Sirs,

In recent weeks I have seen reports that Nazi items have been found and sold at auction for extortionate amounts of money. The first lot, part of a larger collection of magazines, consisted of several editions of a Nazi housewife’s weekly magazine entitled NS Frauen Warte giving tips on knitting, cooking and home care, but also containing Nazi propaganda and anti-Semitic illustrations. The second lot consisted of 13 landscape paintings apparently by Adolf Hitler. The auctioneers did not call them works of art, far from it, but all 13 of the paintings raised a combined total of over £95,000, and the magazines were estimated to sell for between £500 and £700.

I believe there are two distinct types of people who would want to buy those items. The first are genuine collectors of antique, historical memorabilia and art, and the others are those who supported or continue to support the ethos of the Nazi regime known as Nazism.

The former, the collectors and historians, could be seen to be conserving historical documentation, but ultimately, when they sell these items they profit from them. I think that the only real way to conserve this type of historical documentation is to make it available to the public by giving it to a museum for it to be shown in its real context. If you look at the museum in the old village of Oradour-sur-Glane in central France; A village completely destroyed by the withdrawing Nazi troops at the end of WW2. The whole village was set on fire and every inhabitant, including the children, were shot and left to burn. All of the ‘memorabilia’ is housed within the memorial to be seen in the remains of the village by those who choose to visit.

Whilst our democratic society enables the latter, supporters of Nazism, to follow their politics without sanction, if their belief also accepts the actions of Nazis during WW2 then their ownership of this memorabilia could be seen as glorifying those actions and encourage active support of Hitler and his activities, not just the political principles behind them.

The ethical dilemma presented by this situation is a difficult one. Perhaps we should take the same drastic action as was taken with the ivory trade; In order to stop the number of elephants being killed for their ivory tusks, there is a ban on the trade of ivory. It is now illegal to offer for sale any ivory products no matter how old they may be. This ensures that there is no market for the ivory, therefore no need to kill elephants to get it and the universal ban ensures that no one profits or is seen to condone what was done in the past.

It is my opinion then Sir, that we should ban the buying and selling of all Nazi memorabilia. Existing collectors could obviously retain what they currently own, but could not sell it on only donate it to a nominated Museum, such as the British War Museum. This would ensure that no one can profit from the appalling activities of Hitler and his Nazi party during WW2.

Isabell Long