisław Lorentz noted such a case in his diary. In the autumn of 1944, Dr Hans Rodig, head of the evacuation staff created after the fall of the uprising, appeared at the museum and announced that “he is interested in numismatics and he took a silver coin as a souvenir, it seems a 17th-century thaler, which lay at the top of a disorderly heap of items.”²⁶ In a protocol written in October 1944, the already-mentioned Dr Eduard Kneisel wrote that coins may have been stolen also during the evacuation of works of art to Lower

²² J. Robert Kudelski, *Zaginiony konwój SS* (Krakow, 2007), p. 101.

²³ Report by Ernst Boepple, 27 September 1944, IPN Appeals Court in Krakow (henceforth IPN SAKr) 9, p. 64.

²⁴ Record of trial of Dr Wilhelm Ernst von Palézieux of 9 July 1948, IPN Główna Komisja Badania Zbrodni Hitlerowskich w Polsce [Central Commission for Investigating Nazi Crimes in Poland] (henceforth IPN GK) 255/607, vol. 2, p. 47.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 48.

²⁶ Stanisław Lorentz, “W Muzeum i gdzie indziej,” in *Walka o dobra kultury. Warszawa 1939–1945*, Stanisław Lorentz, ed., vol. 1 (Warsaw, 1970), p. 71.

Silesia. The protocol indicates that the boxes filled with coins brought to Seichau were initially kept in the teahouse in the garden of Manfred von Richthofen's estate. Kneisel noted that "a significant number of the crates were damaged. Suffering the most during the transport to Seichau were the heavy crates with coins, which were full of cracks and crevices. It is not out of the question that coins may have fallen out through these openings and were taken by someone."²⁷ It transpired that two crates, which the Germans had marked BA 87 and BA 93, were damaged. The former was "crushed on its narrower side. Some of the coins had spilled out on the floor of the garden pavilion. They were wrapped and put back in the crate"²⁸ (**fig. 4**). The metal box marked BA 93 had a "hand-size opening in its cover. I am unable to determine whether it was made by the pressure of the crates piled up on top of each other or in another way. In any case, its contents appear not to have been diminished."²⁹ In another note to his boss, the conservator informed him more emphatically "that almost all the boxes containing coins were damaged, especially box BA 87, whose narrow side was almost completely covered with cracks. The coins were scattered on the floor. They were picked up in the count's presence and put back in the box."³⁰ Kneisel did not mention the state of the numismatics in boxes BA 83 and BA 91C. Documents archived in the Institute of National Remembrance indicate that the National Museum in Warsaw's collection was transported in these very crates.³¹ The conservator, an Old Masters specialist, appeared not to care very much about any of the antiquities other than the paintings. He most likely knew very little about coin collecting. Hence, he again wrote to Wilhelm Palézieux that "I absolutely need assistance. Otherwise, I cannot imagine how I will cope with making an inventory of everything. Each of the boxes may be moved or lifted en deux, but one person will absolutely not manage! I was assigned an Italian to help move the boxes into the palace, he was paid 2 boxes of cigarettes and 10 RM [reichsmarks]."³² In a report dated 1 January 1945, he again confirmed his lack of skills in protecting and securing numismatic objects. "The boxes holding coins had cracks in them. The protocol co-signed by Count Richthofen describes their state. I was unable to make a list of the contents of the boxes because, first, I had no catalogue material and inventarisation and, second, I am not a numismatics specialist."³³

Governor Hans Frank left Krakow for Seichau on 17 January 1945. When he and his staff settled in von Richthofen's palace, it turned out that the number of rooms assigned to them was insufficient (**fig. 5**). The chief of the Chancellery of the Generalgouvernement government, Dr Meidinger, therefore ordered "some of the works of art [moved] to Muhrau [Morawa near Strzegom], but not everything, only those pieces that fit into a car. Thus, the crates with numismatics and graphic art remained in Seichau. Paintings were packed onto a cart padded

²⁷ Protocol recorded by Dr Eduard Kneisel, 16 October 1944, IPN GK 255/607, vol. 1, p. 134.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Letter from Dr Eduard Kneisel to Dr Wilhelm Ernst von Palézieux, 24 October 1944, IPN GK 255/607, vol. 1, p. 133.

³¹ Zbigniew Kazimierz Witek, *Dokumenty strat kultury polskiej pod okupacją niemiecką 1939–1944 z archiwum Karola Estreichera* (Krakow, 2003), p. 626.

³² Ibid.

³³ "Sprawozdanie z prac zabezpieczających przy składnicy w pałacu Seichau" (*Taetigkeitsbericht ueber die Bergungsarbeiten in Seicha-schloss*) prepared by Dr Eduard Kneisel, 1 January 1945, IPN SAKr 8, p. 128.

with wood shavings. The transport was escorted to Muhrau by Bader and Mohr.”³⁴ Palézieux confirmed this in his post-war testimony to US intelligence services. “Walter Schüler, the deputy chief of Frank’s chancellery and legal counsel to a district court, from Meiningen in Thuringia reported after arriving in Neuhaus [the town in Bavaria to which Frank relocated his government after leaving Lower Silesia] that during the evacuation to Silesia he handed the artworks over to the local authorities in Morawa, who sealed the rooms in which they were stored. Only some closed boxes were left in Seichau, a collection of coins and graphic art.”³⁵ Palézieux left Lower Silesia in the night of 22–23 January 1945 heading for Neuhaus in Bavaria. He therefore did not witness the events that unfolded, and thus most probably did not know that some numismatic collections were taken to the von Wietersheim-Kramsta family palace in Morawa (**fig. 6**) (possibly because no inventory had been created), as his post-war testimony would indicate. According to Hans Frank’s diaries, a protocol on handing the art collection over to the local authorities in Morawa was signed on 23 January 1945 by the aforementioned Walter Schüler and Dr Edward Kneisel on one side and Mayor Robert Schnitzler and Wilhelm Dressler, head of the local branch of the National Socialist People’s Welfare (Nationalsozialistische Volkswohlfahrt, NSV) on the other.³⁶ On the night of 24 January, Frank and his closest collaborators began to prepare to leave Lower Silesia. The next day they were already on their way to Bavaria. The governor ordered them to bring along the three boxes of antiquities he had selected from Morawa. A few days later they were brought to Neuhaus by Frank’s adjutant, Helmuth Pfaffenroth. The list made by German clerks in February 1945 does not include numismatic items.³⁷ This would indicate that they remained in Lower Silesia. On 29 January 1945 the conservator of antiquities of Lower Silesia Province, Professor Günther Grundmann, reached Morawa. He knew that valuable art collections were being held on the estate, having been told a few days earlier by Dr Ernst Boepple, who as the Plenipotentiary for Evacuating the Generalgouvernement Offices in Upper and Lower Silesia remained in regular contact with the conservator of antiquities for Lower Silesia.³⁸ After reaching Morawa, Grundmann determined that a unit of the LVI Panzerkorps was stationed on the estate. Its commander, a major by the name of Fuchs, informed the conservator that “there is a large collection of art from Poland in the palace.”³⁹ Together they decided that with the impending military operations in the area, it would be best to evacuate the art works. Soldiers were summoned to assist with the packing, and the conservator was assigned two lorries. “The estate manager was to procure packing materials, and in the morning everything was to be put on the two lorries I had at my disposal, which were to take the collections and me to Bad Warmbrunn [Cieplice Śląskie].”⁴⁰

³⁴ Record of trial of Dr Wilhelm Ernst Palézieux, 9 July 1948, IPN GK 255/607, vol. 2, p. 50.

³⁵ Statement of Dr Wilhelm Ernst Palézieux, 26 May 1947, IPN GK 255/607, vol. 1, p. 46.

³⁶ Protocol of handing over responsibility for the works of art deposited in Morawa, 23 January 1945, Bundesarchiv Berlin-Lichterfelde R52 II 172, p. 147, in J. Robert Kudelski, *Zaginiony Rafael. Kuliśy największej kradzieży nazistów* (Krakow, 2014), p. 124.

³⁷ List of works of art brought to Neuhaus by Helmuth Pfaffenroth in J. Robert Kudelski, *Zaginiony Rafael. Kuliśy największej kradzieży nazistów* (Krakow, 2014), Annexe 3, pp. 426–28.

³⁸ Transcript of testimony of Dr. Ernst Boepple of 17 August 1948, IPN SAKr 8, p. 137.

³⁹ Günther Grundmann, *Erlebter Jahre Widerschein. Von schönen Häusern, guten Freunden und alten Familien in Schlesien* (Munich, 1972), p. 335.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

No list of the artworks deposited in Morawa survives, nor of the items Grundmann brought to Cieplice. But post-war events indicate that the conservator of antiquities of Lower Silesia Province located the numismatic collections belonging to Polish museums in Morawa. Because of difficulties with transport, he only brought some of the coins and medals he had found to Cieplice, leaving other numismatics on the von Wietersheim-Kramsta estate. This is confirmed by archival materials, both memoirs of the former owners of the Morawa palace and accounts by historians who after the war searched for Polish antiquities seized by German occupation authorities. On 20 August 1945, Witold Kieszkowski – a delegate of the Ministry of Culture and Art for the restitution of artworks – arrived in Cieplice. In Schaffgotsch Library (**fig. 7**) he discovered crates with “Warschau” written on them. “All in all, 19 crates were found, 6 of them with the numismatic collection of the National Museum in Warsaw [...]. Because of the exceptional value of the works of art found in the Schaffgotschs’ Library in Cieplice, I personally oversaw their transport to Warsaw and Krakow, on a lorry belonging to the Ministry of Culture and Art that had been put at my disposal. I handed the collections over to the National Museum in Warsaw with a protocol dated 25 August 45.”⁴¹ The numismatic items found in Cieplice were only one part of the collection brought out from Warsaw. But it soon turned out that antiquities abandoned by the Germans were still in the palace at Morawa. These included valuable coins. The events tied to finding these collections were later recounted by Professor Jan Zachwatowicz, who had taken part in the restitution campaign in Lower Silesia. “Priceless coins from the numismatic collection of the National Museum in Warsaw were scattered on the ground and first floors of the villa [palace in Morawa]. As they escaped, the German soldiers shattered the boxes containing the coins and made off with the most precious ones. Polish scholars managed to collect several sacks of silver coins and a sack of gold Roman coins that weighed a few kilograms.”⁴² But Zachwatowicz either did not know or for political reasons could not write that the numismatics collection was most probably stolen by Russians. The Morawa palace owners’ daughter, Melitta Sallai, remembered what she heard from one of the servants who remained on the estate after the family had been evacuated westward in January 1945. He told her mother, Herta von Wietersheim-Kramsta, that the Soviet soldiers who occupied Morawa went through the art collections in the palace. Many bragged to their mates about the coins they had found.⁴³ Only some of the rich collection of gold numismatics belonging to the National Museum in Warsaw was found in Morawa by Polish historians. Lorentz, who coordinated the restitution campaign in Lower Silesia, later recalled that they had been dumped “in the stable, in manure, which caused damage and even destruction of a large part of the surviving coins and medals... the larger and more impressive coins and medals had been taken, and the gold-plated medals had been cut a little to determine whether they were gold.”⁴⁴ He wrote in his study *Straty w dziełach sztuki i zabytkach przeszłości* [Losses in the works of art and antiquities of the past]: “So far, of the Greco-Roman, Byzantine and Polish numismatic collections, less than half has been regained, while the others, almost all of them gold coins and medals, should be considered lost.”⁴⁵ Overall,

⁴¹ Witold Kieszkowski, “Składnica muzealna Paulinum i rewindykacja zabytków na Dolnym Śląsku,” *Pamiętnik Związku Historyków Sztuki i Kultury*, vol. 1 (Warsaw, 1948), p. 150.

⁴² Włodzimierz Kalicki, “Rejtan pod szynkwasem,” *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 25 September 2001.

⁴³ Author’s interviews with Melitta Sallai, 2007–2010.

⁴⁴ Jodkowski, op. cit., p. 214.

⁴⁵ Report by Professor Stanisław Lorentz, “Straty w dziełach sztuki i zabytkach przeszłości,” IPN NTN 66, vol. 12, p. 21.

the assessment of losses conducted by National Museum in Warsaw experts Szemiothowa and Jodkowski concludes that only a minority of the pre-war numismatic collection returned from Silesia. The gold coins were affected the most, as only a few per cent of their original number were saved. Lost among the ancient coins were staters minted in the 3rd century AD by King of Bosphorus Tiberius Julius Sauromates II and one of his successors, Tiberius Julius Rhescuporis III, hekte from Lesbos (4th century BC), aureuses (including a unique one with an image of Philip the Arabian), octadrachm of the ruler of Pontian Heraclea (3rd century BC) and an Olbian hemiobol (4th century BC).⁴⁶ Polish gold coins and medals are also considered wartime losses, and include a two-ducat coin of Sigismund I the Old; portugals of the Vasa kings, Jan II Casimir, Sigismund III and Władysław IV; Jan III Sobieski's ducats and a few dozen 17th-century donative coins and gold medals (including one from the coronation of Michał Korybut Wiśniowiecki).⁴⁷

Translated by Maja Łatyńska

⁴⁶ Anna Szemiothowa, "Gabinet numizmatyczny (Dział monet starożytnych)," in *Straty...*, op. cit., p. 193.

⁴⁷ Józef Jodkowski, "Gabinet numizmatyczny (Dział monet średniowiecznych i nowożytnych)," in *ibid.*, pp. 212-13.