



Information on data processing: Removal goods from the “Adriatic Depot”

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Terms of reference

The list of removal goods stored at the Port of Trieste and originating predominantly from Jewish ownership, which were confiscated by the Nazi authorities in 1943/1944 and for the most part transported to German Reich territory, was discovered at the Austrian State Archives/Archives of the Republic among the holdings of the former Nazi authority, the Vermögensverkehrsstelle (“Property Transaction Office”). It is stored in a section containing miscellaneous archival material from the departments of the Federal Ministry of Finance that after the war had stored the surviving documentation relating to anti-Jewish seizures (property notices).

The list was compiled in the Italian language and has been given the German working title: “Zusammenfassende Auflistung der verschiedenen Bestände der beschlagnahmten Hausratsgegenstände [...]” (“Summary list of the various holdings of confiscated household items [...]”) and has three main problem areas:

- a. Due to the absence of column headings, the information or figures recorded in each field had to be identified,
- b. errors made when transcribing and typing the information, probably based on the records of the forwarding agents (originally in the German language), meant that in some cases research had to be undertaken and
- c. translated into German.

Ad a. Even contradictory column headings can be determined with some degree of certainty with the help of existing explanations and comparisons. For example, there is a list contained in the internal files of Collection Agencies A and B (Austrian State Archives/Archives of the Republic) with 168 entries that has evidently been extracted from the present list, although the column containing the places of dispatch had been overwritten with “probable place of arrest” or the cargo unit described in very general terms as “kolli” (“boxes”).

Ad b. In order to clarify inconsistencies (in spellings of surnames or places names) in promising cases research was undertaken in the files of the Financial Directorate for Vienna, Lower Austria and Burgenland (Austrian State Archives/Archives of the Republic). The Fund’s internal databases, the Findbuch databases and other aids such as lists of names and the internet were also used.

Ad c. Both the translation of the Italian original into German and the transfer of the data into an electronic list were carried out by a National Fund staff member.

Digitization

It can be assumed that original list was compiled by several different people as the style of writing and the expressions used in the annotations differ considerably from one another. Some of the entries (particularly those on the first page) contain full sentences, later they are sometimes limited to keywords; the “abbreviated” versions are sometimes missing pronouns or articles, for example. The translations correspond to these styles, i.e. articles are also left out in German and keyword sentences used.

The list comprises ten columns and contains the following information, which was transferred into an electronic list, retaining its original form:

1. The number of the store on the site of the Port of Trieste in which the removals were stored.
2. The identifying number on the liftvan(s) or box(es).
3. The number of liftvans or boxes stored, the latter being the smaller unit of cargo.
4. The weight of the cargo in kilograms.
5. Surname and (sometimes shortened) forename of the sender(s) or, in isolated cases, the name of the legal entity, whereby the names do not necessarily indicate ownership.
6. Place of dispatch of the removal goods, which is not always identical to the place of residence.
7. Destination (city or country) of the removal goods (please refer to “Removal goods from the Adriatic depot” for information on the interpretation of identical places of dispatch and destination), these cannot be considered identical to the place of residence either.
8. Monetary amount, most likely in lira – a sum total of storage costs up to 31 October 1943.
A further three-figure number remains elusive (it could, however, signify the processing fees charged by the Italian forwarding agents in the course of their data collection [probably in lira]).
9. Individual remarks on the sender – to whom the Nazi authorities attributed ownership –, which describe the circumstances of the seizure of the removals and are presumably based on information provided by the Gestapo.
10. Standardized remarks on the individual senders of the cargo which are symbolized by “no”, “no?”, “si”, “si?” and a “*” regarding the question of confiscation, and read (in translation) as follows:

“no”: Wares (removal goods) owned by citizens of neutral territories, or non-Jewish German citizens, or citizens who are still resident in their country of origin, on neutral territory or in Italy. It may be possible to lift the confiscation order on request.”

“no?”: “Wares (removal goods) owned by natural persons whose race, Jewish or other, is uncertain, or who have declared themselves German, Aryan citizens without possessing the necessary documentation. They are presently residing either in Germany or on neutral territory. It may be possible to lift the confiscation order on request.”

“si”: Wares (removal goods) definitely owned by Jews resident in enemy states. Confiscation possible without further notice.”

“si?” Wares (removal goods) possibly owned by Jews who have probably emigrated to enemy states or neutral states – therefore it may be possible to lift the confiscation order.”

“*”: “The owner of a particular set of confiscated goods (removal goods) stored in the general stores possesses other boxes that are stored in the private warehouse of the forwarding agent.”

The original list covers 46 pages with 478 individual records (typewritten, collated stencils). As a result of the principle that one entry was made in the electronic list for each person and, as a result, entries relating to more than one person were broken down accordingly, the list contains 514 records. Where new records were created the relevant information was adopted in such a way that the content remained unchanged but the German wording was adjusted to the singular and to reflect the gender of the person listed as owner. All other information such as place of dispatch, number and identity no. of liftvans, values etc. were adopted and the other relevant persons involved referenced in square brackets. It is important to note here that quantities and values given each appear to be attributed to one person but are, in fact related to more than one person.

Abbreviations in the Italian original were written out in full in the German transcription and typing or transcription errors corrected without comment. The latter also applies to the place names “Prey” and “Wem”, which were amended to read “Prag” (Prague) and “Wien” (Vienna), or the company name of forwarding agents (for example the forwarding agents “Locle & Schwarz” appear as “Loeb & Schwarz”, “Lole & Schwarz” or “Hob & Schwarz”). Spellings containing “oe” were left as such, as letters with umlauts were used in the Italian version in places. The different spellings of the currency “lira” used in the annotations were standardized. All annotations were gendered according to the forename of the historical person. The values following the decimal point in monetary amounts (storage fees) had either not been entered or were not uniform, so they were standardized for the Findbuch. Passages in the individual annotations and other statements that either contained omissions or were illegible were furnished with square brackets.

Editing the digitized material

In order to check names (umlauts) which had evidently either been spelled incorrectly or at least questionably in the Italian original, files were obtained and reviewed on spec for dubious entries (Austrian State Archives/Archives of the Republic: files of the Financial Directorate for Vienna, Lower Austria and Burgenland) and, following consultation of the Fund’s database and the Findbuch database, dates of birth were determined and added to the record in square brackets as a “possible date of birth”. The anti-Semitic additions to some forenames (“Israel” and “Sarah”) were ignored.

Inaccurate place and country names were corrected without comment. The country names of the places of dispatch and destination were supplemented where possible. It must be noted that the country names used were those that were in use prior to the German occupation/ the “Anschluss” of Austria to Germany and after World War II was over; i.e. that when the removals were originally listed (1943/1944), a number of places of dispatch and target destinations were located on German Reich territory.

Due to the translation, the standardized annotations were also amended: “subject” became “citizen”, “Germanic” became “German”, “wares” and “holdings” became “removal goods”. Furthermore, gender specific terminology was used. To enhance readability, standardized annotations were reworded to correspond linguistically to the individual annotations.

Finally, the information broken down into separate columns was summarized in the field “remarks” for the Findbuch.