



Collection Agencies A and B - claims, equity and sale files

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Title of the holdings

Austrian State Archives/Archives of the Republic

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

Holdings: **Hilfsfonds** (“Assistance Fund”), 1955–1982

File series: **Sammelstellen A und B** (“Collection Agencies A and B”), 1957-1972

Sub-series: **Anspruchs-, Billigkeits- und Verkaufsakten** (“claims files, equity files and sale files”)

Abbreviation for this type of file: SSt

Origins of the holdings

The establishment of *Collection Agencies A and B* was an indirect result of Article 26 Sec. 2 of the Staatsvertrag (“Austrian State Treaty”) of 15 May 1955 “concerning the re-establishment of an independent and democratic Austria” (Federal Law Gazette 152/1955). In this Treaty, the Republic of Austria undertook to transfer to so called receiving organizations heirless assets or unclaimed assets, rights and interests which were liable for restitution. Collection Agencies A and B, located in Vienna, were established as a direct result of the Auffangorganisationsgesetz (“Receiving Organizations Act”).

Collection Agency A was responsible for the assets, rights and interests of those persons who had been members of the Jewish Community on 31 December 1937; Collection Agency B was responsible for the assets, rights and interests of all other persons who had suffered seizures of assets under the National Socialist regime.

Contents of the files

There are three different types of files contained in the holdings: “*claims files*”, “*equity files*” and “*sale files*”:

- The records of the claims files contain information on alleged restitution claims primarily on immovable properties, secondarily on shops, businesses and movable properties (accounts, securities).
- The equity files were a result of the Viertes Rückstellungsanspruchsgesetz 1961 (“Fourth Restitution Act”). If the so-called “applicant for equitable relief” submitted a notice about his/her losses according to Article 26 Sec. 2 State Treaty 1955 by 26 January 1956, the restituted assets had to be returned within a certain period of time upon their demand.
- Sales of assets of the Collection Agencies to persons other than those obligated to retribute are documented in the sale files.

Informational content

Claims files contain information on both the restitution claim as well as its implementation pursuant to the Erstes Rückstellungsgesetz (“First Restitution Act”), the Zweites Rückstellungsgesetz (“Second Restitution Act”) and the Drittes Rückstellungsgesetz (“Third Restitution Act”). Based on the assets claimed, claims files contain information on:

- The aggrieved natural or legal person or the aggrieved group of persons,
- The assets (register number and cadastral district for immovable properties; for businesses the results of research into their premises, excerpts from the commercial register and confidentially obtained information from a credit agency),
- Correspondence with those obligated to retribute or their representatives,
- Minutes of witness statements
- Formally standardized reports to the respective board of the Collection Agencies in the form of a case summary.

If a settlement was concluded with a person obligated to retribute, valuation reports and notices of assessment can be found in the claims files.

Equity files contain:

- Correspondence with the so-called “applicants for equitable relief”,
- Civil status documents,

- Inquiries addressed to the Ministry of Finance relating to restitution claims according to Article 26 Sec. 2 State Treaty 1955
- A report addressed to the respective board of the Collection Agency about the type of transfer of property (in kind, as monetary value or legal title).

Sale files are mostly similar to the claims files and additionally contain a notice of assessment and up to two valuation reports for immovable properties. Photographs of the real estate may occasionally be attached. Both purchase contracts and reports addressed to the board of the Collection Agency in charge may also be contained in the files.

Alternative sources of information

Alternative sources of information regarding the work of the Collection Agencies A and B can be extracted from the card files Erfassung Liegenschaften (“list of immovable properties”) and Erfassung Betriebe (“list of companies”). They are stored in the Austrian State Archives but solely provide information on the circumstances leading to the opening of claims files.

As these card files are not accessible to the public, the records are not entirely documented by the historians of the Fund.

In cases of restitution claims pursuant to the First Restitution Act or to the Second Restitution Act, the documentation on the proceedings can be looked up in the files of the competent Financial Directorate.

The processing of applications was finalized with a report addressed to the board of the respective Collection Agency, which can be found in chronological order in the Austrian State Archives. They are collected in sub-holdings of the Collection Agency. However, without knowledge of the exact dates of settlements, sales or equity cases, retrieving information can be very time consuming.

If the restitution proceedings pertained to immovable properties, commencement, end of proceedings or possible change of ownership can be gathered from the B-Blatt (“B-sheet”) of the land register as well as from the collections of documents of the competent land register authority. With this information however, it is only possible to speculate on the existence of a legally valid settlement, a dismissal or a withdrawal of the application for restitution.

Explanations and comments

The files of Collection Agency A and B have a standardized structure. The availability of documents depends, however, on the complexity of each individual case. The research activities undertaken at the time can easily be traced for each claim. Moreover, it is possible to infer from the files the prevailing bureaucratic attitudes towards restitution claimants in the 1960s.