

DOCUMENT 26

January 6, 1949, whistleblower Letter from Evelyn Tucker to Ardelia Hall.

“The position of the Fine Arts Officer in USFA was eliminated in July 1946 and from then until October 1947 the negligence of this explosive situation was hardly short of being criminal. (These are strong words, I know, but hear me out). There was no control then on what American officers sent home and there is very little now. I did what I could from my office position in Vienna to control the situation (though of course I could do nothing on what was sent to the States).”

“Before you decide that I’m just a frustrated woman (and I frankly admit that I am) let me say **there is French looted fine arts in the General’s villa in Salzburg, Dutch fine arts in the General’s villa in Linz, a French looted painting in the Officers Club in Salzburg – all definitely identified and included on claims but I have not been allowed to reveal that I have found them; A Lt. Col. returned to the States recently from Salzburg taking with him 26 oriental Hungarian rugs – McKee (my chief) refused to let me write the Provost Marshall of his Army Post to investigate.**”

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DECLASSIFIED
 Authority NN0968071
 By JIM NARA Date 8/25/84

HEADQUARTERS
 UNITED STATES FORCES IN AUSTRIA
 USACA SECTION

Reparations, Deliveries and Restitution Division
 Reparations and Restitution Branch
 APO 777, U. S. Army

C
O
P
Y

Vienna
 6 Jan 1949

Dear Miss Hall,

I had lunch Monday with Ted Heinrich in Wiesbaden and poured out some of my troubles to him. He is a lamb - so kind and sympathetic - and suggested that I write you.

My job as Fine Arts officer for USFA has been both back-breaking and heart-breaking because in spite of the high-principled directives from Washington they have been met with no sincere response here. It hurts me exceedingly to say this. There is probably no single employee in this headquarters who has fought so consistently as I to protect USFA and the US from adverse criticism.

As you probably know OMGUS (Office of MG for Germany) has a well equipped Fine Arts Staff. I regret to say that USFA has not had such foresight, though I think it could be easily proved that more loot was found in the US Zone of Austria than in Germany. The main excuse for the Central Collecting Point in Munich was to handle the loot from the salt mines in Austria, which are technically under the jurisdiction of this headquarters - and which incidentally (though it is not really part of my story now) constitutes quite a controversy between OMGUS and USFA and will surely have to be settled eventually in Washington. The differences of opinion on this are mainly caused by the fact that we here have taken directives from Washington literally (I am of course only concerned with fine arts), which specified that fine arts removed from Austria after the Anschluss would be returned. In Germany the Chief of Fine Arts (at that time Col. Allen) re-wrote Washington directives, according to his interpretation, and therefore issued his own directives, which had all sorts of qualifications as far as Austria was concerned. Therefore the Fine Arts Officers in Munich are not much concerned with the Moscow Declaration, which declared Austria to be the first victim of Nazi aggression, etc. They argue that Austria was an ex-enemy nation and should not get back fine arts that were purchased for the Hitler and Goering Collections, etc, etc., but as I said before this is not now part of my story. If you should be interested in more of this I will be glad to elaborate except that it may be too late now for me to do anything about it - and I can assure you there is no one else in this headquarters who knows anything about it - or is even very much interested.

The position of Fine Arts Officer in USFA was eliminated in July 1946 and from then until October 1947 the negligence of this explosive

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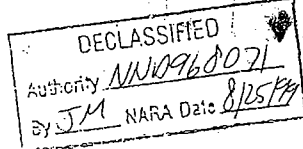
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situation was hardly short of being criminal. (These are strong words, I know, but hear me out). There was no control then on what American officers sent home and there is very little now. I did what I could from my office position in Vienna to control the situation (though of course I could do nothing on what was sent to the States). Finally in October 1947 the job was recreated and I was officially appointed fine arts officer. The same man sits in control now in Salzburg who has been there since 1946 - he was Chief of Property Control & Restitution - now, besides keeping control of this office he is also Deputy Chief of Military Govt. As such in his first capacity he is custodian of my art depot in Salzburg - which he has used as a requisition dump for officers homes and clubs. He is of course a great favorite with the Generals, being among other things a good poker player. Efforts on my part to protect the art depot in Salzburg from these inroads have been without avail - I have not been able to get a letter out of this Division. (This man's name is Vernon Kennedy - he was formerly in labor circles in California and then with UNRRA).

After the excesses between July 46 and Oct. 47 I tried my best to tidy up files and straighten out hopelessly fouled-up cases. The Austrian Govt (which had no reason to believe in the sincerity of a restitution program by USFA (having already suffered at the hands of US personnel) greeted me with thinly veiled hostility. I worked diligently and earnestly to overcome this feeling and finally succeeded in convincing them that I was as anxious to protect Austria's cultural heritage as that of any other nation. From that time on they gave me unqualified support. If only I had had one-half the support from this headquarters! I know that ordinarily Colonels and Generals only know what is reported up to them and any little officer along the way can block information from getting on to them. However, USFA must bear the ultimate responsibility, although the direct responsibility for this fiasco must rest on the first responsible officer, and unfortunately he is my first chief - the chief of this Branch. I am sure he is a brave, capable combat officer but surely a worse choice could never have been made for a chief of a Restitution Branch. He is a WP graduate but culture and diplomacy are only things he has read about (he is much the same type man as McJunkins in Germany, who has not only every nation in Europe gunning for him but has not the support of a single man working for me -- I would give McJunkins the edge on polish but neither man seems to be acquainted with 'diplomacy'.

Before you decide that I'm just a frustrated woman (and I frankly admit that I am) let me say there is French looted fine arts in the General's villa in Salzburg, Dutch fine arts in the General's villa in Linz, a French looted painting in the Officers Club in Salzburg -- all definitely identified and included on claims but I have not been allowed to reveal that I have found them; A Lt. Col. returned to the States recently from Salzburg taking with him 26 oriental Hungarian rugs - McKee (my chief) refused to let me write the Provost Marshall of his Army Post to investigate. I was only allowed to write the officer a nice letter of inquiry. The Salzburg Gold Coin Collection was looted

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while in the possession of the Military Detachment of Hallein, Austria; several truckloads of fine arts were brought to Vienna by General Clark (for his quarters here) from Castle Klessheim in Salzburg; seven paintings were stolen from Lauffen Mine, including a Rubens and a van Dyke, while under protection of US personnel; seven valuable engravings four of them by Durer, were stolen from Alt-Ansee saltmine while under protection of US personnel. Most of these have had no investigation - but all is carefully documented by the Austrian Govt.

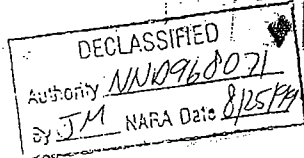
The Austrian Govt has been trying to get permission for a year and a half to send an expert with me through high-ranking officers villas and clubs to see what fine arts are being used there, as most of these places were taken over intact from the Germans. I have stressed time and again that it would not be necessary to remove anything but museum items found. Permission has never been given. I have never been able to get such a request out of this division. The lack of support, sympathy and interest on the part of my Branch Chief and the Division Chief (who have assured the big boys above that they will see that they are not disturbed) has been so embarrassing and I have had to stall and stall Austrian Govt officials who have been so kind and who trust me to work this out eventually in spite of official indifference. I have had to lie to the Dutch and I can hardly look the French in the eye - all to protect USFA, whose policy is so shortsighted and certainly reflects no credit to the US.

It is not by chance that McKee is eliminating this job, instead of one of the industrial specialists, when he was told to retrench on personnel. It is this particular job which he (and others) wants eliminated. He returns to the States in June to attend school and he is going to be very sure there is no Fine Arts Investigator here, who knows anything about the work, after he leaves. It has been said to me in the past two weeks "but, Eve, USFA won't have to worry about anyone saying it has done something wrong after you have gone because nobody knows anything about it but you therefore nobody will know that a mistake has been made". Good, moral logic! Also, it has been broadly hinted to me that my final report had better be good because McKee will still have the opportunity of giving me a final efficiency rating and he can ruin me if my report reflects on him in any way. I asked his person if McKee had asked him to give me that hint - he said "I didn't say that and I won't answer your question, but a work to the wise should be sufficient". He added "you must recognize, Eve, that you are absolutely helpless - the Army has you right by the neck and you can't fight it". For me to have to even listen to this insulting talk - when I have fought so hard to protect (that is keep from public view) so much petty thievery and grand larceny - was rather galling.

Where
are the
depots?

So now with three art depots of unidentified loot, no investigations having been made of officers clubs and villas, with scores of outstanding art claims unsettled - USFA is just eliminating the job - why? Because the man who has been chief here since April 46 must return to the States in June and he wants no investigations made which he is not in a position to block - therefore the art investigator must go

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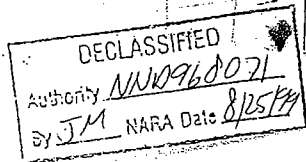
before he does. I am so tired of this whole problem - and three years of trying to do a constructive job with this interference that I will be happy to get completely away.

A few weeks ago three von Ribbentrop albums disappeared from the depot. I questioned Mr. Kennedy and he said he had turned them over to a Colonel in G-2. I said "whatever for?" He said "G-2 interest" (smugly). I said "what intelligence interest could there be in photographs of Ribbentrop shaking hands or drinking cocktails with Chamberlain? They are of historical interest and are wanted by the Library of Congress but are certainly of no intelligence interest". I asked him if he would pick them up in a week or so after the Colonel had looked them over because I must send them to the Library of Congress. He shook his head and when I inquired what this meant he said "hell, the Colonel took them as a souvenir". I said "Mr. Kennedy, this particular type of thing is especially disgusting and has got to stop! He said "well, you had better clear it up with McKee before you do anything because he OKed it". So, as usual I am stymied. (This of course very petty but recent and reflects the attitude).

You may find interesting the attached copy of a letter to General Keyes from Minister Krauland (Ministry for Property Control and Economic Planning). I have never met Minister Krauland but of course know all the men immediately under him, also all the Austrian Fine Arts people in the Bundesdenkmalamt. I had lunch today with Dr. Demus, President of the Bundesdenkmalamt. He had secured a copy of this letter for me because he thought it was so nice. I was of course very grateful and touched. This letter was of course never shown me by this Hq. Dr. Demus said he was notified this morning by an official in the Ministry that USFA's answer to Krauland's letter was negative "because of economic reasons". This is disgraceful - the letter was of course answered by McKee.

Also, for sometime PIO (Public Information Office) which handles state-side publicity for USFA, has been working on a story of me in my job. 10 days ago they turned it in to my Division for clearance (I gave them the facts and they are of course absolutely correct). I came in yesterday from Paris via Wiesbaden and Munich (where I had lunch with Steve Munsing) and was informed by PIO that the story had not been released by my Division. They apparently don't dare let me get state-side publicity (it is scheduled for a Woman's Magazine - which is anxious for the story) and wide publicity in Europe via Stars and Stripes because the Generals here and some other of the big brass might decide they had something unusual in me and want to keep me for publicity's sake if nothing else. So poor USFA is losing good publicity which it was so anxious for when this story was ordered about three months ago. I had to get out of a sick bed and go to the Zone to pose for pictures in the saltmines, castles, etc. But since this was started a Lt. Col. has learned he will be definitely returned to the states in June and I must be quietly gotten out of the way before then - so USFA doesn't get good publicity it needs and wants and the Austrian Govt is disillusioned and suspicious of USFA's sincerity on the question of fine Arts.

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I am forced to admit that I can't help but admire McKee's determination and fighting capabilities because he must have been hard pressed to sell the answer to Minister Krauland to the Chief of Staff -- and now he is managing to either hold up or definitely suppress the feature story (from the woman's angle) of fine arts which USFA was so eager for. It is unfortunate his abilities are not directed on a higher plane.

Probably if I were not so tired and discouraged I would never have written the above letter. You understand of course that if the Army were to see this letter they would burn me at the stake. I am not even asking you to try to do anything about the above because you cant. It is truly hopeless - and God knows I would not want Washington embarrassed by the exposure of any of the above. Sometimes I think we are morally decadent. The above sorry story is given you in the hopes that you may be able to get out some restitution directive on fine arts " with some teeth in it " so this awful mess can be cleaned up.

Yes Miss Hall, I am a frustrated woman.

EVE TUCKER
Fine Arts Officer.

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