

## EXTORTION NOT LOSS

Franz Koenigs lost his art collection as the result of an act of extortion committed by G. van Beuningen, in collaboration with Dr. Hannema, director of the Boymans Museum. Both men had the motives, expertise and information needed for a successful extortion.

1. As means of pressure, Dr. Hannema and D.G. van Beuningen used the immediate and present danger of the Third Reich's war of aggression and fanatical racial and political persecution, with a knowledge of exactly what the Nazi's policies and actions meant for Franz Koenigs and his business partners of many years, the German-Jewish owners of the L&R Bank. The extortioners' calculated use of circumstances that put others in an immediate and growing danger, purposefully withholding action until the danger came unbearably close and their 'mark' was cornered and 'ripe for the plucking', precisely fits the definition of extortion under the threat of war and persecution.
2. The means of pressure was put into the extortioners' hands, when Hitler invaded Poland and Great Britain and France declared war on Germany, and Netherland entered a state of excruciating care to avoid annoying the Third Reich in any way, to paraphrase Queen Wilhelmina's declaration on May 5, 1940.

In the early Autumn of 1939, Franz Koenigs informed the Museum of his contract with L&R, and of the action he planned to take. A strategy for use of the pressure of war and threat of persecution must quickly have become apparent to a person of D.G. van Beuningen's ruthless trader's intelligence, when he knew of the role the Collection then played in a business partnership between the L&R Bank and Franz Koenigs, easily recognizable as a way of circumventing Nazi laws against Jewish ownership of Aryan businesses. Dr. Hannema and D.G. van Beuningen were in a position to see that Franz Koenigs, already in a politically precarious position in Germany, now was concretely linked to the fate of his Jewish friends and partners. The fact that L&R held a mortgage on the Koenigs Collection, with its great emotional, financial and cultural value, would have significant unpleasant consequences for Franz Koenigs, if brought to the attention of the Berlin authorities.

3. The extortioners applied their pressure by means of stalling tactics in negotiation, disinformation in communications, and delay in preparation for shipment of the Collection, following a strategy keyed to developments in the war. Full advantage was taken of the confidence Franz Koenigs had initially placed in Dr. Hannema and the 'gentlemen of Rotterdam'. This strategy's existence can be seen as it is implemented, like a snake swimming just under the surface of the water, until it becomes brutally obvious in the events and transactions on April 9, 1940.

On Thursday, March 29, 1940, the Allied Supreme War Council met in London, pledged to make no separate peace with Germany and agreed to mine Norwegian waters. On that same day, in London, 'The Times' editorial stated that the hour had come to wage war with the utmost vigor, energy, and determination. On Tuesday, April 2, 1940, the shareholders of L&R, including Franz Koenigs, in an emergency session voted for liquidation of the firm, and the directors and Franz Koenigs send letters to the Boymans Museum demanding immediate preparation of the Collection for transportation, and stating that the Collection had been given in payment to L&R. On April 8, 1940, 'the New York Times' announces on its first page that the Allies have begun laying mines in Norwegian waters. On April 9, 1940, the Dutch morning newspapers headline the German invasion of Denmark and Norway, D.G. van Beuningen sends a final offer to the lone representative of the L&R Bank, in liquidation, with a supporting letter from the director of the Boymans Museum, with the option of transportation now seemingly ended. From Heer Goudstikker, the extortioners would have learned that Franz Koenigs was traveling and unreachable, and they knew that the L&R representative could act as owner of the Collection. All the conditions needed to complete the act of extortion were in place.

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