

Aryanization files

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Introductory comments

The following information on the *Arisierungsakten* ("aryanization files") relates, for the most part, to the comprehensive holdings of the former National Socialist *Vermögensverkehrsstelle* ("Property Transaction Office") at the Austrian State Archives. Although, for now only the *Vermögensanmeldungen* have been able to be incorporated into the *Findbuch* database from the very diverse files series "aryanization files", this focus on the holdings of the Austrian State Archives is necessary due to the fact that in 1938, over 90 percent of Austrian Jews lived in Vienna. Due to the vital part played by the Property Transaction Office in implementing the National Socialist policies of persecution and seizure, its aryanization files take on a central role, in both qualitative and quantitative terms.

Origins of the holdings

“Aryanization” is the term used to describe the economic (businesses, companies) and asset-related (real estate, apartments, tenancy rights) seizures perpetrated against the Jews under the National Socialist dictatorship. It is important to differentiate between the two forms of aryanization: the so-called “wild aryanizations” and the pseudo-legal expropriations carried out on the basis of anti-Semitic legal provisions. The former reached their climax in Austria in March and April 1938 and often took place with brutal force and destruction during the course of the looting and plundering raids. In order to bring these massive legal violations and the subsequent damage to the economy under control, during the course of 1938 a series of legal provisions were enacted by the National Socialist authorities which were based on the existing anti-Semitic legislation in the German Reich. On the basis of the Nuremberg Laws of 15 September 1935 (German Reich Law Gazette 1935 I p. 1146, Austrian Law Gazette 150/1938), Jews were ordered by the *Verordnung über die Anmeldung des Vermögens von Juden* (“Ordinance on the Registration of Jewish Property”) of 26 April 1938 (German Reich Law Gazette 1938 I p. 414, Austrian Law Gazette 102/1938) to register their assets. On 18 May 1938, the Property Transaction Office was established in Vienna. It attempted to bring under control and monitor the – sometimes self-appointed – commissars, trustees and “liquidators” of Jewish companies. In bureaucratic procedures, the Property Transaction Office was in charge of deciding on all transfers of ownership involving Jews. That meant approving purchase contracts and prices or ordering liquidations. On the basis of the *Elfte Verordnung zum Reichsbürgergesetz* (“Eleventh Decree to the Reich Citizenship Law”) of 25 November 1941, the *Oberfinanzpräsident* (“Chief Finance President”) Berlin was charged with seizing all Jewish assets which still remained. The Chief Finance President delegated this task to the competent regional Chief Finance Presidents of the Reich Financial Administration.

In a broader sense, the term “aryanization” not only referred to the measures for the financial plundering of the Jewish population and their physical removal from society but also their exclusion from their jobs (dismissals, redundancies, bans on practicing a profession), restrictions on vocational training and the appropriation of movables (e.g. artworks, furnishings, objects made from valuable metals).

Contents of the files

Regardless of the type of asset (industrial, commercial or trade business, real estate) the contents of the aryanization files document the course of the seizure or company liquidation. The range of documentation involved varies:

- Letters of appointment for provisional administrators
- “Requests for permission to sell” by Jewish owners or “requests for permission to buy” by the potential buyers
- Political examination of the buyer
- Drafts of the purchase contract and the final version and its approval by the National Socialist authorities
- Valuation reports, reports on company audits and company data (e.g. balance sheets, inventory lists) production calculations, settlements of accounts of the provisional administrators or “liquidators”
- Liquidation orders
- Accompanying correspondence (e.g. with National Socialist financial departments).

Informational content

Depending on the date on which the files were opened and their provenance (from May 1938 the Property Transaction Office in Vienna; upon implementation of the *Ostmarkgesetz* [“Ostmark Law”, German Reich Law Gazette 1939 I p. 777 ff., Austrian Law Gazette 500/1939] the Property Transaction Offices of the Reich regions; from 1941 the regional Chief Finance Presidents of the Reich financial administration), the significance of the information contained in them varies. Significant information on the “wild aryanizations” only exists in rare cases. The execution of the expropriations and company liquidations can be documented to varied extents. This circumstance is often related to the value or size of the company and the importance attributed to it by the National Socialist authorities for the German war effort. Experience has shown that files on larger industrial companies and real estate are generally more complex than those on small and medium-sized

companies.

In addition to the reconstruction of the individual economic circumstances in relation to the expropriation measures, biographical and professional information on the persecutee and the "aryanizer" can be found.

Alternative sources of information

Alternative sources of information are primarily to be found enclosed in the various aryanization files of the Property Transaction Office at the Austrian State Archives, which are structured according to category or branch: as a result, reports and figures which are enclosed with the original aryanization files may also be found enclosed with the files series "Commissars", "Trustees" or "Administrators". The files of the regional Chief Finance Presidents mainly contain self-contained aryanization measures which can also provide supplementary information on the expropriated persons and the status of their assets (see "Explanations and comments").

In the case of aryanized companies, it is advisable to view the *Firmenbuchakten* ("commercial register files") of the competent Commercial Court as these may contain indications of the "aryanization measure". For seized real estate, the historical land registers and related collections of documents at the relevant District Court ("Land Register Court") can provide insight into the transfer of ownership between 1938 and 1945. In both cases, the possibility exists that the file material (*Handelsregisterakten* ["trade register files"], historical land registers or collections of documents) have already been transferred to the provincial archives.

Austrian State Archives

Austrian State Archives/Archives of the Republic

Record group: **Entschädigungs- und Restitutionsangelegenheiten** ("Compensation and restitution matters"), 1938–1945

Holdings: **Vermögensverkehrsstelle** ("Property Transaction Office"), 1938–1945

File series: various file series

Holdings: **Finanzlandesdirektion** ("Financial Directorate") [Vienna, Lower Austria, Burgenland] pursuant to the *Erstes Rückstellungsgesetz* ("First Restitution Act")

In the Austrian State Archives it is necessary to differentiate between the two holdings of aryanization files. Firstly, those of the Property Transaction Office, established in Vienna in 1938 at the Federal Ministry for the Economy and Labor, whose file holdings are, on the one hand, ordered according to economic sector (industry, trade, commerce) or according to category (real estate) and, on the other hand, according to the internal organization which was relevant at the time. It must be noted that during the implementation of the so called *Ostmark Law* (German Reich Law Gazette 1939 I p. 777 ff., Austrian Law Gazette 500/1939) from 1939 the regional Property Transaction Offices were established in the Reich regions, to which the Vienna Property Transaction Office transferred not only its authorities but also the regional aryanization files. After 1945, these files – sometimes supplemented by files pursuant to the *Erstes Rückstellungsgesetz* ("First Restitution Act") and the *Zweites Rückstellungsgesetz* ("Second Restitution Act") – came into the possession of the local competent provincial archives.

Secondly, aryanization files were opened by the regional Chief Finance Presidents (according to the National Socialist authority titles: Vienna-Lower Danube, Graz, Upper Danube, Innsbruck). These were taken on after May 1945 by the re-established *Finanzlandesdirektionen* ("Financial Directorates"), for example files of the Chief Finance President Vienna-Lower Danube to the Financial Directorate for Vienna, Lower Austria and Burgenland) and used for restitution proceedings pursuant to the First Restitution Act and the Second Restitution Act. As such, the files of the Chief Finance President Vienna-Lower Danube form an integral part of the files of the Financial Directorate for Vienna, Lower Austria and Burgenland pursuant to the First Restitution Act.

In exceptional cases, the entire aryanization files of the Property Transaction Office Vienna can be found in the files of the Chief Finance President Vienna-Lower Danube or the Financial Directorate Vienna.

Burgenländisches Landesarchiv

Record group: **Forschungsarchiv** ("Research Archive")

Holdings: **Behördliche Archivbestände** ("Authorities' archive holdings")

File series: **Arisierungsakten (Nordburgenland und Südburgenland)** ("Aryanization files [North Burgenland and South Burgenland]"), 1938–1945

The files on seizures are found in the Burgenländisches Landesarchiv under the title *Arisierungsakten (Nordburgenland und Südburgenland)* 1938-1945 ("Aryanization files [North Burgenland and South Burgenland] 1938–1945") in the holdings of the *Forschungsarchiv/Behördliche Archivbestände* ("Research Archive/Authorities' archive holdings"). These file holdings also originated at the Property Transaction Office, established by the National Socialists in 1938.

After the *Anschluss* of Austria to the German Reich, the newly drawn boundaries of the *Gaue* ("Reich regions") saw Burgenland split between the two neighboring Reich regions, Lower Danube and Styria. During this process, as of 15 October 1938 (Austrian Law Gazette 443/1938) the northern districts Neusiedl am See, Eisenstadt, Mattersburg and Oberpullendorf were merged with the Reich region Lower Danube, and the southern districts Oberwart, Güssing and Jennersdorf joined the Reich region Styria. For this reason, for the North Burgenland and South Burgenland districts there are two separate holdings of each the Property Transaction Office and the Chief Finance President of the Reich regions Lower Danube and Styria.

After the end of the war in May 1945, Burgenland was re-established in the Soviet occupied zone. The Eisenstadt authorities took on all archive material from the Lower Austrian and Styrian Provincial Governments which related to Burgenland and had accumulated between 1938 and 1945. The files contain the entire correspondence involved in recording and aryanizing Jewish assets (companies, land, insurance policies, stocks and bonds and personal valuables), for example requests for approval to buy, the appointment of a provisional administrator, valuation reports on assets, purchase contracts, purchase contract approvals, written correspondence and expert opinions on liquidation and "aryanisation". In several of these aryanization files, property notices can be found which had been enclosed with the respective aryanization file by the Property Transaction Office. In addition, these holdings also contain a box (no. 67) containing 140 unattributed property notices which are sorted alphabetically.

The file holdings are subdivided into 5 inventories. The inventories consist of 83 boxes with 1,450 individual files and an unknown number of unattributable documents.

Information on data processing: Aryanization files (North Burgenland and South Burgenland)

Archives of Upper Austria

Record group: **Staatliche Verwaltung** ("State administration")

Holdings: **Landesverwaltung** ("Provincial Administration"), 1926–1945

File series: **Reichsstatthaltereie 1940–1945/Arisierungen** ("Office of the Reich Governor 1940–1945/aryanizations")

Record group: **Selbstverwaltung** ("Independent administration") (1918–1945 [1962])

File series: **Gauselbstverwaltung** ("Reich independent regional administration")

The so called "aryanizations" in the Reich region Upper Danube occurred under the supervision of the Office of the Reich governor Upper Danube, particularly its department IV and sub-department IVc (Economy and Labor) and IVc/W4 (later Ib/J). Subject area IVc/W4 was in charge of the "de-jewifications" with the exception of agricultural and silvicultural land and it was also known as the "De-jewification Department", "Aryanization Office" and "Property Transaction Office in Linz".

The measures documented in the files of the *Reichsstatthaltereie 1940-1945/Arisierungen* ("Office of the Reich Governor 1940–1945/Aryanizations") are often confusing and often connected to the corresponding holdings of the Financial Directorate for Upper Austria (*Finanzlandesdirektion – Beschlagnahmte Vermögen; Finanzlandesdirektion – Vermögensrückstellungen,*

["Financial Directorate – Confiscated assets"; "Financial Directorate – Restitution of assets"]), or with the file series *Finanzabteilung des Landes Oberösterreich*, abbreviated: FiRK ("Financial Department of the Province of Upper Austria", abbreviated: FiRK) or the aryanization files and property notices in the holdings *Israelitische Kultusgemeinde Linz* ("Jewish Community Linz"). This was a result of the gradual resolution of the competencies between the German Reich, the transitional entity "Land Österreich" and the "Reich region Upper Danube", established in 1939 (German Reich Law Gazette 1939 I p. 777 ff., Austrian Law Gazette 500/1939). The state of the files can be blamed on the conflicting political and economic interests under the National Socialists and was also caused by semi-legal to illegal interventions and activities.

The Upper Austrian aryanization files trace the asset related occurrences and liquidation of assets as documents of bureaucratic procedures, the latter up to 1944. In the cases in which no liquidation took place, the contents of the files are occasionally supplemented by documentation of the restitution proceedings from 1946 onward. In this regard, there are crossovers with the files of the judicial restitution files pursuant to the *Drittes Rückstellungsgesetz* ("Third Restitution Act"). The Upper Austrian Provincial Archive took on the aryanization files in 1972 in combination with the file holdings *Vermögensentziehungsmeldungen* ("notifications of seized property") as *Vermögensakten* ("assets files") of the Office of the Reich Governor Upper Danube. After the transfer of the related *Kanzleiindex* ("search index") to the Archives of Upper Austria in 1996 both different groups of files were finally separated from one another.

The Reich independent regional administration was, as the successor of the "autonomous provincial administration" (1926 to 1938; with exceptions until 1940) responsible for both assets of the province and the Reich region until both administrative authorities were merged in 1940 and 1941. The file series contains the section of the Reich independent regional administration which was continued in the Finance Department of the Office of the Upper Austrian Provincial Government after 1945. It is important to note that the "aryanization measures" only form part of the files of the Reich independent regional administration, the focus of which is the confiscation of Church establishments (monasteries and abbeys) and the estates of the Schwarzenberg and Starhem families. The administration of properties by the Office of the Provincial Government is documented until the early 1950s in some cases.

This file series also clearly overlaps with other file series of the Archives of Upper Austria: "Financial Directorate – Confiscated assets", "Financial Directorate – Restitution of assets", "Financial Department of the Province of Upper Austria" (abbreviated: FiRK) or the aryanization files and property notices in the sub-holdings "Jewish Community Linz".

The sub-holdings of the Jewish Community Linz are composed of two sub-holdings: firstly, the aryanization files and, secondly, the property notices. Due to their connection of both types of files, the sub-holdings "Jewish Community Linz" are dealt with separately. Further information regarding the aryanization of companies in Upper Austria can also be gathered from the file holdings of the Property Transaction Office at the Austrian State Archives.

Information on data processing: Aryanization files of the Office of the Reich Governor – Upper Austria

Information on data processing: Files of the Reich independent regional administration – Upper Austria

Information on data processing: Aryanization files - Upper Austria (holdings of the Jewish Community Linz)

Tyrolean Provincial Archives

Holdings: **Finanzlandesdirektion** ("Financial Directorate") for Tyrol – *Rückstellungsakten* ("Restitution files")

File series: **Rückstellungsunterlagen** ("Restitution documents")

File: **Listen, betreffend vom deutschen Reich eingezogene und dem deutschen Reich für verfallen erklärte Vermögen** ("Lists regarding assets expropriated by the German Reich and declared forfeited to the German Reich") (signature RU-3/1-10)

Period: 1945 and 1946

According to information provided by the Tyrolean Provincial Archives, due to the wide-scale destruction of aryanization documents by the National Socialist authorities at the end of the war, the "Lists regarding assets expropriated by the German Reich and declared forfeited to the German Reich with proof of the outcomes of the cash-flows relating to these assets" (this

is the full title) often constitute the sole source of documentary information on property seizures to which Jewish citizens were subjected during the National Socialist dictatorship. The lists originated partly from the records of the Chief Finance President Innsbruck regarding property seizures under his jurisdiction for the Reich regions Tyrol-Vorarlberg and Salzburg. The list was also taken on for administration and edited by the Financial Directorate for Tyrol after the war. Files on property seizure which did not fall under the regional jurisdiction of the National Socialist Chief Finance President Innsbruck due to the expropriated owner's place of residence were ceded from the Chief Finance President to the Reich financial administration (e.g. Munich, Berlin-Brandenburg or Berlin-Charlottenburg, Upper Danube and Vienna-Lower Danube). In turn, the Financial Directorate for Tyrol ceded the cases of seizure related to a place of residence lying outside the province to the competent Financial Directorates (e.g. to Salzburg from 1945 and to Vorarlberg from 1946). As a result of the memos noting the transfer and the fact that files on aryianization and seizure only survived the end of the war in 1945 extremely fragmentarily, it cannot be ruled out that files or parts of files might be found in Austrian provincial archives or German archives. Two enclosures are noted on the title page of the list (probably lists), which covered, firstly, property and, secondly, bonds and interest coupons. According to information provided by the Tyrolean Provincial Archives, however, the list contains cash and monies deposited on bank accounts which were confiscated by the German Reich.

Information on data processing: Lists regarding assets expropriated by the German Reich and declared forfeited to the German Reich