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978-0-521-12905-3 - Robbing the Jews: The Confiscation of Jewish  
Property in the Holocaust, 1933–1945  
Martin Dean  
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## ROBBING THE JEWS

*Robbing the Jews* reveals the mechanisms by which the Nazis and their allies confiscated Jewish property; the book demonstrates the close relationship between robbery and the Holocaust. The spoliation evolved in intensifying steps. The Anschluss and Kristallnacht in 1938 reveal a dynamic tension between pressure from below and state-directed measures. In Western Europe, the economic persecution of the Jews took the form of legal decrees and administrative measures. In Eastern Europe, authoritarian governments adopted the Nazi program that excluded Jews from the economy and seized their property, based on indigenous antisemitism and plans for ethnically homogenous nation-states. In the occupied East, property was collected at the killing sites – the most valuable objects were sent to Berlin, whereas items of lesser value supported the local administration and rewarded collaborators. At several key junctures, robbery acted as a catalyst for genocide, accelerating the progression from pogrom to mass murder.

**Martin Dean** is an Applied Research Scholar at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies in Washington, DC. He received a scholarship in history from Queens' College, Cambridge, in 1980 and was awarded his PhD also at Queens' in 1989. His publications include *Collaboration in the Holocaust: Crimes of the Local Police in Belorussia and Ukraine, 1941–44* (2000); *Austrian Policy during the French Revolutionary Wars, 1796–99* (1993); and numerous articles. He has also worked as a Staff Historian for the Australian Special Investigations Unit and as the Senior Historian for the Metropolitan Police War Crimes Unit in London (1992–97). He has held a DAAD grant and was awarded the Pearl Resnick Post-Doctoral Fellowship by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in 1997. He has acted as an expert witness in Nazi war crimes cases in Australia and Germany.

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“Martin Dean’s book is the first fully comprehensive study on the confiscation of Jewish property in the Holocaust and will set the standard for future research and analysis. In the complicated field of robbing and spoliation, it connects important archival findings with a masterly knowledge of even remote research literature, cogently integrating the process of confiscation into the general history of the Holocaust. Therefore I warmly recommend Dean’s study as a compulsory work for scholars, students, and all readers interested in the field of Holocaust history.”

– Frank Bajohr, *Research Center for Contemporary History in Hamburg, Germany*

“This book is surely the most comprehensive and clear guide in English to the manifold ways by which the Nazi regime, its agents, and its allies plundered the European Jews. Not only an admirable overview, but also a depressing case study of the crushing effects of bureaucratic ingenuity.”

– Peter Hayes, *Northwestern University*

“Few, if any, scholars in the English-speaking world can equal Martin Dean’s record of intense study of the most appalling primary sources generated by the most thorough and most minutely recorded genocide in human history. It was, after all, a very German genocide, and hence murder by bureaucratic machinery also involved the greatest theft in human history. Dean looks at all the ways that the German state stole Jewish property and shows the importance of hitherto neglected ones. Blocking the use of a person’s bank account and limiting withdrawals slowly squeezed the individual’s ability to act and ultimately to live at all. The horrible stories of pauperization and humiliation of the Jews under the Nazis make almost unbearable reading precisely because they are so real, so ordinary, and so terrible.”

– Jonathan Steinberg, *University of Pennsylvania*

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*Published in association with the  
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## LIST OF PHOTOGRAPHS

- Cover Illustration:** Confiscated property being loaded onto a truck of the furniture protection service, “Garde-Meuble” in Paris, 1943 or 1944.  
*Source:* Bundesarchiv Koblenz, B 323–311–04. USHMM, WS # 14092.
- 1.1 German students and Nazi SA plunder the library of the Institute for Sexual Research in Berlin, May 6, 1933.  
*Source:* USHMM, courtesy of NARA, RG 306–NT–856–D–1. *page* 17
- 2.1 A German customs official checks the emigration of a Jewish family in Bielefeld, 1936.  
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- 5.1 Jewish men tasked with clearing out Jewish homes after a deportation Aktion in Kraków, c. 1942.  
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*Source:* Nederlands Instituut voor Oorlogsdocumentatie, 5J Jodenvervolgung, Neg # 04658. 257
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Martin Dean, July 2008