

# THE CULTURAL LOOTING OF THE ČELEBONOVIC FAMILY IN SERBIA

by Ruth J. Weinberger

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This short report examines the cultural looting conducted during the Holocaust by the *Einsatzstab Reichsleiter Rosenberg* (ERR) against the Čelebonović family, one of Serbia's most prominent Sephardic Jewish families. Drawing on archival documentation from the German Federal Archives (*Bundesarchiv*), the United States National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), and Yugoslav post-war restitution records, the report briefly reconstructs the biographies of the family's principal figures and provides a brief account of the artworks by Marko and Aleksa Čelebonović and belonging to the family that were looted by the ERR and subsequently claimed for restitution by their father. Despite Allied recovery efforts, nearly all of the works claimed in 1948 remain unlocated today. Of the 13 artworks by Marko Čelebonović listed in a 1948 restitution application, only one—*Interior*—can be traced to a current-day museum collection. The remaining works remain unlocated and are considered missing or lost due to wartime looting.



*Image:* Jakov Čelebonović's House, 18, Vuka Karadžića Street, image taken from: [https://beogradskonasledje.rs/kd/zavod/stari\\_grad/zgrada\\_jakova\\_Čelebonović\\_a.html](https://beogradskonasledje.rs/kd/zavod/stari_grad/zgrada_jakova_Čelebonović_a.html), accessed December 29, 2025.

## BIOGRAPHICAL CONTEXT



*Image:* Jakov Celeboniv,  
<https://www.myheritage.com/research/record-1-OYYV6QXNUZF37BFPU5ABD7XG-HBER56I-1-500198/jakov-Čelebonović-in-myheritage-family-trees>, accessed December 29, 2025.

### Dr. Jakov (Yakov; Tankov) Čelebonović (Cohen) (1868–1950)

Jakov Čelebonović was a distinguished lawyer and president of the Belgrade Sephardic Jewish community. He oversaw the construction of the family palace—now the Museum of Applied Art—between 1927 and 1929. The palace functioned not only as a family residence but also as a cultural hub. Among its frequent visitors was the prominent publisher Geca Kon.<sup>1</sup> Despite Jakov’s public influence, little documentation survived concerning his wartime experiences. It is known, however, that his home was confiscated during the German occupation and converted into the Museum of Applied Arts in 1950, the year of his death.<sup>2</sup> He is buried in the Sephardic Cemetery in Belgrade.<sup>3</sup>

Jakov and his wife Johana (Jovana) had six children, two of whom—Marko and Aleksa—rose to cultural prominence.

### Marko (Mordehaj) Čelebonović [21 November 1902 – 23 July 1986]

Born in Belgrade, Marko was educated in Serbia, Athens, Switzerland, and France, earning a law degree from the Sorbonne before studying sculpture under Antoine Bourdelle. In 1923, he devoted himself fully to painting and settled in Saint-Tropez. During the Second World War, he remained in France, serving as a commander in the French Resistance. Some of his artworks, however, were located with his family in Belgrade, among them at his father’s and uncle’s house and were subsequently looted by the Nazis.



*Image:*  
[https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/f/f3/Marko\\_%C4%8Celebonovi%C4%87.jpg](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/f/f3/Marko_%C4%8Celebonovi%C4%87.jpg), accessed December 29, 2025.

<sup>1</sup> Geca Kon, born into an Ashkenazi Jewish family, ran the largest publishing house in Yugoslavia and all of Southeast Europe, issuing hundreds of titles per year. His bookstore and publishing house emerged as the center of cultural and intellectual life in Belgrade. After the Nazi occupation, Kon became a target of the Nazis. His publishing house was aryanized, and his books were spread out over various libraries, including the library of the now *Bayerische Staatsbibliothek* in Munich. Geca Kon and his family were murdered in 1941. See for example: <https://www.bsb-muenchen.de/en/research-of-nazi-loot/restitutions/geca-kon>, and <https://vreme.com/en/kultura/geca-kon-i-njegova-knjizara>, accessed December 10, 2025.

<sup>2</sup> [https://beogradskonasledje.rs/kd/zavod/stari\\_grad/zgrada\\_jakova\\_Čelebonović\\_a.html](https://beogradskonasledje.rs/kd/zavod/stari_grad/zgrada_jakova_Čelebonović_a.html), accessed December 3, 2025.

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.myheritage.com/research/record-11019-197536/jakov-%C4%8Delebonovi%C4%87-in-worldwide-jewish-burial-registry-from-jewishgen>, accessed December 3, 2025.

After the war, he became a professor of painting at the Belgrade Academy of Fine Arts and later a member of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts. He spent his final years in Saint-Tropez, where he died in 1986.<sup>4</sup>

### **Aleksa Čelebonović [29 December 1917 – 26 May 1987]**

Aleksa Čelebonović, born in wartime exile, began studying law but shifted to art criticism and painting. Like his brother, some of his early artworks were in Belgrade, presumably at this father's place, as well as potentially among other family members, at the onset of war. After World War II, Aleksa returned from Italy and Switzerland to become one of Yugoslavia's most influential art critics. Through his editorial work, monographs, and leadership in the International Association of Art Critics (AICA) and major international exhibitions, he shaped Yugoslavia's cultural diplomacy and the reception of its modern art. From 1976 to 1985, he served as a visiting professor at the Faculty of Applied Arts in Belgrade.<sup>5</sup>



*Image:*

<https://zeptermuzej.rs/en/exhibiti-on-aleksa-celebonovic-a-personality-of-many-talents/>, accessed December 29, 2025.

## **HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

The interwar era and the formation of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia brought profound transformation to Serbia's architecture, urban life, and education. The Jewish community—perceiving itself as fully integrated into Serbian society—benefited from the 1888 Constitution granting full civil rights. By 1939, approximately 11,000 Jews lived in Belgrade, about 80% of them Sephardim; around 16,000 Jews lived in Serbia overall.<sup>6</sup>

The German invasion in April 1941 radically altered this landscape. Serbia fell under direct German military rule, and anti-Jewish measures were introduced immediately. The Nazis relied heavily on the collaborationist government of Milan Nedić, as well as Serbian police and the State Guard. These forces actively assisted the German occupiers in registration, confiscation of property, arrests, deportations, and the operation of concentration camps such as Banjica.<sup>7</sup>

By December 1941, almost all Jewish men had been murdered. Between March and May 1942, more than 6,000 Jewish women, children, and elderly were murdered in gas vans at Sajmište. By August 1942, Serbia was declared “Judenfrei”—making it the first country in Europe for which the Nazis

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<sup>4</sup> [https://nmkv.rs/?attachment\\_id=10366&lang=en](https://nmkv.rs/?attachment_id=10366&lang=en), accessed December 9, 2025.

<sup>5</sup> <https://zeptermuzej.rs/aleksa-celebonovic-svestrana-licnost/>, accessed December 10, 2025.

<sup>6</sup> <https://ester.rs/jevreji-u-beogradu/>, accessed December 3, 2025.

<sup>7</sup> Milan Koljanin, The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettos, entry for Serbia, online available at: <https://muse.jhu.edu/document/4201/pdf/download>, accessed December 3, 2025; see also: [https://www.yadvashem.org/odot\\_pdf/Microsoft%20Word%20-%2006015.pdf](https://www.yadvashem.org/odot_pdf/Microsoft%20Word%20-%2006015.pdf), accessed December 3, 2025.

claimed total extermination of its Jews. Approximately 90% of Serbia's Jewish population was killed, a result made possible by extensive local collaboration.<sup>8</sup>

### EXCURSE: THE EINSATZSTAB REICHSLEITER ROSENBERG IN SERBIA

During 1942 and 1944, the ERR's activities in Serbia were coordinated through the *Hauptarbeitsgruppe Südosten* (HAG Southeast), headquartered in Belgrade.<sup>9</sup> Serbia, which was under of Nazi military control, was commonly referred to as the "altserbisches Reich".<sup>10</sup> The group targeted Jewish and Masonic libraries, archives, and cultural holdings across German-occupied Yugoslavia. Looted materials were shipped primarily to Ratibor in Upper Silesia and the *Hobe Schule* in Frankfurt.<sup>11</sup> Ratibor had served as one of the principal storage, sorting, and processing centers used by the ERR for looted cultural property during the Second World War.

According to the head of Belgrade's ERR office, Dr. Kraft, the *Arbeitsgruppe Südost*, the ERR's internal name for its office in Yugoslavia, only started its practical work in the Balkans in mid-February 1943, at a time when the vast majority of Jews in Serbia had already been murdered or deported. Most Jewish men were killed in mass shootings in 1941, and women and children were murdered by May 1942, after which German authorities declared Serbia *Judenfrei*; the ERR therefore looted largely abandoned or confiscated Jewish property rather than property taken directly from living owners.<sup>12</sup> Its headquarters was located in Gospodor Jovanova 36, Belgrade, in the former offices of Belgrade's chief rabbi.<sup>13</sup> The headquarters later moved to Obilicev Venac 27 II u.III.<sup>14</sup> By February 15, 1944, the *Arbeitsgruppe Südost* (Belgrade) was renamed into the *Hauptarbeitsgruppe Südost* and started operating as an official independent entity. Between 1943 and 1944, during the *Hauptarbeitsgruppe Südost's* most active years, the office was headed by *Obereinsatzführer* Dr. Günther Kraft. His deputy was Werner Untermann.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Patricia Kennedy Grimsted, "Roads to Ratibor: Library and Archival Plunder by the Einsatzstab Reichsleiter Rosenberg," *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, 19. 3 (Winter 2005): 390–458; "The Looting of Jewish and Cultural Objects in Former Yugoslavia: The HAG Südosten & the Einsatzstab Reichsleiter Rosenberg in Belgrade, Agram (Zagreb) and Ragusa (Dubrovnik)," Claims Conference, 2013, online at: <https://forms.claimscon.org/art/ERR-Looting-Yugoslavia-Oct2013.pdf>, accessed December 10, 2025.

<sup>10</sup> "Arbeitsberichte (Jahres-, Monats- und Wochenberichte), Arbeitsunterlagen und Personalnachrichten der Arbeitsgruppe bzw. HAG Südosten (Belgrad)," 1941-1944, Barch NS 30/193, Bundesarchiv.

<sup>11</sup> Patricia Kennedy Grimsted, "Roads to Ratibor: Library and Archival Plunder by the Einsatzstab Reichsleiter Rosenberg," *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, 19. 3 (Winter 2005): 390–458.

<sup>12</sup> <https://portal.ehri-project.eu/countries/rs?utm>, accessed January 20, 2026.

<sup>13</sup> "Arbeitsberichte (Jahres-, Monats- und Wochenberichte), Arbeitsunterlagen und Personalnachrichten der Arbeitsgruppe bzw. HAG Suedosten (Belgrad), 1941-1944," Barch NS 30/193, Bundesarchiv.

<sup>14</sup> "Wochenbericht 22, 23/43 vom 3.5-6.6.43 sowie 7.6-13.6.43, YIVO: Microfilm Nr. MK 542, Berlin Collection, RG 215, OCCE5G – 4.

<sup>15</sup> See Barch NS 30/193, p. 205, 216.

The ERR was not the only Nazi agency carrying out wide-spread confiscations. Other units, including the operational unit *Kunstschutz*<sup>16</sup> (as part of the Wehrmacht), or the *Sicherheitsdienst* (SD)<sup>17</sup>, often reached the territory earlier and thus confiscating large numbers of art collections, archives and for example libraries. The same was true for musical instruments and music scores. In a letter written by Dr. Gerik, the *Bereichsleiter*, in May 1943 and addressed to the *Sonderstab Musik*, there is a note that the ERR was too late to participate in the confiscation of musical instruments from apartments in Belgrade that had belonged to Jews.<sup>18</sup>

### THE ERR LOOTING OF THE ČELEBONVIĆ PAINTINGS

Given the high artistic value attributed to the works of Marko and Aleksa Čelebonović, the ERR seized numerous works belonging to the family.<sup>19</sup> According to documentation preserved at Germany’s Federal Archives, the *Bundesarchiv* BArch NS 30/178, entitled *Aktenvermerk: Sichergestellte Kunstgegenstände bei der Hauptarbeitsgruppe Südosten, Belgrad*, November 6, 1943, at least 29 artworks by the “Jewish painters Marko and Alexander Čelebonović” were confiscated. The following works were noted on the document, including a number assigned by the *Sicherheitsdienst*, which presumably surveyed the artworks and other belongings of the family prior to the ERR.

<i>Porträt eines jungen Mannes</i>	<i>Rahmen</i>	<i>43 (Nummer des SD)</i>
Sitzende und stehende Frau		15
Kinderbild in Rosa	R	
Haus mit Brunen	R	76
Stilleben mit Krug und Tisch	R	81
Frau am Zaun		
Mann mit Vase und Flasche		16
Stilleben mit Zitronen		14
Mädchen in rot-weisser Tracht	R	
Halbakt mit Blume		
Mädchen mit Mandoline		7

<sup>16</sup> Grimsted notes that “most of the art would probably have been seized by the Kunstschutz, but ERR book and archive seizures in Croatia and Serbia have been recorded.” Patricia Kennedy Grimsted, *Reconstructing the Record of Nazi Cultural Plunder. A Survey of the Dispersed Archives of the Einsatzstab Reichsleiter Rosenberg (ERR)*, p. 215, <https://www.errproject.org/guide.php>, accessed December 10, 2025.

<sup>17</sup> “Besichtigung von eingezogenem Buchbestand im SD. Übernahme des einschlägigen Materials wurde vereinbart.“ Wochenbericht N. 18/43 vom 3.5 – 9.5.43, YIVO, Microfilm Nr. MK 542, Berlin Collection, RG 215, OCCE5G – 4. 17.

<sup>18</sup> “Schriftwechsel mit verschiedenen Rosenberg-Dienststellen in verschiedenen Angelegenheiten,” BArch NS 30/173, Bundesarchiv.

<sup>19</sup> “Aktenvermerk: Sichergestellte Kunstgegenstände bei der Hauptarbeitsgruppe Südosten, Belgrad, 6 November 43,” BArch NS 30/178, Bundesarchiv.

Porträt eines jungen Mannes		58
Junger Mann mit Schnurrbart		42
Maler mit Staffelei und Pfeife		24
Krug und Vase vor einem gestreiften Wandbehang		57
Mädchen in Weiss		51
Sitzender Akt		47
Interieru mit Globus		6
Dame mit Pelerine		5
Dame mit Blumenstrauss	R	60
Häuser	R	13
Sitzender mit Krug	R	45
Interieur mit Wäscheleine und Krug	R	83
Stadtbild	R	35
Sofa und Tisch mit Blumenstrauss	R	10
Stilleben mit zwei Kürbissen	R	4

Anlage zu der Bilder-Liste (Gemälde in der Wohnung von Herrn Dr. Kraft)

<u>Lfd.Nr.</u>	<u>Bezeichnung</u>	<u>Rahmen</u>	<u>Nr. des SD.</u>
116	Blumenstrauß	-	
117	Mädchen in Blau vor einem Spiegel	R	
118	Holm, Venedig	R	
119	Damenporträt	R	
120	Venus mit Putten	R	
121	Oberst Lawrence	R	

Bilder der jüdischen Maler Marko und Alexander Celebonovič

Porträt eines jungen Mannes	-	43
Sitzende und stehende Frau	-	15
Kinderbild in Rosa	R	
Haus mit Brunnen	R	76
Stilleben mit Krug und Tisch	R	81
Frau am Zaun	-	
Mann mit Vase und Flasche	-	16
Stilleben mit Zitronen	-	14
Mädchen in rot-weißer Tracht	R	
Halbakt mit Blume	-	
Mädchen mit Mandoline	-	7
Porträt eines jungen Mannes	-	58
Junger Mann mit Schnurrbart	-	42
Maler mit Staffelei und Pfeife	-	24
Krug und Vase vor einem gestreiften Wandbehang	-	57
Mädchen in Weiß	-	51
Sitzender Akt	-	47
Interieur mit Globus	-	6
Dame mit Pelerine	-	5
Dame mit Blumenstrauß	R	60
Häuser	R	13
Sitzende mit Krug	R	45
Interieur mit Wäscheleine und Krug	R	83
Stadtbild	R	35
Sofa und Tisch mit Blumenstrauß	R	10
Stilleben mit zwei Kürbissen	R	4

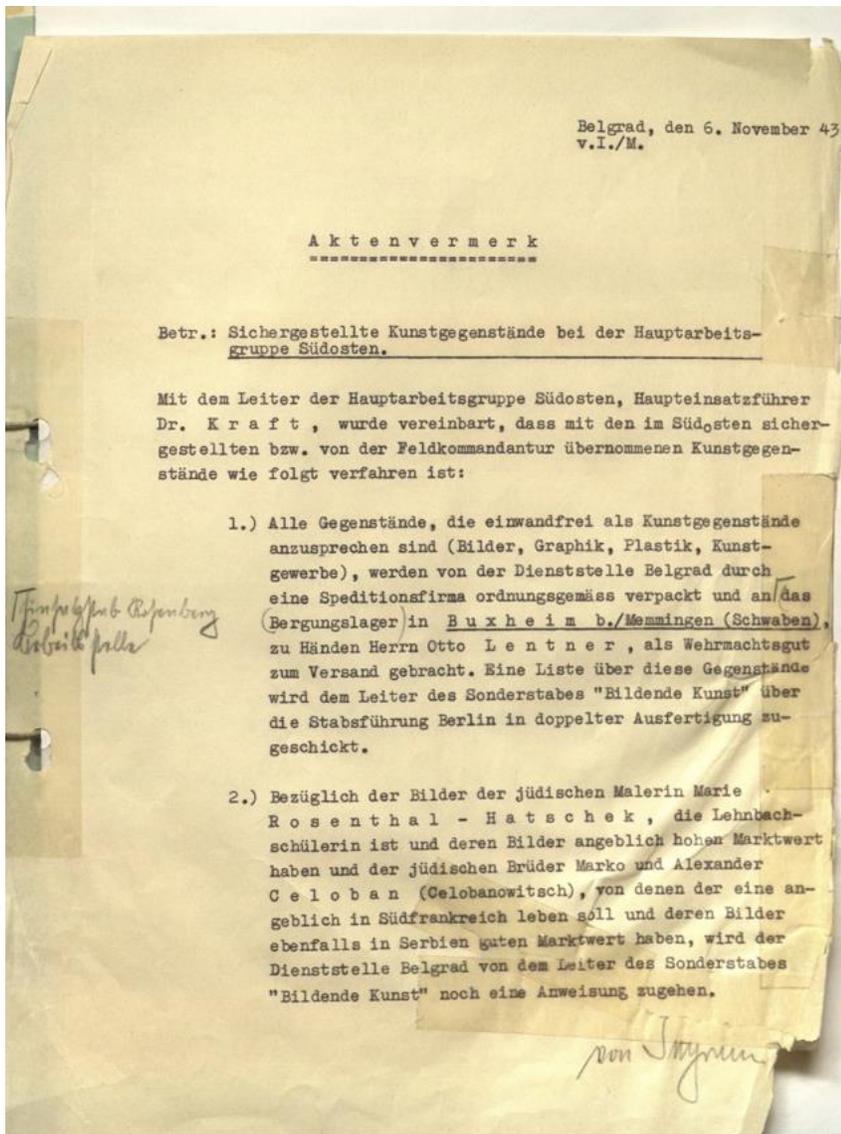


Image: BArch NS 30/178, Bundesarchiv

## POST WORLD WAR II – RESTITUTION

Some objects looted in Serbia and subsequently brought to Germany were recovered by the American Allies and processed through the Collecting Points. In total, 175 objects were shipped to Yugoslavia across seven restitution transports between 1947 and 1949. Additional items were approved for restitution later when misallocations were identified.<sup>20</sup>

Private Serbian citizens also filed restitution claims. Jakov Čelebonović, for example, submitted claims for cultural objects stolen from the family residence. According to records archived at the U.S. National Archives, on May 31, 1948, the family claimed several artworks originally owned by Jakov, including 13 paintings by Marko Čelebonović.<sup>21</sup>

There is no indication on this restitution form that the items

pursued by the Čelebonović family were the ones looted by the ERR and recorded in the above-mentioned documents.

Jakov Čelebonović described on his application form how his property was removed from Yugoslavia to Germany and that “the entire building,” his home, “was occupied by the Germans in

<sup>20</sup> M 1946-EU, Ardelia Hall Collection: Munich Administrative Records, 1945-1951, Custody Receipts On Restitution To Yugoslavia, 1945-1951, <https://www.fold3.com/image/269970947/custody-receipts-on-restitution-to-yugoslavia-page-1-eu-ardelia-hall-collection-munich-administrativ>, accessed December 10, 2025; see also: M 1946-EU, Ardelia Hall Collection: Munich Administrative Records, 1945-1951, Yugoslavia: Identification Of Paintings Of Doubtful Origin, 1945-1951, <https://www.fold3.com/image/270068911/yugoslavia-identification-of-paintings-of-doubtful-origin-page-1-eu-ardelia-hall-collection-munich-a>, accessed December 10, 2025.

<sup>21</sup> M1949-EU, OMGUS - Monuments, Fine Arts, and Archives, 1945-1951, 56 Yugoslavia - Claims Y4, 1946-1948, <https://www.fold3.com/image/295563563/56-yugoslavia-claims-y4-page-4-cu-omgus-monuments-fine-arts-and-archives-1945-1951>, accessed December 10, 2025.

April 1941 and handed over to the *Kulturbund* which stayed there through the whole occupation. The owner was not allowed to remove his belongings.”<sup>22</sup>

<i>No.</i>	<i>Quantity</i>	<i>Specified description of property applied for</i>	<i>Remarks</i>
		<u>Catalogue of Dr. Jakov Čelebonović's Picture Collection</u>	Name of Painter
1.	1	Time Revealing truth (Allegory), oil painting on canvas, about 220 by 170 cm, 16 <sup>th</sup> cent. Nude figures of a woman with a small dog at her feet, behind her each on the left a semi-made figure of an old man holding a sand-glass in his hand. A landscape in the background.	painted by Alessandro Voratari, detto Il Padpvanio
2.	1	Portrait of Ginette Signac, oil on canvas, 65 by 54 cm, painted in 1932	Marko Čelebonović
3.	1	Interior, oil on Canvas, 81 by 65 cm, painted in 1933	“
4.	1	Figure of a woman at a table with flowers, oil on canvas, 65 x 54 cm, painted in 1931	“
5.	1	Oriental woman, oil on canvas, about 30 by 50 cm, painted in 1934	“
6.	1	Paysage, oil on canvas 92 by 73 cm, painted in 1936	“
7.		Portrait of woman in red blouse, oil on canvas, 92 by 73 cm, painted in 1936	“
8.	1	Woman on divan, oil on canvas, 180 by 160 cm, painted in 1939	“
9.	1	Flowers, oil on canvas, 81 by 65 cm, painted in 1927	“
10.	1	Girl with Straw-Hut, oil on canvas, 33 by 24 cm., painted in 1939	“
11.	1	Still-life (Bread), oil canvas, 178 by 60 cm., painted in 1939	“
12.	1	Winter Landscape in Belgrade, oil on canvas, 92 by 73 cm., painted in 1939	“
13.	1	Belgrade Landscape, oil on canvas, 92 by 73 cm., painted in 1939	“
14.	1	Albanian, oil, 30 by 50 cm., painted in 1939	“
15.	1	Portrait of a woman, oil on canvas, about 63 by 90 cm., period frame	Louis Tocque

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

16.	1	Women with baskets, gouache drawing, about 20 by 15 cm	Martin von Cleeve
17.	1	Italia Landscape with Shepherds and Horse, oil on canvas, about 80 by 50cm, period frame	Francesco Zucarelli
18.	1	Landscape, oil on cardboard, about 45 by 35 cm, painted in 1929.	Ignjat Job
19.	1	Flowers, oil on canvas 100 by 73 cm	Peter Lubarda
20.	1	Landscape in Montenegro, painted in 1938, oil on canvas, 73 by 54cm	Milc Milunvić
21.	1	Landscape in Old Tropes, oil on canvas, 81 by 60 cm.	“
22.	1	Girls in Forest. Two girls playing with dog, tress in background, oil on wood, about 35 by 27 cm.	Marcisse Diaz

DECLASSIFIED  
Authority 715057  
By MMD NARA Date 1477

**SPECIFICATION**  
of cultural, historical and art property subject to restitution according to application No. 19/A

No.	Quantity	Specified description of property applied for	Remarks
		<b>Catalogue of Dr. Jakov Čelebonović's Picture Collection</b>	<b>Name of painter:</b>
1.	1	Time Revealing Truth (Allegory), oil-painting on canvas, about 220 by 170 cm, 16th cent. Nude figure of a woman with a small dog at her feet, behind her couch on the left a semi-nude figure of an old man holding a sand-glass in his hand. A landscape in the background.	Alessandro Varotari, detto Il Padovano
2.	1	Portrait of Ginette Signac, oil on canvas, 65 by 54 cm, painted in 1932	Marko Čelebonović
3.	1	Interior, oil on canvas, 81 by 65 cm, painted in 1933	"
4.	1	Figure of a woman at a table with flowers, oil on canvas, 65 by 54 cm, painted in 1931	"
5.	1	Oriental woman, oil on canvas, about 30 by 50 cm, painted in 1934	"
6.	1	Paysage, oil on canvas, 92 by 73 cm, painted in 1936	"
7.	1	Portrait of woman in red blouse, oil on canvas, 92 by 73 cm, painted in 1936	"
8.	1	Woman on divan, oil on canvas, 180 by 160 cm painted in 1939	"
9.	1	Flowers, oil on canvas, 81 by 65 cm, painted in 1927	"
10.	1	Girl with Straw-Hat, oil on canvas, 33 by 24 cm., painted in 1926.	"
11.	1	Still-life (Bread), oil on canvas, 178 by 60 cm., painted in 1939	"
12.	1	Winter Landscape in Belgrade, oil on canvas 92 by 73 cm., painted in 1939	"
13.	1	Belgrade Landscape, oil on canvas, 92 by 73 cm., painted in 1939	"
14.	1	Albanian, oil, 30 by 50 cm., painted in 1939	"
15.	1	Portrait of a woman, oil on canvas, about 65 by 90 cm., period frame.	Louis Tocque
16.	1	Women with baskets, gouache drawing, about 20 by 15 cm.	Martin von Cleeve

DECLASSIFIED  
Authority 715057  
By MMD NARA Date 1477

No.	Quantity	Specified description of property applied for	Remarks
17.	1	Italian Landscape with Shepherds and Horse, oil on canvas, about 80 by 50 cm., period frame.	Francesco Zucarelli
18.	1	Landscape, oil on cardboard, about 45 by 35 cm., painted in 1929.	Ignjat Job
19.	1	Flowers, oil on canvas, 100 by 73 cm.	Peter Labarda
20.	1	Landscape in Montenegro, painted in 1938, oil on canvas, 73 by 54 cm.	Milo Milunović
21.	1	Landscape in Old Tropes, oil on canvas, 81 by 60 cm.	"
22.	1	Girls in Forest. Two girls playing with dog, trees in background, oil on wood, about 35 by 27 cm.	Narcisse Dias

Images: <https://www.fold3.com/image/295563568/56-yugoslavia-claims-y4-page-7-eu-omgus-monuments-fine-arts-and-archives-1945-1951>;  
<https://www.fold3.com/image/295563568/56-yugoslavia-claims-y4-page-8-eu-omgus-monuments-fine-arts-and-archives-1945-1951>,  
 accessed December 29, 2025.

On page 4 of the same application form, Jakov Čelebonović claimed a sculpture described as “Autumn” by Sreten Stojanović<sup>23</sup>, bronze, height 60 cm, done in 1930.<sup>24</sup> Moreover, on page 5, he noted that the following arts and craft objects were also looted:

1 - 18<sup>th</sup> cent. Persian rug, so-called “Kirman”, representing a hunt, 15c by 25c cm.

1 - 18<sup>th</sup> cent. French goblins, representing a bird sitting at a brook, 12c by 18c cm.

<sup>23</sup> Sreten Stojanović (Feb 2, 1898 - Oct 29, 1960) was a Serbian and Bosnian sculptor and art critic. His artistic individuality was best observed in portraits made of various materials. For more information see: <https://artsandculture.google.com/entity/sreten-stojanovi%C4%87/m0976s6?hl=en>, accessed December 8, 2025.  
<sup>24</sup> M1949-EU, OMGUS - Monuments, Fine Arts, and Archives, 1945-1951, 56 Yugoslavia - Claims Y4, 1946-1948, <https://www.fold3.com/image/295563568/56-yugoslavia-claims-y4-page-9-eu-omgus-monuments-fine-arts-and-archives-1945-1951>, accessed December 8, 2025.

1 - 18<sup>th</sup> cent. Chinese censer in bronze, with figure of lion on cover, height 35 cm.

1 - 17<sup>th</sup> cent. Octagonal Italian table, carvings representing figures from ancient mythology, about 120 cm in diameter.

11.905/IV  
18.8.1945  
ОБРАЗАЦ Бр. 1

### ПРИЈАВА РАТНЕ ШТЕТЕ

ПОДНОСИЛАЦ ПРИЈАВЕ

- 1) Презиме, име очево, име: Ђељковић, Мордекун, Морис
- 2) Занимање: буџије лекар, друкче арапског, а шрети је адвокат
- 3) Стално боравиште: буџу Видику, друкче у Софрју, а шрети у Београду
- 4) Штету пријављује као: оштећеник — наследник — старалац — скупник — воступник оштећеног.

ПОДАЦИ О ОШТЕЋЕНИКУ

- 1) Презиме, очево име, име: Ђељковић, Мордекун, Морис
- 2) Године старости: 64
- 3) Занимање: кожарски шривац и извозник
- 4) Стално боравиште (место, среа и округ): Београд
- 5) Народност: Ђељковић, а пореклом крају Србија међујево веле
- 6) Прилажу се образци: број 3, 4, 5
- 7) Прилажу се докази: \_\_\_\_\_

у Београду  
18 августа 1945 год.

Месни Народни одбор у Београду I  
Списак број 299/1  
Примљено дана 20. 8. 1945 год.

Подносилац пријаве (својеручни потпис):  
Ђељковић Морис  
лекар у Видику у Буџинској  
Рудолф Колеков, арапског  
у Софрју у Буџинској  
Ђељковић Морис, адвокат  
у Београду, Омилево веле 17. I

ПОТВРДА  
О УЧИЊЕНОЈ ПРИЈАВИ РАТНЕ ШТЕТЕ

Месни Народни одбор у Београду I потврђује да је Ђељковић Морис  
по занимању артизан из Београда  
поднео је пријаву за ратну штету као оштећеник — наследник — старалац — скупник — воступник оштећеног Ђељковић Морис по занимању кожарски шривац  
из Београда с тим што је, по завршеној провери Месни Народни одбор, у погледу личних и породичних података, предмета оштећења, начина на који је штета примењена и проузроковача штете:

- 1) Пријаву потврдио без примедбе:
- 2) Пријаву потврдио са следећим примедбама:

Податки из ова пријаве унесени у регистар бр. 11752/514  
Немањина

Напомена: Овај образац мора се испунити за сваког подносиоца пријаве ратне штете по образцима бр. 2 и 3.

ИАБ-42-2408-14

Furthermore, on page 15, he claimed the following engravings:

Six engravings painted with watercolors, representing scenes from Viennese life in 1850 (on various squares and streets of Vienna), 35 by 25 cm.

One 19<sup>th</sup> century English engraving, representing a huntsman with horses and dogs, 40 by 60 cm.

Lastly, on page 16, he claimed one Icon, more specifically one Romanian icon representing scenes from life of Christ in small quadrangles, 17<sup>th</sup> cent., about 30 by 40 cm.

Jakov Čelebonović's claim with the American Allies did not represent his only attempt to regain his property, moveable and immovable alike. A few years prior to his "Monuments, Fine Arts, and Archives Section" claim, Jakov Čelebonović filed a war damage claim with the Yugoslav Republic. The Jewish Digital Collection of the Historical Archives of Belgrade provides access to a number of war damage claims filed by the family, including that of Jakov's wife Johana (Jovana) (née Plan). These claims, however, almost entirely refer to lost properties – real estate - as opposed to moveable property, which was not mentioned and claimed.

Image: War Damage Claim of Moric Čelebonović, 20 August 1945 - 20 September 1945, ИАБ-42-К408-14, document folio 8, page 1, <https://jdz.arhiv-beograda.org/en/details/47402>, accessed December 9, 2025.

In claims submitted between August 20, 1945, and September 20, 1945, Jakov claimed the property of his brother who was murdered in the Jasenovac concentration camp, noting that “The claim that I submitted relates to the property of my late brother Morić Čelebonović, who was killed by the Germans in Jasenovac.

“I am his heir and therefore submit this claim.”<sup>25</sup>

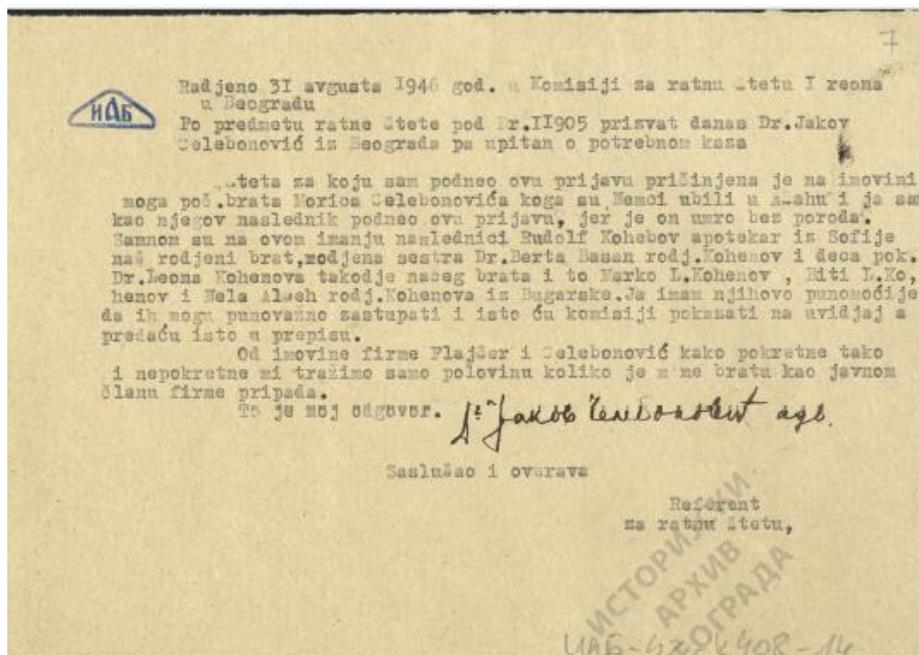


Image: War Damage Claim of Moric Čelebonović, 20 August 1945 - 20 September 1945, ИАБ-42-К408-14, Document folio 8, page 2, <https://jdz.arhiv-beograda.org/en/details/47402>, accessed December 9, 2025.

<sup>25</sup> War Damage Claim of Moric Čelebonović, 20 August 1945 - 20 September 1945, ИАБ-42-К408-14, Document folio 8, <https://jdz.arhiv-beograda.org/en/details/47402>, accessed December 9, 2025.

## WHEREABOUTS OF MARKO ČELEBONVIĆ'S PAINTINGS TODAY



Image: <https://artsandculture.google.com/asset/interior-marko-%C4%8Celebonovi%C4%87/AQEdEVmgULKUXw>, accessed December 9, 2025.

Most of Marko Čelebonović's paintings that his father claimed in 1948 remain lost, as well as those paintings listed by the ERR as having been confiscated. There is only one painting on Jakov Čelebonović's list, *Interior* (oil on canvas, painting in 1933) that can be traced to the Pavle Beljanski Memorial Collection (Novi Sad, Serbia). The provenance given on the Google Arts & Culture page referencing this artwork notes that "the painting was in possession of Marko's uncle and stolen from his apartment during the Second World War. It is unknown from whom Beljanski bought the painting, but Marko was glad he has it at the end. The painting was among 185 artworks Beljanski donated to the nation in 1957."<sup>26</sup>

There is no reference to the painting or its provenance on the museum's webpage.<sup>27</sup> The remainder paintings mentioned and claimed remain lost of their whereabouts are unknown.

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<sup>26</sup> <https://artsandculture.google.com/asset/interior-marko-%C4%8Celebonovi%C4%87/AQEdEVmgULKUXw>, accessed December 9, 2025.

<sup>27</sup> <https://pavle-beljanski.museum/>, accessed December 9, 2025.

## CONCLUSION

The case of the Čelebonović family exemplifies the profound cultural losses inflicted on Serbian Jewry during the Holocaust. Despite the family's significant contributions to Serbian cultural life, their artistic legacy was irreparably damaged through systematic Nazi looting, facilitated by the collaborationist structures of the occupied Serbian state. Allied restitution efforts returned some cultural property to Yugoslavia, yet the majority of artworks belonging to the Čelebonović family remain unlocated.