

PROPERTY SEIZURE IN THE ADRIATIC COAST AREA OPERATIONS ZONE: UDINE, GORIZIA, TRIESTE, POLA (PULA), FIUME (RIJEKA) AND LUBIANA (LJUBLJANA)

1. Introduction

As with the provinces of Bolzano, Trento and Belluno - the area comprising the Prealpine Operations Zone (*Operationszone Alpenvorland*) - it was deemed appropriate to carry out a study on the provinces in the Adriatic Coast Area Operations Zone (*Adriatisches Küstenland*). The close attention that was paid to this area was justified by a series of reasons; in particular by:

- the size and importance of the Jewish Community in Trieste (the third biggest after Rome and Milan) and Fiume (the ninth biggest);
- the important role the Jews played in the economy and, more in general, in local society, especially in Trieste;
- the activity of the Port and Trieste shipping agents who were responsible for numerous assets belonging to Italian Jews and foreign emigrants, or those who intended to emigrate.

As is generally known, German military occupation began in Italy on 8 September 1943 and on 10 September Hitler issued a directive dividing the territory that had not yet been liberated by the Allies into "occupation zones" and "occupied territory"; there was a confidential addition to this ruling that sanctioned the creation of the two operations zones. Two supreme commissioners were nominated for the civil administration of these two zones and while they received their fundamental orders regarding the action from Hitler himself, they had the power to install and remove any office employees. In this zone it was the Gauleiter of Carinthia, Friedrich Reiner, who assumed the role of Supreme Commissioner and he exercised all civil power directly through his substitute Dr. Volsegger.

This research project was led by a scholar with a detailed knowledge of these issues and who has already published specific works on these subjects in the past. An overview of the archive sources that were consulted during this research project¹ and the simple exemplification of some of the

¹ a) ASTs, *Prefettura, Gabinetto*, bb. 362, 363, 367, 368, 371-391, 394, 399, 400, 403-411:37 dossiers containing hundreds of personal files in which a great deal of the documentation pertaining to the activity of property acquisition has been preserved (e.g. Studies on Jewish owners, director shareholders of companies and businesses, resignation of company directors; selling off of companies belonging to Jews; studies on real estate belonging to Jews; lists of Jewish citizens' belongings, etc.). Chronological details of reference of documentation: 1938-1944 Province in question: Trieste; *UTE*, bb. 55 including 846 personal dossiers of owners. These files reflect the extremely technical activity carried out on the census and evaluation of the property: The measures of sequestration, confiscation or later alienation are not included but only mentioned, and mostly only sporadically. There is a trace of "precautionary" sales to non Jewish citizens. Chronological details of documentation: 1939-1944. Provinces in question: Trieste, Gorizia, Pola, Fiume; *Famiglia Casa*, bb.4. This documentation was compiled by the accountant Oscar Casa who was acting as director of agricultural business belonging to Jews that had been sequestered by German authorities during occupation. Chronological details of documentation from 1943-1945 with documents from 1938 to 1957. Provinces in question: Trieste (residence of owners); Gorizia, Udine (location of businesses); *Court of Appeal, Trieste, Series Commission for the restitution of assets confiscated from Jews by German authorities during occupation*, bb. 327-334. This Commission was established with the aim of returning a lot of valuables that had been stolen from Triestine Jews, and that had been found in Austria after the war. The Commission had the objects exhibited in public in Trieste in 1958. The Commission then collected the motions for restitution and any documentation presented from the German occupational authorities, and then went on to adjudicate the objects where ownership had been proven. The objects were first kept in Trieste and then in Rome in the Ministry of Finance. Thanks to this documentation, these objects were then officially given to the Union of Italian Jewish Communities, and then given them to the Jewish Community of Trieste, where they are still to be found today: The acts prior to German occupation do not regard only valuables but also chattels, (bank deposits, coins, furnishings) and real estate belonging to the same owners. It includes decrees and sequestration records, inventories, estimates and reports on the administration of property that was sequestered. The other dossiers included 100 personal files of owners. Chronological details of documentation: 1957-1960 with documents from 1943. Province in question: Trieste; *Commissariato generale del Governo per il territorio di Trieste, Series Governo militare alleato del Territorio libero di Trieste "Office of the Controller, Property and claims"* bb.5 (bb.1.135-1.375). These acts basically document the activities carried out by the Allied Military Government to verify ownership rights, safekeeping and restitution of the assets stolen by the German authorities: valuables, furnishings and bank deposits. It also includes incomplete lists of the owners, objects and bank accounts. There are also historical summaries of what happened to these assets, drawn up by the Allied Military Government (dossier 136, fasc. 97). Chronological details of documentation from 1945-1962. Province in question: Trieste; *Commissariato generale del Governo per il territorio di Trieste*, b.37, fasc. 5-60/13. The acts show what action was taken by the Government General Commissioner for the safekeeping and eventual adjudication of the valuables stolen from Jews in Trieste where it had not been possible for the Commission

publications studied for this report suffices as confirmation of the importance the Jewish question had in this area.²

To ensure the study was even more complete and scientific, it was also deemed appropriate to include four other specific studies that were carried out in bank archives in Trieste: two in the archives of the Trieste Cassa di Risparmio and Medio Venezia spa (taken over by Istituto di Credito Fondiario delle Venezia) in Verona; and a further two, which yielded a considerable amount of information, in the historic archives of the UniCredito Italiano and of the Banca Commerciale Italiana in Milan.

In ruling No. 1 of 1 October 1943 Supreme Commissioner Rainer decreed that he was invested with the exclusive surveillance of all civil public powers for the Adriatic Coast Area Operations Zone, which was comprised of the provinces of Friuli, Gorizia, Trieste, Istria, Lubiana and Canaro (its name at that time), together with the territories in Sussak, Bucari, Ciabar, Castra and Veglia. It

established for this very purpose (cfr. *Fondo Corte d'Appello*) to ascertain ownership. Lists of the objects are also included. Chronological details of documentation: 1959-1962 Province in question: Trieste:

b) Archive of the Republic of Slovenia, *Travka Kevtura* (for the Assicurazioni generali, Ras and other documents). *Adria* (with is a very incomplete collection of the papers of the Commercial Company, created by the Germans).

c) State Archives of Zagabria. German documentation was found regarding the situation of Croatian Jews in 1942, crimes against the Jews, Italian documents by the Fiume Prefect Temistocle Testa on Jewish immigrants from Split, violence in Fiume and a quantification of the assets expropriated in Split and Sebenico. A report written by the Jewish Community of Zagabria in 1946 was found in the deposits of the Banks, including a general reference to the quantification of the assets the Germans stole.

d) Historijski Arhiv Rijeka, Riješka. *Prefektura 1924-1945*. Various dossiers were studied, including: 262-267 (e.g.: Defence of the Race, Jewish census 1938-1939, discriminatory cases); b. 344 (e.g. non Catholic religions, Jewish Community and Jewish Orthodox Union in Fiume; Jewish Community and Jewish Orthodox Union in Abbazia, etc.); b. 350 (Various publications including “*La difesa della stirpe*”); b. 676 (Confined politicians. Concentration camp internees); b. 693 (Administration of sequestered assets 1938-1944). The documents in the deposit make a global reconstruction of the history of the communities of Fiume, Abbazia and the province of Carnaro possible, with specific and detailed reference to the issue of the spoliation of Jewish assets. The same archives in Fiume also includes the remnants of banks that were operating in the city during the years of the Fascist and Nazi persecution of the local Jewish community. For example: the Banco di Roma, Fiume branch R 10 (dossier R 13 contains useful documentation regarding confiscation from 1943-1945); the Banca d'America e d'Italia, Agenzia di Abbazia A 1 (the file “Beni ebraici” [Jewish assets] has almost a hundred documents that cover the period from 24 November 1943 to 18 April 1945); the Cassa di Risparmio di Fiume F.

e) Dr avni Arhiv U Rijeci, *Ju – 6 Rijecka Prefektura*. The content of the 20 dossiers in the archives are fundamental for the overall reconstruction of what happened to the Jewish Community in Fiume from the end of the 1920s to 1945.

f) ASTrieste branches of the Cassa di Risparmio . *Segretariato generale*. 4 labels were identified but the relevant documentation could not be found. 10 dossiers “1948 Jews” files Af/9, Af/9/I°, Af/9/II° were found and studied, containing homogeneous material for the years from October 1943-1945 (corresponding to the creation of the Adriatic Coast Area). There is also incomplete material for the period 1942-1943 and for the period 1945-1954 (corresponding to the creation of the Allied Military Government). Other bits of material are present up to 1992.

g) AS Mediovenzie, Banca Spa di Verona, Archivio storico. This bank was contacted since it had inherited the archives of the Istituto di credito fondiario delle Venezia and to whom the Egeli had given the proxy foreseen in article 12 of rdl 9 February 1939, No. 126, for *Venezia Euganea* and the Provinces of Trieste, Pola and Fiume. Fondo Istituto di Credito Fondiario delle Venezia, Verona, Egeli: Dossiers 1 to 10 contain the directives and correspondence with Egeli, documents of analytical accounting for each asset that had been confiscated, files of assets confiscated from “enemies”, some of whom were definitely of Jewish origin, a few documents regarding the restitution of Jewish assets; dossier No. 1/3 contains various documentation with the Egeli; the dossier Fiume assets with individual cases of “enemies”, some of whom were definitely of Jewish origin (years 1942, 1943, 1944); dossier 34 with a *sottoscicolo* (insert) “Jewish Race” which includes the documents regarding the agreement of the alienation of real estate in favour of the Istituto di Credito Fondiario: Documents from 1938, 1939, drafted to identify Jewish real estate that exceeded the directives enforced.

h) ASUCI, *Filiali*, Trieste branch, *Ispettorato*, b.6 and various files; b.1 and various files.

i) Other contacts were made with the heads of the private archives of the company *Spedizioni “Francesco Parisi”*, the RAS historic archives, the Assicurazioni Generali, Trieste Chamber of Commerce, the Lloyd Navigation Company of Trieste and the Banca Commerciale Italiana. In some of these archives it was not possible to consult the acts: some of them were being reordered while documentation in some of the others had already been directly acquired by the Commission.

² 2 S. Bon, *Gli ebrei a Trieste, 1930-1945. Identità, persecuzione, risposte*, Istituto regionale per la storia del movimento di liberazione nel Friuli Venezia Giulia, Libreria Editrice Goriziana, Gorizia 2000; Id., *Fonti documentarie sul Litorale adriatico (1943-1945) conservate a Lubiana. Descrizione e ipotesi di ricerca*, in *Qualestoria. Bollettino dell'Istituto regionale per la storia del movimento di liberazione nel Friuli Venezia Giulia*, 23 (1995), n 1-2 pagg. 163-183. S.G. Migliorino, *Note sugli esiti dell'applicazione delle leggi razziali a Trieste (1938-1942)*, in A. Vinci (edited by), *Trieste in Guerra. Gli anni 1938-1943*, Istituto regionale per la storia del movimento di liberazione nel Friuli Venezia Giulia, Trieste 1992, pag. 302-314. A. Walzl, *Gli ebrei sotto la dominazione nazista. Carinzia, Slovenia, Friuli Venezia Giulia*, Istituto regionale per la storia del movimento di liberazione nel Friuli Venezia Giulia, Udine 1991.

should be pointed out that the study prevalently deals with what actually happened in certain provinces – more specifically Trieste and Fiume – also in relation to the documents that were consulted, and as a result there is less, if any, information regarding the other provinces of the area in question. The archive sources indicated and the bibliography in the footnotes can be used as reference for any further studies.

2. Jews on the Eve of Racial Laws

2.1. BASIC HISTORICAL REFERENCE

The roots of the Jewish Community in Trieste go back to the XIII century. Following the issue of the Edict of Tolerance by Maria Teresa, the Habsburg empress, the community gradually established itself and by the Eighteenth century their numbers had grown considerably as a result of the influx from Central and South-East Europe.

By the beginning of the Nineteenth century the Community was well integrated in the local society, with members participating in the politics (following the lines of irredentism and later Fascism, although there were also many intellectuals who were anti-Fascist from, for example the Voghera and Pincherle families), in the cultural life (Umberto Saba, Italo Svevo, and Giani Stuparich, to name only those from the literary world), and also in the economics (with considerable capital supporting the Assicurazioni Generali and the Riunione Adriatic di Sicurtà; but there were also a considerable number of industrial companies in the area, which were of importance both at home and abroad).

2.2. EMPLOYMENT AND SOCIAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE JEWISH POPULATION

An extremely long list with all the names of the Jews or those who were presumed to be such in all different sectors is of great interest³ (e.g.: Ministers of State; Senators; National Council of the Corporations; public offices; foreign consulates residing in Trieste; university; high schools; secondary schools; all kinds and levels of scholastic institutions; corporative orders and Fascist trade unions; insurance companies, in particular the Assicurazioni Generali and the RAS where the Jewish presence was at its highest; banks and credit institutes; ship companies; commercial and industrial limited companies; health institutes; physical and sports education societies; general warehouses in Trieste; professionals; artists; manufacturers of fabrics, haberdashery, etc.). The list in question is 92 pages long with a detailed list of the names of over 400 house owners. It should also be pointed out that the memorandum accompanying the lists is dated 7 June 1937. It specifies that: “I took into consideration the race and not the professed religion, also because there have been a great many conversions, at times disguised; for this reason there might also be the odd mistake regarding people who have recently been christened without anyone knowing; I intend to add – at a later date – the taxable income for each individual entry so that the list is as complete as possible: the number, social position, political position, economic and financial position [...]”. It was impossible to discover who the author of this memorandum was.

Complementary to this description was a list compiled by the Provincial Council of the Corporations of Trieste, of 172 businesses “that belong to Italian citizens of the Jewish race, included in the list of letter c) of rdl/126/1939 of 9 February”. The list did not include the Jewish businesses belonging to stock companies, joint stock companies and trades companies represented by the National Fascist Federation of Artisans.

³ a) ASTs, *Prefettura, Gabinetto*, bb. 363.

For Fiume there are also numerous lists that are all based on the list of 22 August 1938. This list was 405 pages long, not only naming the Jews in Fiume but also including their personal details as well as an accurate description of their finances. Further notes for each person indicate whether they possessed any real estate or not, commercial and/or industrial assets, and the state of their financial prosperity in general.

This initial bulky (and general) detailed study was followed by the drafting of lists that became increasingly detailed and specific, including information that was aimed at identifying the owners of Jewish businesses as well as the “type of occupation”, that is, the branch of activity their job was in. This could range from the retail trade of haberdashery, to business agencies, transport companies or handicrafts.

The list for those who were self-employed includes first name and surname, father’s name, mother’s name, date and place of birth, marital status, degree of relationship, citizenship, profession (for example, construction engineer, veterinary surgeon, surgeon, legal procurator, etc.), residence (i.e. address), as well as other various notes.

Another list identified those who were defined as people working in “economic activities”. In actual fact, these were business managers and industrialists (including managers of shipping lines, shipping companies, banks, wholesale trade, etc.). A later list identified the Jews working in public and parastatal organizations.

The final part of this socio-economic study was a list of the owners of buildings of “Jewish race affected by the measure.”

The result was therefore an overview that included the related activities, the exact number, a comparison with the general data of the city, divided up between public organisations, commercial activities, industrial activities, land and sea transport companies, insurance and credit, handicrafts, self-employed, as well as a specification of the roles of owners, managers and employees, within each activity.⁴

Similar (complex) lists were compiled for the town of Abbazia.

One of them classifies the owners of buildings, business and economic activities in general: residents in Abbazia with specific mention of their citizenship, their assets or the economic activities they carried out.⁵

After analysing the data from the census, the Town Council compiled extremely detailed handwritten descriptions, at times as much as ten or fifteen lines in length. The account of the situation of Jews holding public, political, administrative or trade-union positions and of those involved in commercial or industrial activities is followed by detailed figures.⁶

Similar detailed lists were compiled for the Jews in the municipality of Laurana. The *podestà* compiled a list of “the Jews in commercial and industrial activities”, including a table with the statistics that reflected the “proportional numeric situation regarding residential Jewish business people”. The branch of activity in question (commercial, industrial, professionals, without

⁴ All these lists and specific documents are in b. 680 of the aforementioned ASTs collection, *Prefettura, Gabinetto*.

⁵ *Ibid.*, b. 680.

⁶ *Ibid.*, b. 264, document from 26 September 1938.

profession) is followed by the “type”: hotels and guest houses, rooms let, clothing, fruit and vegetables, bric-a-brac, business salesmen, public businesses, garages, doctors, and the well-to-do.⁷

2.3. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE JEWISH PRESENCE ON LOCAL ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL LIFE

In Trieste in particular, it can be observed that the Jewish certainly played a considerable role in the city’s economic and financial life.

It is not possible to quantify (compared to the whole patrimony) the contribution Jewish capital played within the insurance companies, but as far as the Assicurazioni Generali was concerned it must have been considerable, also in view of the important financiers with Jewish origins at presidential and managerial levels. The Arnaldo Frigessi family arrived in Trieste from Hungary and were at the head of the RAS.

The Jewish presence also played a considerable role in both commercial (wholesale business, retail, street traders) and industrial activities. Some Jewish industrialists from Trieste opened factories not only in Trieste (for example the Stock distillery, and the Modiano cartography), but also in the surroundings (for example the cotton textile factory in Gorizia which belonged to the Brunner family, the Weissenfels steelworks in Tarvisio), or they bought agricultural businesses in the south of the Friuli regions or in the area around the Isonzo. This data is inferred indirectly, by evaluating the number of businesses affected by the racial laws; the number of the administrative committees that were already reshuffled in the Spring-Summer of 1938; the number of permanent workers dismissed following the enactment of the racial laws; the number of self-employed struck off the registers or no longer allowed to practise their profession after the introduction of the racial laws and who had already been listed, or rather had already been pilloried, in anti-Semitic local and national papers.

An evaluation of the true extent of the property belonging to Jewish citizens is made more difficult by the amount of partial official data that overlaps with anti-Semitic reports.

2.4. THE FIRST ANTI-JEWISH MEASURES

Although the actual racial laws of 17 November 1938 had not yet been enacted, the Jews were already affected by the various restrictive measures enforced in late 1938.⁸ At the beginning of the year the authorities were already paying close attention and particular sensitivity was growing regards any cultural events that were connected to Judaism. At the end of July 1938, an informer expressed himself very explicitly in a report on the Jewish question for the General Directorate for Demography and Race of the Ministry of the Interior. “The recent manifestations in the press and expressions from the high Authorities of the Regime have found considerable echo in all local milieu. There has been extensive agreement over the racial problem [...]”⁹

This was the climate in which a process of progressive racial discrimination, which was also to affect the economic sector, began. Jews were forbidden to open shops and public businesses, licenses could no longer be transferred. Of significance is also that Jews were forbidden to attend the stock exchange following the general measures from the relevant Ministries. The measure was considered “necessary as, when the European crisis had reached its peak, other symptoms that were

⁷ *Ibid.*, b. 264, document from 23 September 1938.

⁸ S. Bon, “*Gli ebrei a Trieste, 1930–1945. Identità, persecuzione, risposte*”, Istituto regionale per la storia del movimento di liberazione nel Friuli Venezia Giulia, Libreria Editrice Goriziana, Gorizia 2000, pag. 93 and 99.

⁹ ACS, MI, *Demorazza* b.13 fasc. 43.

anything but comforting were also observed". Once again, Trieste was in the forefront with this measure: Indeed, the "Agenzia economica finanziari" [Economic financial Agency] states that "as was already the case in Trieste, Jews are no longer allowed to enter the area reserved for the public in Italian stock exchanges, and a pass was created that was not issued to Jews".

Furthermore, countless companies reshuffled their managerial staff, above all in the most important positions; and many managers were relieved of their posts.

Following a meeting between the Prefect and director of the Fascist Confederation of the Industrialists and the delegate of the Presidency, Bruno Coceani, seven presidents of the Fascist Provincial Trade Unions of the Industry resigned together with fourteen members of the directors of the trade unions themselves.

The request for Aryanisation measures for delicate sectors such as banks actually came from Rome. Furthermore, the Head Office for Demography and Race paid close attention to all the activities within the most prestigious economic companies, hounded by anonymous letters that were pressing in this direction. Meanwhile, detailed lists of commercial businesses were still being compiled, including both the details of ownership and indicating the "race" for each one as well as the date of residence in Italy. Some businesses were liquidated while others underwent variations in their boards of directors, thus resulting in the resignation of members with Jewish origins or the appointment of new administrators. Prior to the enactment of the racial laws, 26 businesses changed their organisational structure.

In a letter dated 4 July 1939¹⁰ the Surveillance Commission for Jewish Businesses wrote to the Prefect that they had received 345 reports; of these 124 regarded businesses that had shut down, 15 were new openings of non Jewish businesses that had been taken over from Jewish businesses, 96 modifications of various kinds, 2 closures of businesses that had already taken over a Jewish business, and 10 donations, in accordance with article 55 of rdl 126/1939 of 9 February.

The most extensive and complex repercussions, which were probably also the most significant to affect the local economy, were to be found in the two insurance companies. This was due to the very importance of the institutions affected, to the influence they had on life in Trieste and to the considerable position they held worldwide. Under the headline "Purging the Insurance Companies" the newspaper "*Popolo di Trieste*" wrote on 9 September 1938: "the Assicurazioni and the RAS are notorious as two true Jewish citadels. This warning concerns them directly and utterly."

In a confidential letter sent from Rome on 22 September 1938 to the Secretary of the Inter-provincial Union of Trieste, the Fascist Confederation of Works and Banks and Insurance Companies, set out that a "statistical study regarding Jewish elements, employees of credit institutions, insurance companies and collection services" should be carried out. Meanwhile, any form of Jewish 'intrusion' in all fields of working activities was identified and filed.

It can therefore be said that prior to the enactment of the racial laws, research apparatus had already been created which led to the creation of archives, requests, and an extensive bureaucratic response. In other words, it was a real case of "Jew hunting", and what is more, one that was controlled and managed by the local authorities.

3. The "Racial Laws" from 1938-1943

¹⁰ ASTs, Prefettura, Gabinetto, b. 400.

There is no doubt it would be interesting to go into the nature of the racial persecution during this period, since it was particularly dramatic and complex, in view of the considerable numbers of the Jewish Community. In a newspaper article dated 12 November 1938 entitled "The racial laws in Trieste", the social-economic impact the anti-Semitic legislation had on the city can be clearly seen. "Of all the Italian cities with a strong Jewish nucleus, Trieste stands out both due to the number of Jews living there and due to the nature of their origins. It would therefore be premature to give a concise overview and a statistically accurate calculation of the changes that have occurred as a result of the new Fascist laws [...]. One measure that is apparently of importance is the ban on Jews employing Italian servants of the Aryan race [...]. Of much greater importance are the directives concerning building and land owners [...]. There is one building ownership/property that probably includes one of the most important areas of the city's building heritage [...] those who enjoy 'discrimination' will be able to carry on exercising their right as owners just like the other Italian citizens, while the other Jews are forced to reduce their property/ownership to respect the limits of the law [...]. In Trieste there are various limited property companies, most of which are in the hands of Jews [...]. Of particular interest for Trieste [...] the exclusion of Jews from the administration of private insurance companies [...] Today the private insurance companies are almost of a parastatal nature, so they therefore have to be treated by the same standard as similar institutions [...] Our insurance companies have already started to review the personnel on this basis before the present directives that have been issued by the Council of Ministries were made clear".

The impact of the racial measures was particularly serious in Trieste.¹¹ Owing to the specific history of the Central Adriatic, many Jews were affected by the retroactive measure that stripped them of their Italian citizenship if it had been acquired during the previous 20 years, thus creating cases of people who were stateless, without a fixed domicile, homeland or passport, and destined to lead an existence that would be barely tolerated by the authorities.

With the expulsion of Jewish managers, directors and employees from numerous offices, the stock exchange, many banks and the Cassa di Risparmio, there was a real earthquake in the financial world. One category the public paid particular attention to was that of the owners of Jewish buildings, the number of which, according to an estimate by the press, was just over 500. As far as the commercial and industrial businesses were concerned, it is known that, if Italian Jews, "owners or managers of any kind" had to report their business by 12 May 1939. Meanwhile various companies continued to be purged; in some cases this had already started as early as late 1938, and was then completed at the beginning of 1939.

The most apparent forms of intolerance, open prejudice or anti-Semitic hatred aside, the question of "Jewish businesses", their classification and transformation, (which also meant resignations of Boards of directors and their recomposition with "Aryan" members), was extremely complex and received a great deal of attention from the local authorities, owing not only to the multiple legal, economic, and legislative implications of the issue, but also to the inevitable repercussions it would have on the general economy of Trieste. In this regard, an undated and anonymous memorandum entitled "For the Aryanisation of Jewish businesses"¹² is both of interest and significance. The memorandum begins with the following words: "In two recent meetings, LL. EE. have recommended that the process for the Aryanisation of the businesses of Jews residing in Italy be accelerated. And since it can be supposed that such directives are to be carried out in all sectors, we believe it is opportune to specify certain points that need to be clarified by the authorities if this assimilation process is to be implemented". This is followed by eight very clearly written points concerning limited companies and single businesses, as can be seen from several passages. "Replacing the Jewish members of the companies' boards of directors with the same number of

¹¹ S. Bon, op. cit. pp. 127 e 599 (with a very extensive bibliography).

¹² ASTs, *Prefettura, Gabinetto* b. 363.

persons of the Aryan race, with sufficient financial means to partially absorb the shares of the Company that are already in the possession of Jews, we will achieve a useful and practical result of Aryanisation; however, as is particularly necessary in limited companies, the previous technical managers and owners of limited companies will be allowed to continue to offer their collaboration subordinately. Without this aforementioned subordinate collaboration of the Jewish owner or manager, the limited company would undoubtedly be restricted in its field of activity [...]. Summary: The capital of the Jews, under close technical control, in the service of the Nation [...]. The climate of our city must also be modified since, as a result of the news published in newspapers and the rumours in all fields, today, if a Jew acts undecisively, the Aryan does not act in the way we stated above, since he fears he will be accused of being a 'front man' acting to protect Jewish capital and businesses".

Regarding the issue of the Aryanisation of businesses, the legislative provisions of February 1939 led the Provincial Council of Corporations of Trieste to draft long lists of businesses in the province of Trieste that belonged to Italian citizens of the Jewish race. This also included the business number register, the business name, its legal form, headquarters, the possible branches and the partners or manager-owner. In almost a thousand files, each Jewish business was studied.¹³

As was the case throughout the country, the Jewish population in the area in question was affected by the measures that restricted ownership rights.¹⁴

Rdl 1728/1938 of 17 November included the "Provisions for the Defence of the Italian race", and in article 10 also stipulated a series of restrictions on the rights of Italian citizens defined as of the Jewish race. These included those regarding land ownership if the rateable value exceeded L. 5,000 and of urban buildings with a rateable value of more than L. 20,000.

For the implementation of article 10 of the aforementioned decree, the following rdl 126/1939 of 9 February dictated the norms for the integration of the law directives. These were diffused by means of circular No. 31 of 3 April 1939, from the Ministry of Finance, Head Office of the Registry Office and the Land Revenue Office to all the Land Revenue Offices and Local Finance Offices.

The service instructions identified those subject to the dispositions and the property rights subject to restriction; it also included a detailed definition of the tasks of the Land Revenue Offices regarding the property reports foreseen by the law.

The individuals who had to submit a report were Italian citizens of the Jewish race; on this point the legislator intervened more than once, from 1939 and 1944, with directives that broadened the number of subjects affected. In accordance with article 14 of rdl 1728/1938 of 17 November, 'discriminated' Jews were exempt from these provisions.

While waiting for the discrimination decree to be issued by the relevant authorities, these subjects also had to submit this report within the period foreseen; once 'discrimination' had been granted, the procedure would be interrupted.

Initially, stateless Jews were considered in the same way as foreign Jews and were therefore not subject to the restrictions regarding real estate and industrial activities foreseen by the law.

According to the circular No. 218, 21 October 1938 by the Ministry of Finance, the racial laws were not applicable to those who were originally foreigners and had been given citizenship after 1

¹³ *Ibid.*, b. 400.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, UTE, Decreti immobiliari di proprietari di razza ebraica (1939-1944), Inventario 1998 (edited by Mariacarla Triadan).

January 1919 but who had lost it *ope legis* with the enactment of article 23 of rdl 1728/1938 of 17 November, and thus became stateless. It was only in those cases where Italian citizenship had been annulled and the person had thus become stateless after 11 February 1939 that the stateless individuals were subject to racial laws regarding any property they had possessed at that date, since legally, they had still been Italians at that time. However, the following circular No. 117, 22 May 1940 from the Ministry of Finance clarified that the dispositions restricting real estate ownership were also to be applied to stateless residents in the Kingdom on 11 February 1939, even if they had been expelled at a later date, and to anyone who had been stripped of their Italian citizenship after 11 February 1939; it also stated that the cases of the stateless, which had already been shelved, were immediately to be studied once more.

Finally, in accordance with dlgs 2/1944 of 4 January 1944, issued to the offices with circular No. 30 of 8 March 1944, the directives regarding property restrictions were extended to foreigners of the Jewish race, even if they were not residents in Italy or 'discriminated' Jews. This new provision regulated the total confiscation of any kind of assets throughout the State territory, if it belonged to individuals of the Jewish race, whether foreigners or Italian, discriminated or not.

The impact of this measure meant that all the cases that had remained open in expectation of the discrimination decree or because of disputes regarding the quota allowed were finally implemented; all the reports on real estate, including the cases where the assets were still within the limits that had been previously allowed, prepared the ground for total confiscation in favour of the State and the alienation of this property through the EGELI (the Organisation for the Management and Liquidation of Property).

Regarding the contents of the cases in the archives, these begin with a report on the real estate rights pertinent to the date 11 February 1939 that had to be presented by the holder of the rights or his representative (in particular in the case of minors or those who were incapacitated) in the District Office of Direct Taxes of the province where the person had their fiscal residence no later than 12 May 1939; for any assets purchased after that date, the report had to be presented within 90 days of the purchase. Once the tax offices had registered the reports, they were sent to the relevant Land Revenue Assessment office; this meant that the Trieste Land Revenue Assessment office received all the reports that had been presented at the Offices of Direct Tax in Fiume, Gorizia, Monfalcone, Pola and Trieste. The Land Revenue Assessment offices also received extracts from reports regarding property situated in their territory but which had been reported elsewhere.

The task of the Land Revenue Assessment Office consisted mainly in the verification and calculation of the overall amount of the estimates and the assessable income regarding the real estate that had been reported; they then had to divide land and buildings into an "allowed quota" and "excess quota" if the assessable income exceeded the legal limits. Once the office had assessed the quotas, if they did not exceed the limits, the results were sent to the Local Revenue Office; otherwise they went to the EGELI.

Department III of the Land Revenue Assessment Office was responsible for assessing all real estate reports. A "listing" was opened for each request for assessment and this was separate from the archives classification of the "Department III, class/group E". These "listings" were kept alphabetically in a specific section of the archives according to the names of the owners; a single dossier was kept for each owner and included any "listings" concerning him. Once the "listing" had been opened, it was registered on specific forms that had been devised for the formation of a special Cadastre in order of arrival.

The cases for the “listings” of Department III, class E were opened and then updated from the financial period 1938-39 until 1943-44 (in only one case did it continue until 1944-45); each file was assigned a progressive number within the financial year and also included a number of the file Mod. 1 – a and 1 – b which was registered, as has already been stated, in the name of the real estate rights owner.

The files of the “listings” usually included:

- 1) a conformed copy of one or more reports that had been presented in the Local Office of Direct Taxes with the relative data for the land and buildings by the person reporting the property;
- 2) a summary of the real estate property, compiled by the Land Revenue Assessment office, on the basis of any cadastral data they had, to document the value and assessment of the land and rateable value of the buildings;
- 3) the results of the analysis of the reports were sent to: The Local Revenue Office, if the size of the property falls within the legal limits; otherwise to the EGELI, should the real estate property exceed the aforementioned limits;
- 4) possible appeal by the owner against the division between “quota permitted” and “excess quota” and correspondence with the EGELI on the subject;
- 5) plans of the buildings, generally included when the property was to be divided as it had an excess quota.
- 6) copies of notary sales or deeds of gift transferring real estate to non-Jewish citizens;
- 7) prefectural decrees of discrimination or recognition of statelessness after being stripped of the Italian citizenship.

The rearrangement of the archives of Department III – Class E, in the Trieste State Archives in June 1997 - where it had been sent by the Trieste Land Revenue Assessment office—basically involved the general identification of the “listings”. This then made it possible to reconstruct 846 individual files (bb. 4-45).

While making the inventory, the alphabetical order of the files was therefore adopted, following the same principle that the statute itself had imposed when the archive series was created. There is very little documentation regarding the internal activities of the Office (bb. 1-3) and what there is, is incomplete, especially in view of the fact that they had to deal with these exceptional dispositions within such a brief time. The summary forms of the “listings”, the index cards and files of the land and real estate owners (bb. 46-55) are no longer of any use when searching for the individual files which were catalogued alphabetically; due to their intrinsic conciseness they are, however, a source for a quantitative study on Jewish property and the strategies undertaken to avoid racial measures, such as the sale of their property and application for a “discrimination” or status as a “stateless” Jew.

The inventory includes a reference index of the surnames of those holders who do not appear in the alphabetic sequence of the files.

Due to its very nature, the documentation from the Local Revenue Assessment Office does not offer any elements attesting that confiscation or preventive sequestration actually took place. Any study with these aims should also take into consideration the documentation preserved in the archives of the Local Revenue Office, the Land Registry office, the EGELI and the banks responsible for managing and liquidating the assets delegated to the latter.

In record No. 01870 of 4 May 1940 by the EGELI, received by the Trieste UTE and sent to the Land Cadastral Offices of Venezia Giulia, the Verona branch of the Istituto di Credito Fondiario

delle Venezia was named as EGELI delegate for the provinces of Trieste, Pola and Fiume while the Gorizia branch of the bank Cassa di Risparmio di Gorizia was named for the province of Gorizia.

It was possible to consult some of the collections of documentation from the Istituto di Credito Fondario delle Venezie, mentioned previously in note 1. This is now located in the historic archives of the Mediovenezie spa di Verona. The Institute itself, which was founded as a non-profit making institution following the rdl 2443/1919 of 30 November and the result of a consortium between the di Risparmio delle Venezie and the Istituto Federale delle Casse di Risparmio delle Venezie, was part of the former. Other participating members were the Cassa di Risparmio di Bolzano, the Cassa di Risparmio di Fiume, the Cassa di Risparmio di Gorizia, the Cassa di Risparmio di Padova e Rovigo, the Cassa di Risparmio di Pola, the Cassa di Risparmio di Trento e Rovereto, the Cassa di Risparmio della Marca Trevigiana, the Cassa di Risparmio di Trieste, the Cassa di Risparmio di Udine, the Cassa di Risparmio di Venezia, the Cassa di Risparmio di Verona, Vicenza, Belluno, the Cassa di Risparmio di Zara.

In 1939 an agreement was drawn up, in which the EGELI entrusted the Institute with the proxy foreseen in art. 12 of rdl 126/1939 of 9 February for the management and sale of Jewish property, and delegated to the Institute in the area of Venezia Euganea and the provinces of Trieste, Pola and Fiume.

Prior to the signing of this agreement, there was a preliminary problem which involved the department head offices of Fiume, Gorizia, Trieste, Udine, Trento, Bolzano and the Inspector's Office of Pola, concerning the agreement to sell mortgaged real estate on behalf of the Institute. In actual fact, it was forbidden to alienate real estate without the permission of the Land Institute, and since some Jews who had mortgages had given their permission for the sale, an official clearance was required for the sale of mortgaged assets, which was to be requested by borrowers for counter-guaranteed loans, "as long as the contracting parties are of the Aryan race."¹⁵

As early as August 1938, the Fascist Union of Tradesmen in the province of Verona wrote to the Head Office of the Land Bank "so that the mediation is not recognised, or that the intermediary action of those elements that do not have a regular PS license and the card of this trade union organisation is not recognised."¹⁶

An analytical evaluation that is based on the commercial value for the 1940s (second half) – 1943 (first half) concerns "enemy property" according to war-time legislation. It includes the assets sequestered, registered in 3,400 index cards numbered progressively; not all of these are still to be found in the archive.

Of all the index cards, 107 names are those of people who are definitely of Jewish origin, but are defined as foreigners, Greek, English, French, American, Yugoslav or Brazilian. The places where property was sequestered are Trieste, Grado, Fiume, Venice, Tarcento (Udine), Verona, Belluno, Treviso and Istria.

Based on this incomplete list, the total amount of the property that was sequestered certainly comes to a hundred of millions.¹⁷

As far as the property of "enemy nations" is concerned - more precisely, those indicated for the province of Carnaro - the sequestration of the property of Carolina Adolfo (née Keppelmann) is

¹⁵ AS Mediovenezie, *Egeli*, b. 134.

¹⁶ *Ibidem*.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, b. 1.

significant. This consisted of two villas, land, vineyards, woods, in Abbazia; the inventory of the furnishings alone (including household linen) came to the sum of L. 181,616 in April 1942.¹⁸

There was only one case of sequestration which was ordered by the Trieste Prefect Tullio Tamburini but then annulled, since the owner, Rachele Grunfeld (née Levi) "belonged to the Municipality of Zagabria."¹⁹

The letter sent on 12 August 1942 to 17 Jewish owners with property in Trieste is interesting. It states that "the Organisation will pay the tax from the 1st January of the following year to the year the property is assigned. For the whole previous year, the former owner remains the registered occupant of the property."²⁰

For a better understanding of how the Jewish real estate that had been "transferred to the EGELI" was managed and exploited, a look at the list of 10 Jewish owners in Trieste is sufficient. It includes the sums they each owed to the administrators and the Istituto di Credito Fondiario delle Venezia, with the amount of annual rents, percentages and totals. The payments to the Land Bank are around L. 2,000 while those to the administrators exceeded this figure each year.²¹

Other partial calculations concern the "quotas in cash to pay the real estate price decreed by the Directorate on April 1942" for 6 other Jewish owners. On 30 April 1942 the interest alone came to L. 2,593.95.²²

In Spring 1942 10 special bearer certificates were issued concerning Jewish property: "Consignment of the securities and payment of the cash quotas [...] depend on the balancing of the accounts at the time the respective properties are appropriated, should the Corporation be creditor." The cases for a further 18 names of Jews are dated October 1942.²³

A list of the files in either office or private documents compiled by the secretary of the EGELI real estate management sales Department, Verona, 10 February 1941 was also found. The data included in the following order is: No. of the order, date of the file, surname, name, father's name, domicile or residence of the parties, summary of the property or assets deducible from the contract, their location, price or value, contract duration, registration date, No. of sheet, registration tax, notes, where registration took place (e.g. Trieste, Venice, Vicenza, Udine, Istria).²⁴

There is also a general index for the accounting department. For the period January – June 1942 totals were indicated for the income statements and asset accounts.²⁵

There are also tables compiled by the Istituto di Credito Fondiario delle Venezie summarising the management of "enemy nationals property" for the years 1941, 1942 and 1943, covering the provinces of Belluno, Treviso, Verona, Fiume, Padua - Rovigo, Padua, Vicenza Udine, Pola, Venice and Trieste. The net payment for 1941 for the entry "rents" came to L. 246,332.29. For 1942 it was L. 356,181.13 while for the financial period 1943 it came to L. 512,323.61.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, b. "Beni Fiume"

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, b. 5, "Dossier February" - April 1942.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, b. 2, Letter dd. Trieste, 31 July 1942.

²¹ *Ibid.*, b. 2, Undated list but presumably referring to 1942.

²² *Ibid.*, b. 2.

²³ *Ibid.*, b. 2, sfasc. Sequestration of real estate belonging to enemy subjects, letter from The EGELI to the *all'Istituto di Credito Fondiario delle Venezie*, Trieste Office, Via Fontanone 1 and p.c. to the Verona Head Office. Correspondence from 1 October 1942 to 14 May 1943 with the office in Trieste.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, b. 2.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, b. 8.

The "Payments liquidated for the financial periods 1940, 1941, 1942, 1943" came to a total of L. 1,619,000.²⁶

Some documentation was found for the RSI period. A letter with the subject "Jewish property" was sent from San Pellegrino Terme, the EGELI Head Office, to the Head Office of the Istituto di Credito Fondiario delle Venezie in Verona and to the Office in Trieste on 17 December 1943. It solicited that those in question, who had left caution money to guarantee the purchase of ex-Jewish assets, should be asked once more if they intended to withdraw their request. If that was the case, they were asked to give the name of the individual depositor who wished to have the deposit repaid.²⁷

On 10 February 1944 the Sparkasse der Provinz Bozen informed the director of the Istituto di Credito Fondiario delle Venezie – Verona that there appeared to be no need for the intervention of this Bank for the administration of Jewish property that had been confiscated by the State in the province of Bolzano." The letter was signed 'Der kommissarische Leiter (P. Mayr).'²⁸

The same happened in Venezia Giulia and Verona, where the Istituto di Credito Fondiario delle Venezie wrote to the EGELI, San Pellegrino Terme on 5 August 1944 that: "as you already know, administration of the property in question (Jewish enemy nationals property) in Venezia Giulia must be transferred to the government of the Reich, whose fiduciaries must be given the property that has already been sequestered, together with any credit balances and the revenue of the present sequestratory management with justification." Signed by the director general, it concluded by raising the delicate question of possible liability.²⁹

4. The Seizures of Jewish property during German occupation (September 1943 – April 1945)

The German plan for the occupation of Italy, which had already been carefully drawn up months before the Armistice between the Italian Government and the Allies, was immediately put into effect on 8 September 1943. As already stated in the introduction, the plan entailed the creation of two "Operation Zones" that were practically cut off from the rest of Italy: the Adriatic Coast and the Prealpine Zone including Alto Adige, the Trento region and the Veneto province of Belluno. A constant characteristic of the German policy in Venezia Giulia immediately became clear and it was followed with both precision and method, starting with the very choice of the name - the decision to reinstate the Austrian term "Adriatic Coast" thus assumed an emblematic value in the attempt to separate Trieste from Italy and to include the city within Germany, as an opening onto the Adriatic for the future "Greater Germany".

With this underlying objective, a ruling of 15 October 1943 granted the Supreme Commissioner Reiner, exclusive control over all civilian authorities.

A consequence of this was the almost complete inapplicability of the directives issued by the organs of the RSI. Notwithstanding repeated intervention by the Head of the Province, in which he pointed out the inconsistency between the Italian and German laws, and the refusal of the Banca d'Italia to comply with the Supreme Commissioner's instructions ("until the ruling is amended, so that it is no longer applicable in the territory of the [...] aforesaid decree (dlg 2/1944) and ordering that all assets of Jewish individuals in the aforementioned territory must be paid into your account"), on 24 November 1944 the German authorities, the *Deutsche Berater*, informed the Head of the Province of Trieste that "in response to multiple questions put to him whether dlgs of 4 January 1944 regarding the treatment to be applied to Jewish property, shall also be applied in the Operations

²⁶ *Ibid.*, b. 3. fasc. "Studi preparatori per la convenzione". [Preparatory studies for the agreement].

²⁷ *Ibid.*, b. 2.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, b. 3.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, b. 6.

Zone of the “Adriatic Coast”, the Supreme Commissioner has declared that this decree has no force in law and that the only instructions and orders to be followed are those issued on the subject by the Supreme Commissioner himself.”

The same situation was to be found in Fiume. The attitude regarding "Jewish property" by the Fascist Prefect Temistocle Testa, which had already been extremely clearly and violently expressed in September 1938, tried to reaffirm itself after 8 September 1943.

However, in the north-east area the situation was exacerbated and made more complicated – as has already been said – by the creation of the *Adriatisches Küstenland*. The Quarnero province in Fiume, under the authority of a *Deutsche Berater* who was subordinate to the orders of the Supreme Commissioner Rainer, a resident in Trieste, was also part of this Operations Zone.

The functionaries of the RSI who applied the legislative decree of January 1944 soon began to take steps anyway.

For example, documentation of correspondence has emerged between the Florence Local Revenue Office and Fiume, dated 28 January 1944, to ascertain what real estate property belonging to Italian citizens of the “Jewish race” was “still available”, (consisting in buildings and apartments owned in Florence and Fiume), and reconstructing the cases that had been compiled by the Florence Land Revenue Assessment office on 30 June 1940. Furthermore, the Head of Fiume, L. Matarazzi, asked the Prefect for “a list of the Jews in this province where it is possible to give the undersigned the possibility to comply with the rulings of the above-mentioned legislative decree.”³⁰

However, as early as the beginning of April 1944, the Prefect Alessandro Spalatin (lawyer, counsellor of the section of the Court of Appeal in Fiume from 29 October 1943 to April 1945 and the successor to Senator Riccardo Gigante, who was appointed by the German authorities on 21 September 1943), informed the Presidency of the Ministry of Councils of the RSI that “the Supreme Commissioner for the Adriatic Coast Operations Zone had advoked the management of Jewish property to himself and has established his own offices for that very purpose”. The Prefect then declared he was “unable to supply the information requested” regarding real estate and chattels, shares, securities, and debts owed to ‘persons of the Jewish race.’”³¹

The Prefect gave similar replies to injunctions from the Istituto di Credito Fondiario delle Venezie, the EGELI Property management and sales department, and telegrams from Minister Buffarini in May-June 1944.³² However, the Prefect of Fiume was informed of the bureaucratic procedures started by the public limited companies, in the RSI “to comply with the reports of shares registered to persons of the Jewish race” with the accuracy required, with the request for “a copy of the persons of the Jewish race living in this province.”

However, the conflict of interests between functionaries of the RSI, who wanted to apply the legislative decree of January 1944, and the occupying Germans became clear from the very start.

For this reason, one German document of real importance is that dated 27 April 1944 and written on paper with the letter heading of the *Deutsche Berater*, the German consultant. It is the reply to the memorandum “Jewish and enemy property. Provisions for sequestration” from the Prefect. The document (translated from German) stated: “I would like to inform you that we have introduced directives regarding the property of Jews and enemies in the Operations Zone and that any issues

³⁰ Dr avni Arhiv u Rijeci, (Fiume) *Ju-6 Rijeka Prefektura*, b.680.

³¹ *Ibid.*, b.680.

³² *Ibidem*.

relating to the matter will be dealt with directly by the Offices of the German Police". The document is signed on behalf of Dr. Rassmann and comes from the office –Department II/dr: R/Ha/1729.³³

The direct style, the certainty with which the German functionary informed the Prefect of his rights is very clear, putting the latter in a subordinate position. Of equal interest are the minutes of the Prefect from June 1944 and January 1945, addressed "To the German consultant" with the object "Management of Jewish property."³⁴ There are only two documents but once again they clearly show the imbalance in the relationships between the ally – occupier and functionaries of the RSI, even at higher levels. German laws were applied in the Adriatic Coast and obviously also in the province of Quarnaro.

In May 1944 the Banco di Napoli turned to the Prefect once again, asking him to mediate in favour of Italian interests and to try to exert pressure on Supreme Commissioner Rainer. The issue in question was a legal dispute between businesses, (one owned by a Jew), which had not yet been resolved "although the verbal statement was followed up with a detailed report to the Sussak *SS Polizei und SD*". The document ended: "In accordance with dlg No. 2 of 4 January, Jewish liability in the territory of the Italian Social Republic is assumed by the EGELI, the responsibility of which, however, is not extended to the Adriatic Coast Operations Zone, where the German Supreme Commissioner has reserved the right to administer the property of individuals belonging to the Jewish race, and ordered all activities to be stopped immediately without taking any measures regarding liability".

When the German occupier-ally established the *Adriatisches Küstenland*, not only was the persecution aimed at the total annihilation of any Jews living in the provinces of Trieste, Udine, Gorizia, Lubiana, Pola and Fiume, but it also foresaw the spoliation of their property. This represented a source of considerable revenue for the occupier.

Although it is extremely difficult to ascertain the true extent of the spoliation of Jewish property in the Adriatic Coast, there are still sufficient elements to attempt an initial reconstruction of the mechanism that came into play. At first, property seizures were carried out by the police and SS with the automatic confiscation of Jewish property; but later it revolved around the creation of the Financial Department of the Supreme Commissioner for the Adriatic Coast. These two stages were basically linked together because they implied the immediate passage from the act of "illegal" violence to the bureaucratized "legitimate" stage of stealing. Indeed, all the property that was in the hands of the Germans appear to have been confiscated by the Financial Department which was at the head of various other sectors (Assistance Command, various military commands, and public institutions, even those outside the Adriatic Coast). The mechanism also involved the request for the immediate use of furniture, books, and objects of the most different kinds, all taken from Jews.

The Financial Department could not act independently but was directly dependent on the Supreme Commissioner, who had to ratify each official measure since he had the ultimate control over all civilian authorities.

This apparatus was also enforced for the more immediate and 'mechanical' implementation of private despoilment.

However, there were also other means and ways, which were just as direct and effective - pressure on the banks in Trieste and on the administration of Punto franco (forcing the surrender of Jewish

³³ *Ibidem.*

³⁴ *Ibidem.*

property in storage, some left by foreign Jews passing through the Port of Trieste, some belonging to local Jews who hoped to find safety by emigrating).

Above all, however, it was private individuals who were responsible for the pillaging. This was in the form of a *Möbel Aktion*, “Operation Furniture”, as the clearance of Jewish homes by a business called Kühne und Nagel was described in their correspondence with the Supreme Commissioner and in a letter that repeats the instructions given by the first Councillor of the Fischbach government. In 1946 the Jewish Community in Trieste received 131 reports of apartments that had been plundered, with a total damage estimated at L. 186,656,388.

Other real estate was confiscated, for example the considerable property of the former chief executive of the RAS, Arnaldo Frigessi from Rattalma. This also worried figures in the Italian world of politics (the director of the Provincial Union of Credit Institutions and Insurance Companies in Trieste, G. Ruiz, the Prefect Bruno Coceani) because of the definite economic loss this meant for Italy.

Other cases were the Villa Triestina estate in the Cervignano countryside belonging to Alfredo Brunner; the Saciletto estate belonging to Salem – D’Angeri, the ex-podestà of Trieste; the Panigai estate belonging to the Brunner – Segrè family; the Castello di Spessa estate belonging to Count Salvatore Segrè Sartorio; the Terranova d’Isonzo and Marcorina di Filippo Brunner estates; as can be seen from documentation by Oscar Casa, administrator of property in the province of Gorizia and Udine, the Ruda estate belonging to Giacomo Jacchia was sequestered for the personal use of the Supreme Commissioner Rainer himself.

Amongst the assets, worthy of mention is the collection of books in the Synagogue, which practically became a warehouse, and the general assets in the building of the Risiera of San Sabba. The most interesting volumes, works of art plundered from private collections (for example, the Stendhal library belonging to Gino Pincherle; the art collections belonging to the Pollitzer family, to Aldo Mayer and to Count Salvatore Segrè Sartorio) were sent: to the *Gaumuseum* or the *Dorotheum* in Carinthia, the Klagenfurth auction house and even to Germany, (as can also be seen from documentation found in the Bonn State Archives).³⁵

The aforementioned are only examples while further information can be found in specific publications.

4.1. FURNISHINGS SEQUESTERED FROM THE GENERAL WAREHOUSES AND HELD IN PRIVATE SHIPPING WAREHOUSES AND IN THE MINOR CUSTOMS WAREHOUSES

This episode is illustrated in a “brief report of the work carried out” by Mr. Bruno de Steinkühl who was acting as sequestrator³⁶ and in another report by the self-same.³⁷ The furniture, which belonged to Italian and foreign Jews who had emigrated, had been sequestered in accordance with the decree by the Trieste Prefect on 11 May 1943. In one of his reports, the sequestrator divided the furniture stored in the general warehouses into seven categories. Should the assets be released, the sequestrator indicated that the shippers would be able to ask the Law Court for authorisation to put the items up for auction for the lots of furniture whose owners had probably disappeared during the War. He expressed himself as follows on the matter: “in view of the fact that there are various unscrupulous individuals who are waiting anxiously for these auctions to be held, I fear that there

³⁵ S. Bon, op. cit., pp. 333 and segg.

³⁶ Ufficio centrale beni archivistici, *Allied Control Commission Italy 1943-1947* Property Control, Jewish Control Property in Trieste (Italy 1943 August 1944); July, Aug. 1945, fasc.250.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, Report on activities of the undersigned Bruno De Steinkuehl as sequestrator of Jewish property (household goods) held in the Free Port of Trieste.

may be illicit dealings for the lots that have been released from sequestration.” He added that “the crates contain various objects such as furniture for dining rooms, bedrooms, living rooms, personal garments, medical instruments, silverware, crystal-ware, glass, paintings, rugs, woollen blankets [...] in short, a great variety of objects which, nowadays in particular, are much sought after and of great use”. The following statement is even more interesting: “regarding the state of the goods, after a cursory appraisal I noted that many of the lots indicated by the General Warehouses in the docket that is an integral part of the decree of sequestration do not correspond and are, at times, much smaller. Evidently objects have been removed illegally which therefore makes my task as sequestrator even more difficult and my responsibility even greater since I will be forced to examine and list all the objects deposited in the various crates one by one”.

A letter dated February 1944 in which the sequestrator sent the Prefectural Offices of Trieste his bill of costs, including a description of the costs born, gives a general idea of the material that was sequestered: “for having examined 479 cases with 667 crates of furniture sequestered and for having examined 1,914 files regarding 7,910 different packages lying unclaimed in the Punto Franco warehouses [...]”. The most decisive fact was that in the letter dated 12 January 1944 to the various shipping offices, the Supreme Commissioner informed them that he had ordered “for reasons of security due to the war, the removal of the goods from Punto Franco [...]. The furniture belonging to Jews has been confiscated and will be disposed of according to the directives of the High Commissioner. The property belonging to people who are not of the Jewish race will continue to be held by the High Commissioner. Thus, upon consignment to the organs appointed by the High Commissioner, the current administration is no longer responsible.

With the memorandum dated 25 August from the Supreme Commissioner to the Prefectural Offices of Trieste with the following text, there is a further development:

“Sequestered furniture ex. d.p. NO. 1100/12409

Although the mandate as sequestrator has already expired with your record No. 1137/2585 of last February, with the present I would like to give you the following information regarding the situation of the furniture in question so as to guarantee good administration:

Following the orders from the German Authorities given to the shippers and General Warehouses holding the lots, the following lots were shipped:

Crates (containers) 669 and individual packages 8,212 for a total gross weight of Kg. 2,996,974 - packages 8,881 in total of the aforementioned quantity have been sent:

to Berlin:

crates (containers) 449 and individual packages 989 for a total gross weight of Kg. 1.630.998

to various cities in Carinthia:

crates (containers) 170 and individual packages 7,719 for a total gross weight of Kg. 1.365.976

Regarding the costs, altogether the following sums were paid:

L. 18,047,404.05

RM 9,868,40

\$ 38,00

Throughout the whole of July 1944 some crates, also including 26 packages for an overall value of L. 324,493,40 remained there because it was likely or had been proven that they belonged to members of the Aryan race.

This is the information you required and if you need further clarification on the remaining goods I will not hesitate to inform you.”

5. Bank involvement in the spoliation procedures

5.1. TRIESTE BRANCH OF THE CREDITO ITALIANO

On 11 October 1943 the Trieste branch of the Credito Italiano received an order from the *Befehlshaber der Sipo und SD* (Head of the Sipo-SD),³⁸ sent on the seventh of that month, for the "immediate" sequestration of all amounts, that is, bank accounts and savings deposits belonging to Jews; by the 12th of the very same month a list of the securities and of the persons affected by that disposition was to be sent, as was a list of any amounts transferred to Aryans from 15 July onwards in the same year. In a confidential letter sent from Rome on 11 September 1943 to the secretary of the Inter-provincial Union of Trieste, the Fascist Confederation of Works and Banks and Insurance Companies, commented that a "statistical study regarding Jewish elements, employees of banks, insurance companies and collection services" should be carried out. These directives were subject of a meeting that took place on 12 October between the Director of the Inter-provincial Union of Credit Institutions and Insurance companies, accompanied by an official of the Trieste Cassa di Risparmio and the Head of the German Police, Konle. During the meeting it was made clear in what difficulties the banks found themselves in, owing to the lack of time they were being given to compile the list requested and also since there was no list to find out the names of the various Jews. Regarding the latter, Commissioner Konle agreed that the banks could turn to the Registry Office for that information; meanwhile, the freezing of any securities "clearly known" to belong to Jews was to be regarded as executive. The same Inter-provincial Union of Credit Institutions and Insurance Companies was also to compile a list of Jewish names and to determine the territorial boundaries within which the request would have been considered valid; the inventory the banks were to compile was a list of the names of Italian Jews, separated from those "belonging to other nations, including those which were non-belligerent."³⁹

One fundamental aspect that certainly worried the banks in Trieste was the fact that the directives laid down by the German authorities were in clear contradiction to those of the Italian legislation regarding bank secrecy, as the Milan Credit Head Office was to make clear a few days later in their reply.⁴⁰ During the meeting on 12 October the proposal was put to Commissioner Konle that the order from the Head of Police should be issued by the Inspectorate of the Banca d'Italia, which supervised all bank institutes. Once again on 12 October, there was another meeting in the head office of the Inter-provincial Union of Banks and Insurance Companies. All bank managers from the banks in Trieste took part and during the meeting it was underlined how important it was that the aforementioned directives should come through the Inspectorate, "thus giving the provisions a semblance of legality".⁴¹ Furthermore, the expediency of proceeding with caution was emphasised, meaning that only the lots belonging to Jews who had been proven such were to be sequestered, and that careful studies were to be carried out before giving the German authorities the lists they had requested.

³⁸ ASUCI, *Filiali, Trieste, Ispettorato*, b. 6, fasc. 8 "Nominativi di razza ebraica (Corrispondenza)", s.fasc. "Corrispondenza con la Direzione Centrale", letter from the Trieste Head Office of the Credito Italiano to the Head Office of the Credito Italiano, 13 October 1943 enclosing letter from the *Befehlshaber der Sipo und SD* to the Credito Italiano, 7 October 1943 with the relative translation. The signature at the bottom of the document is illegible, Liliana Picciotto Fargion names Ernst Weimann as the *Befehlshaber der Sipo und SD* of the Adriatic Coast, and he stayed in Trieste from October 1943 to May 1944, when he was replaced by *SS-Sturmbannführer* Dietrich Allers. L. Picciotto Fargion, *Il libro della memoria. Gli ebrei deportati dall'Italia (1943-1945)*, Mursia, Milan 1991, p. 800. See also: ASUCI, *Filiali, Trieste, Ispettorato*, b. 6, fasc. 8 "Nominativi di razza ebraica (Corrispondenza)", s.fasc. "Corrispondenza con la Direzione Centrale", letter from the Trieste branch of the Credito Italiano to the branch of the Credito Italiano, 19 October 1943, enclosing minutes of the meeting.

³⁹ ASUCI, *Filiali, Trieste, Ispettorato*, b. 6, fasc. 8 "Nominativi di razza ebraica (Corrispondenza)", s.fasc. "Corrispondenza con la Direzione centrale", letter from the Trieste branch of the Credito Italiano to the branch of the Credito Italiano, 13 October 1943 enclosing letter from the *Befehlshaber der Sipo und SD* to the Credito Italiano, 7 October 1943 with relative translation. A further summary of this meeting also states that even the SS had an "apparently quite bulky" list"; *ibid.*, fasc. "Der Befehlshaber der Sipo u. d. SD in Triest", handwritten without letter heading, 12 October 1943.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, Head Office of the Credito Italiano to the Trieste branch of the Credito Italiano, 21 October 1943.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, letter from the Trieste branch of the Credito Italiano to the Head Office, 19 October 1943, enclosing minutes of meeting.

As far as can be deduced from the minutes of the meeting, according to the declarations made by Commissioner Konle, the criteria to be applied regarding “race” were to be those in force in Germany - the banks then stressed their lack of jurisdiction in “assuming essentials that differed from those which [would have been] supplied by the Registry Office to establish who belonged to the Jewish race.”⁴²

On the 19th of the same month, the director of the Inter-provincial Union of Credit Institutions wrote to the head of Police for the Prealpine Operations Zone that the banks had already frozen the assets held in the name of those who “definitely belonged to the Jewish race”. However, the Inspectorate of Credit of the Banca d'Italia never received the letter that had been requested. The importance that this injunction for sequestration should come from this institute was repeated once more: “as we have already said, this would relieve the banks of any possible responsibility since current Italian legislation states that only an order from the Magistracy may impose the sequestration of property, no matter where it is deposited; if there is no such order from the Magistracy, a disposition from the government is required and this is why we ask that the order of the Supreme Commissioner replaces the disposition from the government.”⁴³

Acting as the local representative of the Inspectorate for the Defence of Savings and the Provision of Credit, on 19 November 1943 the manager of the Trieste branch of the Bankitalia received the order from the Head of the Police of the Adriatic Coast to ensure that all the credit institutions in Trieste and their relative branches complied with the dispositions that had been issued; the list regarding the securities deposited that belonged to Jews was to be sent by the 24th of that month.⁴⁴

On 15 November 1943, acting as agent for the *Befehlshaber der Sipo-Sd*, a member of the German police went to the Fiume branch of the Credito Italiano, asking for a written declaration of the accounts belonging to Samuele Herskovits; when the employees refused, the person in question insisted and demonstrated that other banks had also supplied similar documentation. In the end, the employees of the Credito Italiano gave in to the request.⁴⁵

When the Head Office of the Credito Italiano heard of what had happened in Fiume, they immediately sent the Trieste branch instructions on what to do; the latter then sent this memorandum to the other branches: should it be impossible to refuse requests that violated the principles sanctioned by the law regarding the protection of bank confidentiality, the information requested was to be sent to the local branch of the Issuing bank, i.e. the Banca d'Italia, which was the local representative for the Inspectorate for the Defence of Savings and the Provision of Credit and which would then act as considered most opportune; there was also to be opposition in the case of any requests presented regarding the forced opening of safe-deposit boxes and removal of their contents, or the confiscation of bank account balances or stocks. If it was impossible to refuse, a notary was to be present and a record was to be kept.⁴⁶

⁴² *Ibidem*.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, letter from the director of the Inter-provincial Union of credit institutions and insurance companies to the head of Police for the Adriatic Coast Operations Zone, 19 October 1943.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, letter from the manager of the Trieste branch of the Banca d'Italia to the Trieste branch of the Credito Italiano, 19 November 1943.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, s.fasc. “Corrispondenza ns Fiume”, letter from the Fiume branch of the Credito Italiano to the branch in Trieste, 15 November 1943. See also: *ibid.*, s.fasc. “Corrispondenza con la Direzione Centrale”, letter from the Trieste branch of the Credito Italiano to the Head Office of the Credito Italiano, 19 November 1943.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, s.fasc. “Corrispondenza con la Direzione Centrale”, letter from the Head Office of the Credito Italiano to the Trieste branch of the Credito Italiano, 30 November 1943; s.fasc. “Corrispondenza ns Udine”, Trieste branch of the Credito Italiano to the management of the Udine branch, 14 December 1943 enclosing memorandum; *ibid.*, s.fasc. “Corrispondenza ns Pola”, Trieste branch of the Credito Italiano to the management of the Pola branch, 14 December 1943 enclosing memo; s.fasc. “Corrispondenza ns Fiume”, Trieste branch of the Credito Italiano to the management of the Fiume branch, 14 December 1943.

In Fiume the order to freeze and sequester all amounts belonging to Jews - bank account books, securities, deposits, safe-deposit boxes – is dated 24 November 1943 – which is when the Fiume branch of the Banca d'Italia informed all the central credit institutions and the Banca d'America e Banca d'Italia in Abbazia of the directives the *Befehlshaber der Sipo-Sd* had issued on the subject. On the same day, in the afternoon, a meeting took place in the Fiume branch of the Banca d'Italia, with representatives from the various credit institutions affected by the directives; during the meeting Kleemann, a member of the *Sicherheitspolizei, SS-Sturmscharführer*, ordered that all assets and deposits belonging to Jews should be frozen immediately. The banks also had to send a list of the details of the deposits in question; the lists were not to include any information regarding “Jewish means”, but had to include all the persons considered to be “of the Jewish race”, regardless of their professed religion and nationality. On 3 December the Fiume branch of the Credit sent the Banca d'Italia the list requested by registered hand delivery but pointed out how the lack of precise indications regarding the native names of the Jews meant there were both omissions and mistakes in the data.⁴⁷ Regarding the bearer passbooks, one can read: We would like to inform you that we also have ‘bearer’ books with names that might lead one to believe they belong to Jews; in this regard, we would like to point out that the laws regulating this kind of books, which are printed on the books themselves, stipulate that the banker considers the person who presents the book, if ‘bearer’, as the legitimate owner of the aforesaid.”⁴⁸

On 24 December the Trieste branch of the Credito Italiano reminded the Head Office of the Fiume branch that the data concerning Jewish assets was only to be given “once communication [had been received]” from the authorities requesting the lists with the Jewish names; the aforementioned Head Office would then ensure this information be supplied by the Banca d'Italia. In actual fact, the Bankitalia never received a list of the names of Jews whose assets were to be frozen, neither from the Prefectural offices nor the German authorities; when questioned, the German Headquarters replied that should any doubts arise, it would be possible to consult their list. It appears that all the local banks in Fiume finally supplied lists and went on to freeze the assets “as they saw fit.”⁴⁹

The injunction to sequester⁵⁰ all Jewish securities – whether savings deposits, bank accounts, stocks, deposits – was sent on 17 November 1943 by the offices of the head of the Sipo-SD of the Adriatic Coast Operations Zone directly to the Credito Italiano in Udine, without any memorandum from the Banca d'Italia and without supplying any lists of Jewish names. Within one week, the Credito Italiano was to send a detailed list of Jewish property in the bank through the Banca d'Italia; the German Head also added imperiously, that he would hold the company directly responsible for the accuracy and thoroughness of the information being supplied. In response to a request for instructions on this matter, the Trieste branch authorised the branch in Friuli to comply with these directives, urging them, however, to submit the lists to the local Banca d'Italia.⁵¹

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, s.fasc. “Corrispondenza ns Fiume”, letter from the branch in Fiume to the Trieste branch of the Credito Italiano, 3 December 1943 with various attachments, including minutes of the meeting held on 24 November at the local branch of the Banca d'Italia; the circular from the Fiume branch of the Banca d'Italia to the various credit institutions in Fiume and the Banca d'America e d'Italia in Abbazia, 24 November 1943; letter from the Fiume branch of the Credito Italiano to the branch of Banca d'Italia, 3 December 1943 with a List of the names believed to be Jewish with securities deposited in the Credito Italiano branch of Fiume and the Agenzia di Sussak.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, letter from the branch in Fiume of the Credito Italiano to the branch of the Banca d'Italia, 3 December 1943 with List of names believed to be Jewish with securities deposited in the Credito Italiano Fiume branch and in the Agenzia di Sussak.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, letter from the branch in Fiume of the Credito Italiano to the Trieste branch of the Credito Italiano, 10 January 1944.

⁵⁰ The expression generally used by the German authorities for Jewish property is *beschlagnahmen*, that is *sequesterate*; which is how it was usually translated, even if it was actually a matter of true confiscation measures. A more appropriate translation of the verb *confiscate* is *einziehen*. The use of this term was probably related to German legislation.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, s.fasc. “Corrispondenza ns Udine”, letter from the Udine branch of the Credito Italiano to the Trieste branch of the Credito Italiano, 26 November 1943 enclosing a copy of the letter from the office of the *Befehlshaber der Sipo-Sd* to the Udine branch of the Credito Italiano, 17 November 1943; letter from the Trieste branch of the Credito Italiano to the Udine branch, 29 November 1943.

In response to further questions, the Superior Commander of the SS and the Police in the Adriatic Coast Operations Zone⁵² gave the Banca d'Italia further directives regarding the freezing of Jewish property. The sums of money deposited belonging to Jews could be used for the payment of recurring costs such as taxes or such like to public bodies; prior to the presentation of the appropriate documentation and with the German institutes' agreement, withdrawals could be made from frozen bank accounts to pay the wages of unskilled labourers, workmen and employees. The bank was also responsible for the collection of promissory notes in circulation and was to accredit the proceeds to the frozen bank account. If the bank intended to recover any credit claimed from the security holders it was, as a rule, permitted to sell those securities. Following an agreement between Germany, Hungary and Switzerland, Hungarian and Swiss Jews were not subject to this freezing of assets.⁵³

In early February 1944 the *Abteilung Finanzen*, the Financial Department of the Supreme Commissioner, asked the credit institutions to open a bank account in the name of the *Vermögensverwaltung des Obersten Kommissars*, [Property Administration of the Supreme Commissioner]; some of the banks in question were then asked to transfer money to this account, using the amounts in deposits and bank accounts in the names of Italian Jewish citizens. There is not enough information to be able to state exactly which and how many credit institutions were involved.

Regarding this episode, the manager of the Trieste branch of the Banca d'Italia sent a letter to the Financial Department of the Supreme Commissioner, highlighting the contradiction that had arisen between the abovementioned directives and the laws promulgated by the RSI government, more specifically dlgs 2/1944 of 4 January. He underlined, however, that various banks would not have "legally" been able to comply with the instructions issued until, "finally", a ruling was issued to sanction the inapplicability of the RSI decree and the validity of the directives issued by order of the Supreme Commissioner.⁵⁴

The issue seems to have been resolved in March that year when the manager of the Banca d'Italia sent the local bank managers the memorandum from the organs of the Supreme Commissioner regarding the inapplicability in loco of dlgs 2/1944 of 4 January; according to what the representative of the Banca d'Italia was told by German officials, this oral communication was

⁵² This position was held by the *SS-Gruppenführer und Generalleutnant* Odilo Globocnik, who had previously been jointly responsible as Commander of the SS and the Polish district police of Lublino, for the construction of the concentration camps of Belzec, Sobibore and Treblinka and for carrying out *Aktion Reinhard*, during which between 1,500 and 1,945,000 Jews were killed. Apart from coordinating the deportation of the Polish ghettos, one of his tasks was also the confiscation of Jewish property which he then had to send to Germany. This theft yielded no less than 178,045,960,590 Reichsmark; L. Picciotto Fargion, *Per ignota destinazione. Gli ebrei sotto il nazismo*, Arnoldo Mondadori Editore, Milan 1994, p. 113; pp.123-124; R. Rurup (edited by), *Topographie des Terrors. Gestapo, SS und Reichssicherheitshauptamt auf dem "Prinz-Albrecht-Gelände". Eine Dokumentation*, Verlag Willmuth Arenhövel, Berlin 1987; Italian translation, *Topografia del Terrore. Gestapo, SS e Reichssicherheitshauptamt sull'area "Prinz Albrecht" a Berlino. Una documentazione*, Verlag Willmuth Arenhövel, Berlin 1994 (quote taken from), p. 166.

⁵³ ASUCI, *Filiali, Trieste, Ispettorato*, b. 6, fasc. 8 "Nominativi di razza ebraica (Corrispondenza)", s.fasc. "Corrispondenza con la Direzione Centrale", letter from the Trieste branch of the Credito Italiano to the Central Head Office of the Credito Italiano, 18 January 1944 enclosing copy of letter from the Trieste branch of the Banca d'Italia to the Trieste branch of the Credito Italiano, 15 January 1944.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, letter from the Trieste branch of the Credito Italiano to the Central Head Office of Milan, 16 February 1944 enclosing letter from the Trieste branch of the Banca d'Italia to the Financial Department of the Supreme Commissioner for the Adriatic Coast Operations Zone and the Superior Commander of the SS and the Police, 11 February 1944. According to the papers found in the historic archives of the Banca Commerciale Italiana it appears that on 18 March 1944, the director of the Financial Department of the Supreme Commissioner Zoyer, sent the Trieste Banca d'Italia a note in which he stressed that the directives regarding Jewish property were to be issued exclusively by the Supreme Commissioner, more precisely by the Supreme Commander of the SS and Police; ASBCI, *SFI*, ex 64c, cart. 5 "Confisca attività di nominativi di razza ebraica. Corrispondenza con le Filiali", fasc. 9 "Trieste. Corrispondenza 1943- 1945", letter from the Trieste branch of the Banca Commerciale Italiana to the Central Head Office, Italian branch service, Secretariat, 17 March 1944 with various attachments including a copy of the letter from the director of the Financial Department of the Supreme Commissioner for the Adriatic Coast Operations Zone, Dr. Zoyer to the Trieste branch of the Banca d'Italia, 8 March 1944 and the relative translation.

followed up with written confirmation by the occupying authorities.⁵⁵ In actual fact, the latter arrived much later, that is in March 1945. Only one year earlier the organs of the Supreme Commissioner had informed the manager of the local branch of the Banca d'Italia that he did not consider written confirmation necessary since the laws of the Salò government, promulgated later on 1 October, were to be "ignored" and only applied following the orders of the Supreme Commissioner. The manager of the Banca d'Italia turned to the Prefect for instructions on this issue, and not even he was able to help.⁵⁶

On 25 February a meeting took place between the deputy manager of the Trieste branch of the Credito Italiano and the Trieste Prefect, Bruno Coceani. The bank continued to receive orders from the German authorities to credit Jewish assets to a bank account in the name of the German authorities since, until then, both the bank in question and other credit institutions had refused to comply. During the discussion with the manager of the Banca d'Italia on the subject, Coceani also believed that since the Duce had issued a decree on the subject, the German authorities should have legalised their demand with a ruling; he himself had "raised the question in writing after another request for the transfer of real estate property". Meanwhile, however, the Credit was not to make the payments requested.⁵⁷

When the Prefect of Fiume was asked whether dlq 4 January 1944 was also inapplicable in the province of Quarnaro, the Fiume branch of the Credit replied that on the basis of the directives issued by the Supreme Commissioner, as far as the seven cases of sequestered Jewish property were concerned, the credit institutions were to deal directly with the Financial Department of the Supreme Commissioner. The problem regarding how long these assets were to remain frozen was to be resolved through the Banca d'Italia. The latter was also responsible for directives and issues of a general nature. On 12 April the Prefectural Offices of Fiume confirmed that all the measures regarding Jewish property for that province came under the jurisdiction of the appropriate offices created by the Supreme Commissioner.⁵⁸

By 18 April 1944 the German authorities had still not promulgated any ruling regarding Jewish assets - until that moment directives for the banks had been issued through the Banca d'Italia. Regarding the procedures to be followed regarding the liquidation of guaranteed capital bonds probably that very month, the Banca d'Italia sent the Trieste branch of the Credit, indications as to how to proceed: requests were to be sent to the Financial Division of the Supreme Commissioner via the Banca d'Italia, if the property in question had not yet been sequestered; otherwise, the request was to be sent straight to the German office. Four sums had already been paid into the bank account *Oberkasse des Obersten Kommissars in der Operationszone Alpenvorland* at the Trieste branch of the Banca Commerciale Italiana, and it was into this account that most of the deposits belonging to Jews from Trieste were paid. These four payments were of considerable size and came from Jewish assets, including the ordinary bank account balance of L. 31,954 in the name of Aldo Silvio Majer.⁵⁹

⁵⁵ ASUCI, *Filiali, Trieste, Ispettorato*, b. 6, fasc. 8 "Nominativi di razza ebraica (Corrispondenza)", s.fasc. "Corrispondenza con la Direzione centrale", letter from the Trieste branch of the Credito Italiano to the Central Head Office of Milan, 9 March 1944.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, letter from the Trieste branch of the Credito Italiano to the Central Head Office of Milan, 13 March 1944; letter from the Trieste branch to the Central Head Office of the Credito Italiano, 15 March 1945 enclosing copy of the letter from the Trieste branch of the Banca d'Italia to the Trieste branch of the Credito Italiano, 9 March 1945 and translation of German text.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, minutes of a meeting between the deputy manager of the Trieste branch of the Credit and the Prefect Bruno Coceani, 25 February 1944.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, letter from the Trieste branch of the Credito Italiano to the Central Head Office of Milan, 28 April 1944; enclosing copy of letter from the Fiume branch of the Credito Italiano to the Head of the Province of Fiume, 28 March 1944, copy of the letter from the Prefect of Fiume to the Fiume branch of the Credito Italiano, 12 April 1944.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, letter from the Fiume branch of the Credito Italiano to the Central Head Office in Milan, 18 April 1944.

On 18 July 1944 the *Deutsche Berater für die Provinz Quarnero in Fiume, Abteilung Finanzen, Referat Vermögensverwertung* (German consultant for the Province of Quarnero, Financial Department, Liquidation Office) requested a list of the securities belonging to Jews, having previously at some unspecified date, taken over the task of liquidating Jewish property; this had previously been carried out by the Office of the *SS Polizeidienststelle di Sussak*, (Sussak District Police).⁶⁰ As far as the deposits belonging to Jews were concerned, bank account and savings books balances all went in to the bank account that had been opened in the *Trieste Commerciale Italiana*, but some sums were also paid into the *Reichskreditkasse* in the *Bankitalia* into the bank account *Der Deutsche Berater für die Provinz Quarnero in Fiume, Abteilung Finanzen, Referat Vermögensverwertung* when the German authorities so desired.⁶¹

The *Deutscher Berater* of the Province of Udine ordered the transfer of the assets belonging to Giuseppe Pincherle into the bank account called *Vermögensverwaltung des Finanzberaters* [Property Administration of the Financial Councillor] in the *Cassa di Risparmio, Gorizia*; the balances of the existing bank accounts in the *Pola* branch of the *Credito Italiano* were paid into the *Commerciale Italiana* account in *Trieste*.⁶²

From August 1944 onwards, the German authorities began asking the *Fiume* branch of the *Credito Italiano* that the bearer passbooks, even if they were not presented, should also be paid into the bank accounts in the names of the German authorities; the bank repeatedly pointed out that the passbook had to be presented if the directives were to be complied with. On 18 August the Financial Department of the Supreme Commissioner sent a memorandum saying that amongst the property confiscated from Mr. Mittersdorfer, there had also been a bearer savings passbook with the heading *Work*, the balance of which came to L. 1,540,25, which was to be paid into the *Oberkasse* account in the *Commerciale Italiana*; the *Credito Italiano* then replied that, if this operation was to be in accordance with the law, the security had to be presented. The savings book balance had, in the meantime, grown to L. 1,550, and was paid into the *Oberkasse* of the *Banca Commerciale Italiana* on 30 March 1945.⁶³

In May 1944 the delegate Inspector of the *Fiume* branch of the *Banca d'Italia* informed the *Credito Italiano* branch in the city in question, of the order issued by the Superior Commander of the *SS* and *Police*, to immediately freeze the bank deposits of Leonardo, Elisa, Giacomo Bonomi and Anna Luft, the latter's wife, in accordance with the directive (*Beschlagnahme-bescheid*) issued by the *Trieste Sipo-SD* on 24 June 1944, which was to be considered "legal" and "non impugnable"- all the assets and real estate belonging to the Bonomi family were seized. Amongst the assets in the bank, there was

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, s.fasc. "Corrispondenza ns Fiume", letter from the *Fiume* branch of the *Credito Italiano* to the *Trieste* Head Office, 20 July 1944 enclosing copy of letter from the German councillor for the Province of Quarnero, Financial Department, Liquidation office to the *Credito Italiano* in *Fiume*, 18 July 1944 and relative translation.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, letter from the *Fiume* branch of the *Credito Italiano* to the *Trieste* branch, 22 July 1944; *Der Deutsche Berater für die Provinz Quarnero in Fiume, Abteilung Finanzen, Referat Vermögensverwertung* to the *Credito Italiano*, 3 August 1944 and relative translation; letter from the *Fiume* branch of the *Credito Italiano* to the *Trieste* branch, 10 August 1944 enclosing directives for sequestration sent by the Financial Department of the Supreme Commissioner for the *Adriatic Coast Operations Zone* to the *Credito Italiano*, 9 August 1944 and relative translation; sequestration order from the Financial Department of the Supreme Commissioner of the *Adriatic Coast Operations Zone* to the *Credito Italiano*, 10 August 1944 and relative translation.

⁶² *Ibid.*, s.fasc. "Corrispondenza ns Udine", letter from the *Udine* branch of the *Credito Italiano* to the *Trieste* branch, 20 July 1944 enclosing copy of letter from the German councillor for the Province of *Friuli* to the *Udine* branch of the *Credito Italiano*, 15 July 1944 and relative translation. *ibid.*, s.fasc. "Corrispondenza ns Pola", letter from the *Pola* branch of the *Credito Italiano* to the *Trieste* branch of the *Credito Italiano*, 19 August 1944.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, s.fasc. "Corrispondenza ns Fiume", letter from the *Fiume* branch of the *Credito Italiano* to the *Trieste* branch, 14 August 1944 enclosing copy of the letter from the Financial Department of the Supreme Commissioner for the *Prealpine Operations Zone* to the *Credito Italiano* in *Fiume*, 9 August 1944 and relative translation; letter from the *Fiume* branch of the *Credito Italiano* to the Financial Department of the Supreme Commissioner; 18 August 1944; *ibid.*, fasc. 2 "Danni derivanti all'Istituto in periodo di emergenza", letter from the *Trieste* branch of the *Credito Italiano* to the General Head Office, 21 June 1945 with attachment the *Credito Italiano* branch in *Fiume*, List of payments or delivery of securities we had to carry out to the German authorities on assets belonging to third parties, including those belonging to Jews.

also a bearer savings passbook. the German authorities ordered that the balance should be paid into the *Reichskreditkasse* in the account *Deutscher Berater, Abteilung Finanzen Referati Vermögensverwertung* (German Councillor, Financial Department, Property Evaluation Section).⁶⁴ When asked for instructions on the matter, the Trieste branch wrote: "It is obvious that also in the current exceptional circumstances, we cannot simply pay the balances of the bearer savings passbooks without presenting the relative securities since we also do not know if these books have been transferred to Aryans who were not suspected at the time. Please, therefore, decline from making the payments requested and ask the applicant to present the savings passbook, or if appropriate, ask them to obtain a valid decree of amortization."⁶⁵ It appears that the Central Head Office of the *Commerciale Italiana* gave its branches similar instructions.⁶⁶

Remaining on the same subject, when replying to a question from their branch in Fiume, the Trieste branch of the *Credito Italiano* informed them that the personal savings accounts could also be closed without the passbooks being presented; what was required however, was that the following wording be added: "Closed with presentation of book = Case 'E'". The same procedure was to be followed for current accounts.⁶⁷

When the Udine branch received the request from the German councillor for the Province of Friuli to close several bearer savings accounts without presentation of the relative passbooks, it refused to comply and signed a declaration to the *Deutscher Berater* stating as much on 18 August. Several days later, the German councillor had a letter sent to the bank in which one can read that in accordance with the order by the Supreme Commissioner, the accounts in question were to be closed since the books were either already in the hands of the bearers, or had been destroyed. The sums were paid into an account in the *Credito Italiano* in Udine, in the name of the German councillor. Furthermore, various other banks in the city had already taken the necessary measures.⁶⁸

In August 1944, once again through the *Bankitalia*, the Supreme Commissioner sent the credit institutions instructions regarding the procedures to be followed for the opening of safe-deposit boxes belonging to Jews - this was to be carried out not only in the presence of a representative of the Financial Department of the Supreme Commissioner, but also two representatives from the bank holding the boxes. The presence of a notary was not requested by the German authorities and was left to the bank's discretion; the costs for this were to be born by the latter if necessary. The costs for forcing open the boxes if necessary were to be deducted from the property seized and the contents were to be consigned to the representative of the Supreme Commissioner after compiling a record in duplicate.⁶⁹

The position of the *Banca d'Italia* regarding the issue of Jewish property was clarified in a memorandum sent to the Trieste Credit in September 1944: while lamenting the fact that the

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, fasc. 8 "Nominativi di razza ebraica (Corrispondenza)", sfasc. "Corrispondenza ns Fiume", copy of the letter from the Fiume branch of the *Credito Italiano* to the Trieste branch, 22 May 1944; copy of the letter from the German Councillor for the Province of Quarnero, Financial Department, Property Liquidation Office to the Fiume branch of the *Credito Italiano*, 16 August 1944 and relative translation; memorandum from the Trieste branch of the *Credito Italiano*, 2 September 1944. In one letter from the Fiume branch of the *Credito Italiano* to the Trieste branch, dated July 1944, a payment of L. 26,295 to the "*Reichskasse* in the local *Bankitalia*" is mentioned; *ibid.*, letter from the Fiume branch of the *Credito Italiano* to the Trieste branch of the *Credito Italiano*, 22 July 1944.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, memorandum from the Trieste branch to the Fiume branch of the *Credito Italiano*, 28 September 1944.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, letter from the Fiume branch of the *Credito Italiano* to the Trieste branch, 11 August and 6 October 1944; reply from the Trieste branch of the *Credito Italiano* to the Head Office of the Fiume branch, 21 August and 9 October 1944.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, s.fasc. "Corrispondenza ns Udine", letter from the Udine branch of the *Credito Italiano* to the Trieste branch of the *Credito Italiano*, 18 August 1944 with copy of memorandum from the *Credito Italiano* in Udine to the German Councillor for the province of Friuli, 18 August 1944; letter from the Udine branch of the *Credito Italiano* to the Trieste branch, 31 August 1944 with translation of the German part of the text.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, s.fasc. "Ebrei. Corrispondenza con la Banca d'Italia", letter from the manager of the Trieste branch of the *Banca d'Italia* to the Trieste branch of the *Credito Italiano*, 31 August 1944.

aforementioned bank frequently turned to them for clarifications, instructions and directives as to how Jewish property should be dealt with, the manager of the Trieste branch of the Banca d'Italia underlined that the latter's role was solely that of intermediary, communicating the directives promulgated by the occupying forces upon the orders of the German bodies. The Banca d'Italia was therefore "in no way directly involved" in the cases regarding Jewish property.⁷⁰

Between mid February and March 1945 the manager of the Trieste branch of the Banca d'Italia informed the representative of the various banks that, regarding the orders issued by the German authorities on the confiscation of Jewish property, the director of the Inspectorate for the Defence of Savings and the Provision of Credit had issued directives that contradicted the effective directives of the RSI, and to abstain from meeting requests that "they [...] did not consider to have been made correctly."⁷¹ Once the Supreme Commissioner was informed of the memorandum the Inspectorate had sent, the German authorities sent a written reply in which they underlined their authority in the Adriatic Coast Operations Zone for the monetary and banking system, including the surveillance of banks and credit institutions. Italian laws and rulings were only considered valid if they had been authorised and dlg 2/1944 of 4 January regarding Jewish property was therefore invalid in that territory.⁷²

In July 1946 the manager of the Trieste branch of the Banca d'Italia sent all the central credit institutions a circular asking for information on behalf of the Financial Department of the Allied Military Government regarding the number of safe-deposit boxes that had been forced open, and how much this operation had cost. When it was discovered that the local banks had debited the abovementioned sums to the individual owners of the safe-deposit boxes, the Financial Department began to look into the matter, basically in an attempt to find a solution which was in the interests of both the box owners and the credit institutions.⁷³ It is not known if and how an agreement was reached or whether a solution to the problem was actually found; we do know that the sum of the costs born for the forced opening of 14 safe-deposit boxes came to L. 8.435,60⁷⁴ and that the bank recovered this amount "either by debiting the sum from the bank account of the person in question or through a payment [to the Credito Italiano, *editor's notes*] by the Commerciale Italiana from amounts that previously belonged to Jews and had been transferred to the aforementioned *Oberkasse* on their behalf."⁷⁵

Thanks to the documentation from immediately after the war, it is possible to quantify the securities belonging to Jews that were sequestered and confiscated by the German authorities in both the Trieste branch of the Credit and its other branches. As far as the situation that developed in Udine is concerned, the bank account balances and the amounts from books came to a total of L. 34,084 as well as a further L. 3,492 from two banker's drafts sequestered from Silvio Jannowitz, which were then either paid into the "E.T. account" or were directly paid back to "E.T. representatives". Some

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, b. 5, fasc. "Posizioni nominativo di razza ebraica", the manager of the Banca d'Italia of Trieste to the Credito Italiano, 14 September 1944.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, b. 6, fasc. 8 "Nominativi di razza ebraica (Corrispondenza)", s.fasc. "Corrispondenza con la Direzione centrale", letter from the Trieste branch of the Credito Italiano to the Central Head Office, 15 March 1945 including a copy of the letter from the manager of the Trieste branch of the Banca d'Italia to the Trieste branch of the Credito Italiano, 9 March 1945 with translation of the German part of the text. From the documentation regarding the Trieste branch of the Commerciale Italiana it appears that the circular from the Bank Inspectorate had probably been sent around 10 February 1945; ASBCI, *SFI*, ex 64c, cart. 5 "Confisca attività di nominativi di razza ebraica. Corrispondenza con le Filiali", fasc. 9 "Trieste. Corrispondenza 1943-1945", letter from the Trieste branch of the Banca Commerciale Italiana to the Central Head Office, Italian branch service, secretariat, 12 February 1945.

⁷² ASUCI, *Filiali, Trieste, Ispettorato*, b. 6, fasc. 8 "Nominativi di razza ebraica (Corrispondenza)", s.fasc. "Corrispondenza con la Direzione centrale", letter from the Trieste branch of the Credito Italiano to the Central Head Office, 15 March 1945 including copy of the letter from the manager of the Trieste branch of the Banca d'Italia to the Trieste branch of the Credito Italiano, 9 March 1945 with translation of the German part of the text.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, fasc. 2 "Danni derivanti all'Istituto in periodo di emergenza", circular from the manager of the Trieste branch of the Banca d'Italia to the Trieste branches, 31 July 1946.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, letter from the Trieste branch of the Credito Italiano to the Trieste branch of the Banca d'Italia, 6 August 1946.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, letter from the Trieste branch of the Credito Italiano to the Trieste branch of the Banca d'Italia, 17 August 1946.

securities were transferred to the Cassa di Risparmio in Gorizia while others were withdrawn, it would appear in person, “by E.T.”⁷⁶

The Pola branch of the Credito Italiano recorded four assets belonging to Jews that had been sequestered and then confiscated, more specifically, transaction accounts and savings books for a total of L. 316,188; these sums had been paid into the *Oberkasse* bank account at the Commerciale Italiana.⁷⁷

Between April 1944 and April 1945 the Trieste branch of the Credito Italiano paid the Banca Commerciale Italiana a total of L. 1,604.071. Following the orders from the *Deutscher Berater* for the province of Gorizia, 20 shares in the Assicurazioni Generali belonging to Umberto Donati were returned to the Cassa di Risparmio in Gorizia.⁷⁸

In Fiume it was the Financial Department of the German Councillor for the province of Quarnaro in particular who was responsible for the sequestration of Jewish assets and furthermore, from July 1944 onwards, the sums were paid into the *Reichskreditkasse*; the only sum - L. 1,550 - to be paid into the Commerciale Italiana account was that of the bearer savings passbook registered as “Work”, while the contents of a safe-deposit box with 450,000 Russian roubles were taken by the *Obersturmführer* Börner.⁷⁹

5.2. THE CASSA DI RISPARMIO IN TRIESTE

One of the first things the German occupation German troops put into effect was the sequestration of all Jewish assets, in the form of accounts, saving deposits and valuables, in the Cassa di Risparmio in Trieste (and, with “immediate effect”, its branches). The document is dated 7 October 1943.

The order of the Head of the Police and SS, Commissioner Konle, was filed by the bank in Trieste on 11 October at 9 in the morning. They then ordered that the docket of the amounts in question and of the “persons in question” should be presented no later than 12 October. Finally, they asked the bank to indicate any amounts that had been transferred from “Jews to Aryans” from 15 July onwards, i.e. in the period that roughly corresponds to the fall of Mussolini and the establishment of the Badoglio government.

There are two later extracts of minutes of the Administration Council of the Trieste branches of the Cassa di Risparmio [branches of the Cassa di Risparmio in Trieste] that make it possible to define their relationship with the German authorities.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, letter from the Udine branch of the Credito Italiano to the Central Head Office, 15 June 1945 enclosing a copy of the letter sent from the Udine branch of the Credito Italiano to the Central Head Office, 9 June 1945 and List of payments or delivery of amounts that had to be carried out for the German authorities regarding assets of third parties including those with Jewish names. In *Il libro della memoria* the name of Silvio Janovitz appears, arrested in Gemona, in the province of Udine, on 4 June 1944, deported from Trieste and killed when he arrived in Auschwitz. L. Picciotto Fargion, *Il libro della memoria, cit.*, p. 336. Exactly what “E.T.” refers to is unclear: it is possible, but only a hypothesis, that it means German Army.

⁷⁷ ASUCI, *Filiali, Trieste, Ispettorato*, b. 6, fasc. 2 “Danni derivanti all’Istituto in periodo di emergenza”, letter from the Pola branch of the Credito Italiano to the Head Office of the Trieste branch of the Credit, 9 July 1945 enclosing copies of the letter from the Pola branch to the Central Head Office of the Credit, 15 June 1945 and the memorandum from the Pola branch of the Credito Italiano to the Institute for Industrial Reconstruction, 15 June 1945.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, letter from the Trieste branch of the Credito Italiano to the Trieste branch of the Banca d’Italia, 21 August 1945 enclosing List of the Sums belonging to Jews we had to pay into the Trieste Commerciale italiana in compliance with the directives from the Financial Department of the Supreme Commissioner for the Adriatic Coast Operations Zone and the List of the securities we had to consign to the German authorities. An analogue copy of the first list was sent from the Trieste branch to the Central Head Office of the Credito Italiano on 13 June 1945. *Ibid.*

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, letter from the Trieste branch of the Credito Italiano to the Central Head Office in Milan, 21 June 1945 enclosing List of payments, or consignment of amounts we had to pay to the German authorities for assets belong to third parties, including those with Jewish names.

When the President received the order for sequestration on 11 October 1943, he “pointed out that the implementation entails considerable difficulties of a practical nature and might lead to considerable inconvenience resulting from involuntary erroneous inclusions or omissions since there is no official list of persons of the Jewish race”. Although he had absolutely no intention of disobeying, the President wanted to take his time and defer the issue when he stated that “it will obviously be necessary to proceed by induction and to try and resolve the numerous cases where there are doubts, by carrying out investigations in the public offices and as a consequence this will entail a lengthy process”.

On 12 October 1943 the Administration Council was summoned once again, in view of a visit by Mr and Mrs Ruiz and Dr. Benni to the Head of Police, “to receive further clarification needed for the Credit Institutes”. The new orders stipulated clerical work that was to be completed within a relatively short period, beginning with a study of the list of “Jews” in the Registry Office. Furthermore, “for those names that were clearly known by the credit institutions to be of the Jewish race, sequestration was to be considered as complete for all intents and purposes”. Faced with such orders that were to be carried out immediately, the President had no choice but object, hoping that the Banca d'Italia or the Trade-union would take action in the general interest of the institutes.⁸⁰

This hope was, however, completely in vain since the personal cases - sequestration memorandums of the Banca d'Italia - were already filed from 17 March 1944 to 10 April 1945.

However, the provisional activities of the other institutions that were now dealing with the "Jewish question" made rapid progress if one considers that as early as 26 October, the Municipal Registry Office had already produced a list with 3,420 names of "citizens of the Jewish race".

This list is followed by a list of “businesses belonging to Italian and stateless citizens of the Jewish race and registered on the list compiled by the Provincial Council of the Corporations of Trieste”, including 202 businesses, the owners’ names and the addresses of the former. On 26 October 1943, as a result of a meeting with Mr. Moser, bank manager of the Banca Commerciale Italiana, the Trieste Cassa di Risparmio’s stipulated the "freeze on Jewish assets", of the personal accounts on the registry office list, those known to be Jewish and commercial businesses. As has already been stated, the action taken by the Cassa di Risparmio branches in Trieste corresponds perfectly to the decisions taken by the other banks.

Furthermore, on 20 October 1943 the branch in Grado had already reported two names, one Italian and one stateless citizen, with the amounts in the savings accounts.

In compliance with the orders from the Banca d'Italia, memorandum dated 19 November 1943, the Bank sent the list of the credits and deposits registered by Jews in carbon copy, with the remark that all the items had been declared "inaccessible". The list in question was the "List of deposits" which was the result of a comparison with the list from the registry office and given to the Banca d'Italia on 24 November. The list was drafted by the Central Head Office and Agency No. 1 in the city and included all the deposits for the payment of taxes and duties, savings accounts, bank accounts, securities held for safekeeping and administration, amounts deposited to guarantee grants, with details of whose name they were registered in and the relative sums. However, this list was constantly updated - the ninth list was dated 14 June 1944.

However, the Trieste Banca d'Italia somehow acted as intermediary between the Head of the German police, who stipulated which directives were to be adopted in first person and “not the

⁸⁰ ASTrieste branches of the Cassa di Risparmio , *Segretariato generale*, AF 9 1943.

Supreme Commissioner”, and the other Credit Institutions. In actual fact, on 15 November 1943 the Head of Police sent the Fascist Confederation of the Credit and Insurance Institutes of Trieste a request to the manager of the Banca d’Italia in Trieste, asking him as Credit Inspector, to “repeat my letter dated 7 October 7 1943 to the banks on my behalf.” And he added: “in view of your perplexity I believe I can explicitly affirm that for the moment, special conditions and the directives issued by the German security authorities prevail over any others.”

On 19 November the manager of the Banca d’Italia asked all the Trieste Cassa di Risparmio branches to send the complete list of all amounts (cash and objects in the various accounts and deposits, securities of any kind and the contents of safe-deposit boxes) belonging to Jews without further ado.

It should be pointed out that in actual fact, in the Adriatic Coast area the linguistic definitions “sequestration”, “freezing”, “inaccessible” all have the same meaning, which is, seizure of property. The dlq 4 January 1944 concerning the new directives for property belonging to Jewish citizens is known: However, the 21 articles comprising the document made the situation in the Adriatic Coast area even more serious and complicated.

As has been shown, the Banca d’Italia proceeded very systematically while the Trieste branches of the Cassa di Risparmio continued with one more task, this time for the Prefectural Offices of Trieste, sending them no less than three more lists dated 29 February 1944, 4 March 1944, 11 March 1944, all with information regarding Jewish property.

On the other hand, it should also be pointed out that as early as 19 February 1944, the chief executive of the Trieste branches of the Cassa di Risparmio sent the executive accounting department, the securities department, the savings department, the Duties and Tax Office, the Information Office and Agency No. 1, and Agency No. 2, a copy of the memorandums sent "to the authorities concerned" on the same date.

On 21 February 1944 another extensive, substantial list of the assets belonging to Jews to be sequestered (and updated to 8 February 1944) was sent to the Central Head Office, Secretariat of the Monfalcone branch. There is a handwritten list dated 8 February 1944 registering the savings books belonging to Jews, including the number of the book, in whose name the account is registered and the amount. This time it also includes a calculation for the total sum, equivalent to L. 365,826.40. A further list with the same date - 18 handwritten sheets - includes the names of "Jewish" property owners, with their names, the property address, with an overall value that comes to L. 323,153.460.

This last list followed a list of 658 properties belonging to Jews, continuing the progressive numbers, the number of the collector’s office, the name of the taxpayer, the sum of the corresponding evaluation and the address.

These files were part of the dossier "List of Jews and citizens of enemy states" that combined a list of Jewish names and a list of Greek citizens residing in Trieste.⁸¹

As has already been pointed out, this succession of lists - an attempt to continuously update, complete and modify the calculations in the Adriatic Coast area - was exacerbated after the introduction of dlq 2/1944 of 4 January. In fact, in Trieste, as early as 15 November 1943 the power assumed by the head of the German police was subject to the supervision of Dr. Zoyer, Head of the Financial department for the Coast province. The papers are addressed to Trieste – Ufficio Sezione

⁸¹ ASTrieste branches of the Cassa di Risparmio , *Segretariato generale*, AF 9 II°. 1948.

III/4 [Department III/4 Office], (progressive numbering of file) Dr. Fi/Wo and signed by Dr. Fischbach, asking that the accounts of sequestered property be made out to the account of *Vermögensverwaltung des Obersten Kommissars, Oberkasse des Obersten Kommissars in der Operationszone Adriatisches Küstenland*, through and at the Banca Commerciale Italiana.

This complex situation is described very clearly by the Chief Executive of the Trieste branches of the Cassa di Risparmio in a registered letter to the Prefectural Offices of Trieste, which is dated 29 February 1944 and therefore relatively close in date to the RSI directives. The document includes “three copies of the combined lists, the existing deposits and credits dated 8 February in our Institute and registered to individuals of the Jewish race”. But the Chief Executive adds: “We would like to point out that the aforementioned property has been sequestered by the Head of Police for the Adriatic Coast Zone with a letter dated 7 October 1943”.

In line with the principles of a qualitative study, two cases were chosen to exemplify the confiscation of property by the Germans, one belonging to Camillo Ara (a famous figure in politics in Trieste in the early twentieth century) on 22 March 1944, for L. 1,122; the other on 5 January 1945, belonging to the engineer Carlo Pollak, with a sum of L. 1,000, once again via the German bank account in the Banca Commerciale Italiana.

However, a quantitative study shows that 108 deposits belonging to Jews were sequestered by the German authorities and transferred to the Banca Commerciale Italiana for a total value of L. 1,270,238.74.

It is clear that the statute was applied in accordance with orders from the German authorities that, on 8 March 1944, had had a file compiled in which each individual client of the Trieste branches of the Cassa di Risparmio had to declare on their own responsibility that the relative sum in the bearer passbook “did not belong to a person of the Jewish race”. This investigation was certainly no simple bureaucratic undertaking nor to be underestimated in view of the fact that just a few days later, on 16 March 1944, the Trieste branches of the Cassa di Risparmio wrote to the Commissioner for the Adriatic Coast Operations Zone asking for a meeting with Dr. Fishbach, “regarding the payments made in your favour (the Germans) by several administrators over the last few days with reference to sums owed to Jews”. They asked for instructions on how these sums were to be used.

The form for the payments that had been made was enclosed in the letter and included the names of nine administrators for a value of around L. 50,000.

On 22 March 1944 another list was compiled – “Form for Jewish bank accounts at the Central Head Quarters”, with the number of the bank account, the name, the sum declared, the interests and current balance for an approximate value of L. 1,000,000 - and another “List of the tax payment deposits”, once again belonging to Jews, no less than three pages long.

However, property seizure was not just limited to “cash” in the banks.

Indeed, on 31 August 1944 the Trieste branch of the Banca d'Italia informed the Trieste branches of the Cassa di Risparmio that the Supreme Commissioner had issued the order for "the opening of the safe-deposit boxes belonging to members of the Jewish race", including a detailed description of how to proceed.

A representative of the German Finance Department was to be present, as were two Bank representatives while a notary was not required. “The Credit Institute may, however, decide to have a notary present, but at their own cost”. The boxes were to be forced open if there were no keys.

The assets sequestered from the respective Jews were to be used to cover the costs for the blacksmith. The contents obviously had to be given to the representative of the Credit Institute connected to the German Finance Department and a record was to be made in duplicate, in compliance with current bureaucratic rules.

What is particularly interesting is the involvement of the bank where the sequestration took place – because although it was informal, they were actually totally responsible. Indeed, the record had to include the names of those present during the opening, and the latter also had to sign it.

To allow a more complete description of the property seizure of Jewish assets, another document that is of particular interest is one drawn up by the Finance Department of the Supreme Commissioner that was sent to the Trieste branch of the Banca d'Italia and signed by Dr. Zoyer. Reference is made to property confiscation, and to the "R.I." Office of the Head of the Police and SS, who was responsible for the directives to be respected. The document is dated 24 February 1945.⁸²

This bureaucratic property seizure did not stop until the last few months of German occupation.

A letter dated 6 March 1945 in the name of the Supreme Commissioner informs the Trieste branches of the Cassa di Risparmio of the "payment of dividends to shareholders of the companies the Assicurazioni Generali and Riunione Adriatica Sicurtà". They were given instructions to cash the dividends earned by shares in the two insurance companies "that are in your safekeeping and that are part of the Jewish property that was sequestered". The proceeds of these dividends were to be paid into the bank account of the "Superior Account of the Supreme Commissioner of the Adriatic Coast Operations Zone" at the Banca Commerciale Italiana. They were obviously also to be informed of each individual quittance, with a credit form.

On the headed letter paper of the Banca d'Italia, one last document sent to the Trieste branches of the Cassa di Risparmio (with a carbon copy to the Supreme Commissioner, Finance Department), and is particularly significant. It is the order for the sequestration of the property belonging to *Pia Casa Gentilomo*, the rest home for elderly disabled Jews and issued by the Superior Commander of the SS and Police of the Adriatic Coast on 13 March 1945. The assets were sent to the administration of the Finance Department of the Supreme Commissioner. The amount in question was L. 33,000. - 5% 1949 government securities.

The document includes an extensive handwritten annotation by a diligent functionary, dated 18 April 1945, stating that since the aforementioned securities were the property of the Jewish Community, "they had already been frozen in compliance with the racial laws, proof thereof being that the respective revenues were already periodically credited to the account of the *Oberkasse des Obersten Kommissars in der O.A.K.* at the Commerciale Italiana."⁸³

5.3. TRIESTE BRANCH OF THE BANCA COMMERCIALE ITALIANA

As was already mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, the Commission also found documentation of considerable interest regarding the Trieste branch of the Banca Commerciale Italiana. It covers issues and general aspects that have already been mentioned and therefore need not be repeated.

⁸² ARSLO, Lubiana, *Questura triestina*, 227, fasc. V.

⁸³ ASTrieste branches of the Cassa di Risparmio, *Segretariato generale*, AF/9/I°. 1948.

Attention will focus more on other more specific information concerning the Trieste branch of the Commerciale Italiana that is considered to be of particular interest.

As had already occurred in the other local banks⁸⁴, on 7 October 1943 the Trieste branch of the Banca Commerciale Italiana received an order from the *Befehlshaber der Sipo und SD* (Head of the Sipo-SD) for the "immediate" sequestration of all amounts, that is, bank accounts and savings deposits belonging to Jews; by the 12th of the very same month a list of the amounts and the persons affected by that disposition was to be sent, as was a list of any amounts transferred to Aryans from 15 July onwards in the same year.⁸⁵

As had already been the case with the branch of the Credito Italiano, the Trieste branch of the Commerciale Italiana informed the secretariat of the Italian Branch Service of the "embarrassing situation" the various banks in Trieste thus found themselves in, and something that the German Commander had already been made aware of by the Fascist Inter-provincial Union of the Credit and Insurance Institutes.

On 7 December of the same year the Trieste branch of the Banca Commerciale Italiana informed the Branch Service that as the local representative of the Inspectorate for the Defence of Savings and the Provision of Credit (and following the request by the Bank of issue), they had sent the Banca d'Italia the list of assets belonging to Jews. The overall value of the amounts reported was L. 60,035,000; the deposits came to L. 4,638,000, the available funds came to L. 85,000, while the overall value of the guaranteed capital bonds, and safe-custody securities came to no less than L. 55,241,000; the total balance of the personal savings books came to L. 71,000. The Commerciale Italiana then even reported the existence of 89 safe-deposit boxes belonging to Jews.

Another memorandum to the Central Head Office stated that the list regarding Jewish assets in the Trieste branch of the Commerciale Italiana had been sent to the German authorities on 24 November.⁸⁶ At an unspecified date but somewhere around early February 1944, the Supreme Commissioner instructed the Credit Institutes in the Adriatic Coast Operations Zone to open an account called *Vermögensverwaltung des Obersten Kommissars*; some of them also received the order to transfer the balances of bank accounts belonging to Jews to the aforementioned account.

In his memorandum dated 15 March 1944 telling the Commerciale Italiana to comply with the orders issued by the German authorities, following the advice of Dr. Fischbach from the Finance Department, the bank manager of the Banca d'Italia also informed them that the cases regarding sequestered property were to be dealt with directly by the occupying authorities themselves, while those regarding the assets that had remained frozen were still to be dealt with "through the intermediary" of the Trieste branch of the Banca d'Italia.⁸⁷

⁸⁴ ASBCI, *SFI*, ex 64c, cart. 5 "Confisca attività di nominativi di razza ebraica. Corrispondenza con le Filiali", fasc. 9 "Trieste. Corrispondenza 1943-1945", the Head of the SIPO-SD to the Trieste branch of the Banca Commerciale Italiana 7 October 1943 and relative translation.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*; another document refers to the freeze imposed by the Commander of the SS and Police of the Adriatic Coast Operations Zone on Jewish property in October 1943; the formal sequestration of assets registered to individuals and transferred to the administration of the Finance Department of the Supreme Commissioner was only carried out once the Credit institutes had sent a list through the Banca d'Italia including all the assets affected by this disposition; *ibid.*, ex 57, cart. 7 "Risarcimento danni di guerra (ebrei) 1943-1946", fasc. 3 "Corrispondenza con le Filiali", s.fasc. 2 "Trieste 1945-1946", letter from the manager of the Trieste branch of the Commerciale Italiana to Guido Cella, vice-director of the Central Head Office, 23 June 1945.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, ex 64c, cart. 5 "Confisca attività di nominativi di razza ebraica. Corrispondenza con le Filiali", fasc. 9 "Trieste. Corrispondenza 1943-1945", letter from the Trieste branch of the Banca Commerciale Italiana to the Central Head Office, Italian branch service, Secretariat, 14 October and 7 December 1943, 11 February 1944.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, letter from the Trieste branch of the Banca Commerciale Italiana to the Central Head Office, Italian branch service, Secretariat, 17 March 1944 enclosing a copy of the letter from the manager of the Trieste branch of the Banca d'Italia to the Banca Commerciale Italiana, 15 March 1944; copy of the letter from the director of the Finance Department of the Supreme Commissioner for the Adriatic Coast Operations Zone, Dr. Zoyer to the Trieste branch of the Banca d'Italia, 8 March 1944 with relative translation and copy of the letter from the manager of the Trieste branch of the Banca d'Italia to the Finance Department of the Supreme

On 5 June the Trieste branch of the Commerciale Italiana received an order through the Banca d'Italia to freeze secret accounts, those using pseudonyms and savings books registered with only a surname; during a meeting that was held in the Bank of issue (and at which all managers of the Trieste Credit Institutes were present), the gravity of this disposition was pointed out, as it would also affect the majority of the depositors since the number of bearer passbooks was certainly greater than the number of personal ones. As far as the Commerciale Italiana was concerned, the manager and co-manager of the Trieste branch informed the manager of the Banca d'Italia that only 3% of all the savings books that the aforementioned bank had in circulation were actually personal passbooks - the German authorities' decision to freeze these would have affected and alarmed nearly all the clientele, "who are not always able to assess the motives for such dispositions objectively, thus resulting in an increase in the withdrawal of capital deposits by categories that are not affected."⁸⁸ He went on to add that the Commerciale Italiana had no "secret accounts" since they all had to be registered to individuals or legal persons without distinction.⁸⁹

The Trieste branch of the Banca d'Italia was quick to inform the Superior Head of the SS and Police of the serious drawbacks the application of the directives in question would have; in July 1944 the German authorities then partially modified their ruling - the freeze was immediately annulled for savings books and accounts with a balance that did not exceed L. 1000, while it remained effective for accounts with over L. 50,000. Before making any payments from bank accounts or deposits with a balance that did not exceed L. 50,000 the credit institutes had to verify that they did not belong to Jews.

The letter from the Banca d'Italia regarding the new directives is dated 22 July; on the 25th of the same month, during a meeting that was held at the Inter-provincial Union of Trieste of the Confederation of Credit and Insurance Institutes, the managers of various credit institutes decided to adopt a common stance: should a bearer savings passbook with a balance of less than L. 50,000 be registered into a pseudonym or not include all personal details, the bank would ask the presenter to make a declaration stating that the sum was not derived from Jewish property. Should the book balance exceed L. 50,000 the person in question would have to go to the Head of the SS and Police.⁹⁰

On 27 July 1944 the Fiume branch of the Commerciale Italiana reported they had received a letter from the delegate Inspector of the Banca d'Italia informing them of the orders from the *Höherer SS und Polizeiführer in der Operationszone Adriatisches Küstenland* regarding the savings books that did not include the owner's name and surname; it also underlined that the occupying authorities would hold the credit institutes responsible for the regularity of the payments made regarding the deposits of up to L. 50,000.⁹¹

Commissioner, 15 March 1944; Memorandum. Dispositions by the German authorities for property belonging to Jews in the Adriatic Coast Operations Zone, 24 May 1945.

⁸⁸ ASBCI, *SFI*, ex 64c, cart. 5 "Confisca attività di nominativi di razza ebraica. Corrispondenza con le Filiali", fasc. 9 "Trieste. Corrispondenza 1943-1945", letter from the Trieste branch of the BCI to the Central Head Office, Italian branch service, Secretariat, 9 June 1944 enclosing copy of the letter from the manager of the Trieste branch of the Banca d'Italia to the Trieste branch of the Credito Italiano, 5 June 1944; copy of the letter from the manager and co-manager of the BCI to the manager of the Trieste branch of the Banca d'Italia, 7 June 1944; copy of the letter from the manager of the Trieste branch of the Banca d'Italia to the Trieste branch of the Commerciale Italiana, 5 June 1944. The quotation is from: *ibid.*, copy of the letter from the manager and co-manager of the BCI to the manager of the Trieste branch of the Banca d'Italia, 7 June 1944.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, letter from the Trieste branch of the BCI to the Central Head Office, Italian branch service, Secretariat, 26 July 1944, enclosing copy of letter from the manager of the Trieste branch of the Banca d'Italia to the BCI, 22 July 1944; copy of the memorandum regarding the meeting held on 25 July 1944, s.d.; Memorandum. Dispositions by the German Authorities against property belonging to Jews in the Adriatic Coast Operations Zone, 24 May 1945.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, letter from the Fiume branch of the BCI to the Central Head Office, Italian branch service, 27 July 1944.

On 31 August 1944 the Trieste branch of the Banca Commerciale Italiana also received a letter from the manager of the Banca d'Italia with the directives introduced by the Supreme Commissioner regarding the opening of safe-deposit boxes belonging to Jews.

The Commerciale Italiana asked the bank of issue to point out to the German authorities that the bank would only comply with the ruling if the boxes had already been sequestered and only in the presence of a public official. Furthermore, if the box owner did not have an account in that institute, the costs for forcing it open were to be covered in advance by the Supreme Commissioner. It appears that the intervention of the bank of issue was to no avail. During a meeting the Finance Department of the Supreme Commissioner promised that the costs for the forced opening of boxes belonging to individuals who did not have an account in that Bank would have been born by the occupying authorities. The process of opening these boxes, in the presence of a notary who had to take minutes and compile an inventory of the contents, began in September 1944; by 23 November 47 out of 88 had been opened, and half of these had been found empty. The others contained savings books, shares, and silver and gold objects.

On 28 June 1945 the Trieste Commerciale Italiana sent the secretariat of the Italian branch service a list of the 62 safe-deposit boxes that had been broken open since September 1944. In some cases the German authorities had deposited the valuables that had been found either in an account in the name of the Finance Department of the Supreme Commissioner or in the name of the individual owners from whom the assets had been confiscated. There is no documentation regarding the objects and documents that were found.⁹²

From the correspondence between Aristide Gherarducci, manager of the Trieste branch of Commerciale Italiana and Guido Cella, vice-director of the Central Head Office, it can be deduced that the crediting of the sums belonging to Jews in the Supreme Commissioner's account were carried out separately for each individual starting in March 1944 and continuing until April 1945. From what is written in a letter sent to Cella on 28 May 1945, by adopting strategies such as claiming to be in formal difficulties and by prevaricating, they managed to save almost all the valuables held in guarantee and for safekeeping, also bearer securities, belonging to Jews.

From March 1944 onwards, the Finance Department of the Supreme Commissioner ordered the banks to transfer all the accounts in their name into the account called *Oberkasse des Obersten Kommissars*, to withdraw all closed and sealed packages deposited in Jewish names as well as the safe-deposit boxes that had been forced open and their contents. The only brief interruption of this operation was in February 1945, following a circular sent by the Inspectorate of Credit to the Banca d'Italia.

All the amounts that were sequestered from Jews, (here and at other banks), were transferred into the abovementioned account, as were the proceeds from the sales by the Supreme Commissioner of Jewish property, the rent from houses belonging to Jews [...]; with deposits that came to a total of L. 56,076,478.70, and for many of which no provision was stated, and withdrawals that came to L. 20,732,919.45, in June 1945 the balance of the aforementioned account was L. 35.343.559.25. Regarding the assets that were sequestered and confiscated at the Banca Commerciale Italiana, bank account balances with a total of L. 4,333,590.20 were paid into the *Oberkasse* bank account.

⁹² *Ibid.*, Nota. Memorandum. Dispositions by the German authorities for Jewish property in the Adriatic Coast Operations Zone, 24 May 1945; *ibid.*, ex 57, cart. 7 "Risarcimento danni di guerra (ebrei) 1943-1946", fasc. 3 "Corrispondenza con le Filiali", s.fasc. 1 "Milano con sottopratiche relative a Novara, Firenze e Trieste", letter from the Trieste branch of the Commerciale Italiana to the Central Head Office, Italian branch service, Secretariat, 28 September 1944 enclosing copy of the letter from the manager of the Trieste branch of the Banca d'Italia to the BCI, 31 August 1944 and relative translation; letter from the Trieste branch of the BCI to the Central Head Office, Italian branch service, Secretariat, 23 November 1944 and 28 June 1945.

Furthermore, the sum of L. 59,598.10 was debited from that account for the costs of forcing the safe-deposit boxes open and for the custody rights of registered securities.⁹³

A chest and two sealed suitcases lying in the deposit, the property of Gabriele Leonzini, Gino Macchioro and Moisè Vittorio Padoa, for a declared value of L. 650,000 were withdrawn by the Supreme Commissioner while sixty-two out of eighty-eight safe-deposit boxes were forced open and their contents removed; some of the securities found in the boxes had been deposited in an account in the Commerciale Italiana, either in the name of the Finance Department of the Supreme Commissioner in the Adriatic Coast Operations Zone, or in the names of the former owners.

On the whole the securities were not “touched”: the securities deposited, for a total of L. 24,900 in the name of Camillo Ara were liquidated and the proceeds paid into the *Oberkasse* account; the securities deposited for a total of L. 19,000 in the name of the Jewish Community of Gorizia were withdrawn by the Supreme Commissioner while the proceeds from the liquidation of the securities deposited in the name of Count Senator Salvatore Segrè Sartorio were used to reduce his credit exposure towards the Commerciale Italiana.

Shares, personal bonds and coupons were paid into the Securities account of the *Finanzabteilung*.⁹⁴

5.4. INFORMATION ABOUT OTHER BANKS

The collection of the Banca d’America e d’Italia, Agency A1 of Abbazia was also consulted in the Fiume Archives. It contains internal circulars of the Banca d’Italia; Fascist (RSI) and Nazi directives (Adriatic Coast Operations Zone); cases for individual names; lists of people who had been identified as Jews, and whose bank deposits were confiscated; subversive dispositions for Jewish property that divert money from bank accounts belonging to Jews and transfer them to the bank account of the *Reichskreditkassa* in Fiume.

A summary of this material makes it possible to reconstruct the scale of seizure of the bank assets both in general and as a whole, while also making it possible to identify specific cases of property seizure.

The Nazi authorities proceeded with great rigidity in the Adriatic Coast. In May 1944 they ordered the immediate freezing of all savings books that did not have both the owner’s surname and first name. If they wanted a refund, it was then up to the person in question to go to the Security Police (Sipo) of the SD to be issued a declaration of release (*geprüft und freigegeben...*).

Police control also covered the execution of Jewish wills, as was the case for the deceased Giacomo Kurz from Abbazia. It was probably for demagogical reasons that the Nazis issued a directive leaving the inheritance to the Municipality of Abbazia, which thus benefited from a bequest of L. 10,000. This will also stated that the sum in question be used by the podestà of Abbazia for charity.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, ex 57, cart. 7 “Risarcimento danni di guerra (ebrei) 1943-1946”, s.fasc. 2 “Trieste 1945-1946”, letter from the manager of the Trieste branch of the Commerciale Italiana, Aristide Gherarducci, to Guido Cella, vice-director of the Central Head Office, 28 May and 23 June 1945

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, statement dated 25 June 1945 of the securities account in the name of the *Finanzabteilung des Obersten Kommissars in der Operationszone Adriatisches Küstenland*. The manager of the Trieste Banca d’Italia informed the Commerciale Italiana on 15 January 1944 that the *Höherer SS-und Polizeiführer*, the High Command of the SS and Police, had ruled that the banks were allowed to sell securities after informing the German authorities of each case to recover credit owed to Jewish owners. *ibid.*, ex 64c, cart. 5 “Confisca attività di nominativi di razza ebraica. Corrispondenza con le Filiali”, fasc. 9 “Trieste. Central Head Office, Italian branch service, Secretariat 5-6.

There was also abundant speculation by the Banks regarding Jewish property as the account “profits and losses” was always foremost in the minds of the functionaries who looked after the interests of the institute they presented, one could almost say down to the very last penny.

Thus, in early 1944, once again the agency of Abbazia (Fiume) of the Banca d'America e d'Italia acted as the bank of issue for a bearer passbook that was formally in the hands of the Jewish community, with a balance of L. 45,026.30 on 30 September 1943. On 20 March 1944 the Trieste branch of Banca d'America e d'Italia took great care to inform their branch in Abbazia that, from 30 September 1943 onwards, the aforementioned passbook was no longer to benefit from the special interest rate for long-term deposits. In actual fact, as a result of the freezing of Jewish property, the German authorities could ask that the relative balance be transferred into their accounts, so that the sum was no longer to be considered committed for a certain period of time, but was free. This obviously meant it had a lower interest rate.

Right until the very end, just a few days before the Yugoslavian army occupied the main cities in Venezia Giulia, the banks were corresponding with the German occupation authorities to ensure that the directives regarding the delicate matter of Jewish property were being respected.

Things did not always go the way the Nazis wanted. For example, this was the case of the sequestration of the property belonging to Romy de Frida, a resident in Abbazia who owned a deposit of \$ 2,650 in the Banca d'America e d'Italia (Trieste branch) - the sum had already been transferred to the corresponding Bank in New York where the American authorities had frozen it, thus making it inaccessible.

In other cases, however, the deposits belonging to Jews were credited by force to the *Reichskreditkasse*, into the account *Der deutsche Berater – Abteilung Finanzen, Referat Vermögensverwertung* in Fiume.

The documents that have been found in the Fiume Archives show how the Nazis, not only resorted to raids, but also used legal channels. That is, they took advantage of the Banca d'Italia and its surveillance powers over the credit institutes. The spoliation of bearer passbooks falls into this category. By means of transfer, the sums were credited to the bank account of *Der deutsche Berater* (German councillor), in the *Reichskreditkasse*, which had various branches in different Italian cities. This operation was called: Reparto R II (R II. Az.: 457).

Other information concerns the Cassa di Risparmio in Fiume – the Abbazia branch. The information includes a form sent to the Banca d'Italia in Fiume on 25 November 1943. This form included all the deposits belonging to Jewish and foreign Jews that were considered frozen (bank accounts, savings deposits as well as safe-deposit boxes). In March 1945, the *S.S. Polizei* of Fiume went ahead with the forced opening of 5 boxes belonging to Jews.

On 30 March, four savings books issued by the Abbazia branch – in the name of individual Jews whose accounts had been blocked on 24 November 1943 in accordance with a sequestration decree of the Banca d'Italia in Fiume - were closed and the sums were transferred to the Fiume Cassa di Risparmio in the account of the *Reichskreditkasse, den Deutschen Berater für die Provinz Quarnero in Fiume, Finanzabteilung Ref. Vermögenverwertung*. The total came to L. 9,191,35 and it was confiscated by the Sipo and the SD of the *Operationszone Adriatisches Küstenland* Trieste, as part of the operation called R II.Az:103.

Once again on 5 April, the Cassa di Risparmio in Fiume, the Abbazia branch, went ahead with the liquidation of three savings books (balance L. 20,601,30) as part of an operation called R II Az:665.

5.5. ACTIVITIES OF THE “SOCIETA' MOVIMENTO MERCI ADRIA”

It is obvious that if a study on the spoliation of Jewish property is to be complete, it must also clarify in whose hands this property finally ended up. On the other hand, an attempt to meet this need might only be achieved through a very analytical description of this property, following its 'path', step by step, and determining whether it was actually restituted or not.

In reference to the area in question, it can certainly be affirmed that the Finance Department of the Supreme Commissioner was the only institution that was authorised to dispose of Jewish funds. This can also be deduced from a series of other events. As had also been the case in Carinthia, the Finance Department installed fiduciary administrators for Jewish assets and businesses. They had to pay the revenue in cash - for example any income from rents - into the account "Superior Account of the Supreme Commissioner in the Adriatic Coast Operations Zone" in the Trieste Banca Commerciale Italiana, indicating the protocol number of the Jewish victim each time (for example, Ju-0000). As in the north of Carniola, fiduciary administrators appeared all over the place, almost constituting an autonomous professional group; others were also appointed for the liquidation of Jewish businesses. First of all, they had to draw up an inventory and make an estimate with the help of experts, before going ahead with the free sale to possible private purchasers. The procedure was therefore no different to the one applied in the Reich, and it gave any locals who were so inclined the chance to become rich.⁹⁵

Apart from actually implementing the confiscation of property, the German Head also tried to bestow a semblance of legality to this despoilment. For this reason, as early as the end of 1943, with ruling No. 18 he founded a commercial company called “Adria”.⁹⁶

The company's main task was to take care of the liquidation of Jewish businesses, even if the general regulations drafted in a German circular mentioned other purposes: for example, regulating the traffic of goods in the operations zone and in particular, fighting the black market and increasing commerce with the Reich. The men holding the various posts within the company were all German – as were the members of the Surveillance council.

The action area of the economic-financial company basically covered the entire region of the Adriatic Coast Operations Zone: Friuli, Venezia Giulia, Slovenia, Istria, and Pola and Fiume in particular. The closest commercial ties were with Carinthia, (Klagenfurt especially), but also stretched further north to Salzburg, Vienna, Innsbruck, Linz, and Graz as well as to various cities in Germany (Hamburg, Lübeck, Berlin, Munich); they used the railway network Villaco-Pontebba. The effects of this operation were obviously felt along the Adriatic Coast, but also extended to north Italy, (from the Veneto to Milan).

The *Società Adria* began its work in July 1944 and closed on 1 May 1945; Giuseppe Marko was liquidations delegate. However, commercial operations are documented until the last days of April: In fact, the last documents are headed Trieste 21-23 April 1945.

The Germans had to rely on the transport companies and local shipping agents (the companies: Parisi, E. Selvataici, F.lli Gondrand), although the railway was frequently chosen as an alternative – as were shipping companies (Società anonima di trasporti “La Marittima”, Società anonima di

⁹⁵ A. Walzl, *Gli ebrei sotto la dominazione nazista, Carinzia, Slovenia, Venezia Giulia*, Istituto Friulano per la storia del Movimento di liberazione, Udine 1991.

⁹⁶ The references to the Società Adria are taken from S. Bon, *Gli ebrei a Trieste, 1939-1945, Identità Persecuzione Risposte*, Istituto regionale per la storia del Movimento di liberazione nel Friuli Venezia Giulia, Libreria Editrice Goriziana, Gorizia 2000.

navigazione “Adriatica”), which used the cargo docks of the general warehouses in the Port of Trieste. Economic collaboration made use of the financial support guaranteed by the local banks: both the Banca Commerciale Italiana and the Trieste Cassa di Risparmio were the credit institutes that most frequently acted as intermediaries in the processes of economic-administrative support.

An important chapter in the exploitation policy followed by the *Società Adria* was that of “former Jewish property”. The *Dorotheum*, Monte di pietà and auction houses in Klagenfurth were frequently involved in these cases, organising auctions and sales, (sometimes for Venetian art merchants), of property from houses, that had been sequestered or pillaged once their owners had fled or been deported. In these cases the objects in question were often “luxury” goods such as paintings, rugs, silverware, ornaments, valuable furniture, pianos, books, and even microscopes, objects that were not just sold to private individuals, but also to institutions such as the *Intendenza di Marina* in Trieste. Other cases were examples of the liquidation of Jewish-owned businesses such as, for example, those belonging to Eugenio Neumann and Rachele Kaigon, which were put up for auction.

This information not only shows just how important this company was but also reveals its perfect and complex bureaucratic organisation, created with the very purpose of planning and exploiting the trade in Jewish property to the utmost. It also reveals a multiform business system that involved various local economic sectors. As a consequence, confiscation became of great importance in the life of the whole city, implementing the liquidation of Jewish assets (businesses, shops, apartments), in a capillary and meticulous fashion and making it extremely difficult to disguise and save anything, thus meaning the losses were very extensive.

Relatively accurate details about how the “Adria” operated can be seen in a letter in the trial file of Erminia Schellander who, as legal procurator, had been the fiduciary and administrative liquidator of the Supreme Commissioner. The procedure described is the one that was followed in the liquidation of no less than 15 Jewish businesses (Giacomo Pollak; Moller Baker Giuseppe; Ierace Felice; Romano Davide; Fischbein; Geiger Gustavo; Gentile; Arnstein; Majer; Reiner Massimiliano; Mandelberg; Kostoris Adolfo; Kostoris Leone; Vacardi Oscar; Levi Eberardo; Maccaria e Bemporad) resulting in liquid assets for the Germans of almost five million lire. Once the Supreme Commissioner had given the order for the sequestration of a certain business, he gave Erminia Schellander the keys to the respective businesses with the order to make an inventory and an evaluation of the existing goods, assisted by experts and a certain Eder (probably the same man who oversaw problems of supply and trade in the “Adria”, determining the prices and who the goods could be sold to). Once this had been done, the goods could be sold and private negotiations made, but only once the Supreme Commissioner had given his approval. In other cases, the sales were handled directly by the “Adria”, which had been founded for this very purpose. Schellander herself paid the money from the sales into the Commissioner’s private account or into the bank account in the Commissioner’s name in the Banca Commerciale Italiana. As liquidator, Schellander received 5% of the first L. 500,000 from the proceeds from liquidation while for sums exceeding this, the Commissioner decided how much was to be paid in each single case, but it was always less than 5%. Erminia Schellander therefore derived substantial financial benefit from her share in the profits, so much so, that on 2 September 1945 her bank balance in the Banca Commerciale Italiana was L. 214,503.25; she also purchased numerous valuables that were being sold cheaply.

During the trial, in an attempt to clear herself Erminia Schellander stated that as a native German, she had found it impossible not to collaborate with the occupying forces. She admitted “however that she was unsympathetic towards the Italians and considered herself a German. She admitted she had been glad when the Germans had arrived because she had always been hindered by the Italians and this was a good opportunity for her to fulfil her professional ambitions”.

6. Restitutions

Due to its very nature, this final chapter is inevitably fragmentary and uncertain since, unlike in the other Italian provinces where the confiscation procedures that were adopted were somehow paradoxically "legal", and were thus followed by annulment procedures, in the Adriatic Coast area everything was done, as has been shown extensively, with the direct intervention of the German authorities, adopting procedures that make it more difficult to reconstruct individual episodes. The payment of bank deposits into a bank account in the Supreme Commissioner's name, the transferral of a great deal of Jewish property to Carinthia, auction sales and the direct removal of objects and valuables that were found in the homes of deportees certainly made it more difficult to retrieve the property.

6.1. PROPERTY EXPROPRIATED IN THE PERIOD 1938-1943

A letter sent to the Trieste Local Revenue Office on 25 June 1945 concerning "Enemy property" requested a copy of the records of the sequestrations regarding persons in the enclosed list. This included 46 names, of whom 4 were Yugoslavian, 42 Greek and a great many of whom were certainly of Jewish origins.⁹⁷

On 9 April 1946, the EGELI in Rome wrote to the Istituto di Credito Fondiario delle Venezie on the subject of the administration of property in the hands of the Allies. They had a list of 10 names that were definitely of the Jewish race and were discussing the continuity of the presence of private administrators for them. A letter sent from the Credito Italiano on 18 June 1946 to the delegate of the Trieste EGELI spoke of cases of the actual extent of the restitution of "enemy property", including five different cases of "Jewish" property for one single name, and explained the legal procedures to be adopted for reimbursement.⁹⁸

On 6 October 1946 the Local Revenue Office of Trieste wrote to the Registry Office of the Trieste Prefectural Offices "wanting to annul the sequestration, carried out in 1941 "of the property belonging to the Greek subject, the late Felice Israel Davide, situated in Opicina (Trieste)."⁹⁹

With reference to the collection consulted in the Istituto di Credito Fondiario delle Venezie archives it can be concluded that there is no overall quantification of expropriated "Jewish property": The specific term is hardly ever used although they do speak of "enemy property" including names that are certainly of the Jewish race. There is also no overall quantification of the property that was restituted, thus leading to the belief that the collection was "cleaned out" after the war.

6.2. PROPERTY STOLEN IN THE PERIOD 1943-1945

Without trying to reconstruct the entire restitution process, certain information found in the various archives deserves mention - information that is important due to the historic period it refers to but which might not necessarily be directly related.

6.2.1. Memorandum "Confiscated Jewish property"¹⁰⁰

This memorandum, which is in two parts dated respectively 28 February 1950 and 31 August 1950, offers a reconstruction of the whole restitution process of confiscated property by the Office

⁹⁷ AS Mediovenezie, Istituto di Credito Fondiario delle Venezie, Verona, Egeli, b.6.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, see also the letter from the Istituto di Credito Fondiario delle Venezie which talks about the clearance of the amounts on behalf of the Istituto cambi for the same individual.

⁹⁹ *Ibidem.*

¹⁰⁰ ASTs, Commissariato generale del Governo per il territorio libero di Trieste, b.136.

established by the Allied Military Government (AMG) and called the *Jewish Property Control Office*. This was established in February 1946 to study the files of the Finance Office of the former Supreme Commissioner with the aim of restituting as much property as possible to its legitimate owners.

The *Jewish Property Control Office* functioned as an AMG office until 1 April 1949 when it was then placed under the control of the Finance Superintendency, although the actual transfer of power and cases did not actually take place until 30 September 1949. On that date the bank account balance in the existing banks that had not yet been distributed to the rightful claimants was L. 23,003,262, which was subdivided as follows: L. 17,665,616 in the Banca Commerciale Italiana and L. 5.337.646 in the Banca Nazionale del Lavoro.

The amount of furniture and jewellery was as follows:

TABLE 1 – *Amount of furniture and jewellery.*

<i>Restituted to owners</i>			<i>Unclaimed and still available</i>	
	<i>Number of objects</i>	<i>Value in lire 1943</i>	<i>Number of objects</i>	<i>Value in lire 1943</i>
Furniture	1157	L. 945,000	138 (a)	L. 1,000,000
Rugs			2 (a)	L. 50,000
Jewels	228	L. 1,500,000	514 (b)	L. 50,000

(a) Deposited in the lofts of the property on Via Coroneo 30

(b) Deposited in Palazzo di Giustizia

The current value can be calculated by multiplying the 1943 value by 12 or 15.

6.2.2. Memorandum “Memo to Col. I. I. Madigan”¹⁰¹

Dated 25 February 1953, the memorandum summarised the situation of furniture belonging to Jews. The total amount restituted to their legitimate owners was L. 18,659,616.60 of which L. 8,697,513.30 appears to have already been paid in November 1952 and L. 350,074.30 was still outstanding with *the Banca Commerciale Italiana*: The payments that still had to be made came to a total of L. 9,612,029.

6.2.3. Trieste branch of the Credito Italiano

On 16 May 1946 the Finance Department of the Allied Military Government instructed the Trieste branch of the Banca Commerciale Italiana to transfer the amounts belonging to “Jewish” names that had been confiscated and paid into the *Oberkasse* account back to the original banks, using a form they themselves provided. On 14 June the sum of L. 2,388,684.15 was credited to the Credito Italiano, which was then told to identify the various depositors. The discrepancy in the sum restituted in accordance with the AMG which was L. 2,388,684 and the amount reported by the Trieste branch as the balance of the payments made, which came to L. 1.604.071.10 was noticed by the Central Head Office of the Credit and they then asked their own branch to account for it in June 1946. As far as can be deduced from the reply from the Trieste the Credito Italiano, the Commerciale Italiana had made a payment of over L. 820.605 “for sums that came to the aforementioned through the Clearing house or in cash and are therefore not included in the lists you received [...]”¹⁰² The Banca Commerciale Italiana itself had detracted a total of L. 35,991.95,

¹⁰¹ *Ibidem.*

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, letter from the Trieste branch of the BCI to the Trieste branch of the Credito Italiano, 14 June 1946; memorandum from the Trieste branch of the Credito Italiano to the Central Head Office of the bank, 4 July 1946 enclosing letter from the Trieste branch to

broken down as follows: L. 7475.5 for the costs of opening safe-deposit boxes, commission, custody rights and commission and L. 28,516.45 justified as follows: “L. 20,554.4 refunded to individuals who are not of the Jewish race and L. 7,962.05 to those with rights in accordance with the orders of the German Supreme Commissioner.”¹⁰³

In addition to the analysis of this more general document, a further more detailed study was carried out, paying particular attention to some of the approximately 170 personal files that were discovered regarding the freezing and confiscation of assets belonging to Jews and the restitution of which, if it took place, was not immediate. It should also be pointed out that the cases are not at all easy to read since it is bank documentation and is therefore extremely technical.

One document that was not part of the bookkeeping includes a list of 50 Jewish operations with a total balance of L. 122,133.95 which were “still outstanding” on 5 August 1946, i.e. sums that had not yet been restituted. In December 1946 the total of the latter fell to L. 91,165.25 and then on 24 February 1947 fell further to L. 91,026.25.¹⁰⁴ As can be seen from the list in question, starting with the date of the first overall total, some of the amounts were liquidated over the months. These amounts nearly always have annotations such as: “paid”, “g.c. (transfer)” or “reimbursed”; if present, the dates for each operation range from 1946 to 1955. However, the latter are not always included and some of them are unclear or illegible. From calculations it appears, for example, that the sum of L. 9,497 pertaining to Margherita Popper, (the date of restitution is unclear since the document was partially damaged), was restituted before 25 October 1946. According to the annotation on the document in question, L. 4,331.75 was paid back to Anna Senatti Baruch on 23 November 1946, while the year 1951 is written on the cover of the relative personal file.¹⁰⁵

Subtracting all the amounts that appear to have been annulled from the first overall total, one gets the sum of L. 19,745.35 for a total of 33 entries that are still open. It is unknown what exactly happened to the aforementioned amount: it is possible that further payments were made at a later date without the operation being registered on the list and it is also possible that the amounts simply remained in the bank. The most substantial amounts that do not appear to have been paid are L. 5,372.30 belonging to Carlo Pollack, L. 2,015 belonging to Bruno Forti and L. 3,881 registered in the name of Enrico Wagner, 23 entries consisted in sums of less than L. 300 of which 13 were less than L. 100.¹⁰⁶

Following a comparison between the names registered in that list and those in *Il libro della memoria*, it appears that of the 53 names cited, 5 correspond to Jews who were definitely deported and 7 to people who might have been. This clarification was essential since the comparison made leaves grey areas and can therefore not be considered completely reliable. Since the personal files frequently did not include personal information that helped identify the subjects, it is not always possible to be completely sure that the people actually correspond. One of the names on the list is that of Giulio Levi - this name appears twice in the book by Liliana Picciotto Fargion, but since the Jews in question appear to have been arrested in Florence and Rome, the cities where they were

the D.C. on 4.7.46 called “Damaged suffered by the institute during a period of emergency”. ‘Clearing house’ which are linked to banks, exchange agents, insurance companies, manufacturers, finance companies, stock exchange commissioners, are the centres run by the Banca d’Italia where they carry out the activities required for compensation amongst each other, regarding credit and debit, and to reduce money manipulation to a minimum. They were only to be found in the main towns until 1989. L. Goldschmied, *Dizionario di nozioni bancarie ed economiche*, Casa editrice Ceschina, Milan 1957, pp. 648- 649; Istituto per l’Enciclopedia della Banca e della Borsa, *Dizionario di Banca Borsa e Finanza*, Rome 1993, vol.I, p. 1610.

¹⁰³ ASUCI, *Filiali, Trieste, Ispettorato*, b. 6, fasc. 2 “Danni derivanti all’Istituto in periodo di emergenza”, memorandum from the Trieste branch of the *Credito Italiano* to the Central Head Office of the bank, 4 July 1946 enclosing “Danni derivati all’istituto in periodo di emergenza”.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, b. 1 “Pratica Ebrei”: since the document was partially damaged, it is not possible to read the whole heading: what is still legible is “concerning Jews, still outstanding”.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, fasc. 31 “Pratica Ebrei. Senatti Anna di Natale. Trieste”.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, list with incomplete title “concerning Jews, still outstanding”.

living, it is highly unlikely that this is the same person. In the case of Wanda Tedeschi, neither the place of residence nor the father's name corresponds.¹⁰⁷ Using different data to make a comparison, the Jews included in the list who were definitely deported are: Massimo Bluer or Blauer, Alfredo Lossi, Giuseppe Schwarz, Guglielmo Mühlstein and his wife Regina Dann;¹⁰⁸ those who were presumably deported are: Raffaele Italia, Carlo Kern, Giuseppe Mustacchi, Carlo Pollack, John or Jonas Spiegel and Emanuele Staineri.¹⁰⁹

From documentary material it can be deduced that, as a whole, the confiscation procedure for deposits was as follows. The secretariat of the Trieste branch of the *Credito* informed its various branches and agencies of the freeze that was to be applied to the assets of a given person, the balance of any books was transferred to an inaccessible account and then, following the directives issued by the Supreme Commissioner, was once again paid into the original books that was then closed. Once the charges for closing the account and/or other commissions had been detracted, the sum was transferred to the Supreme Commissioner's bank account in the Banca Commerciale Italiana.¹¹⁰

Bruno Forti appears to have had (payable 1950) BTN nominal L. 1,000 shares at 5% as well as an account with a balance of L. 1,512,80 that went up to L. 2,031 in February 1944; on 31 May 1944, the manager of the Trieste branch of the Banca d'Italia informed the *Credito* that they had been transferred to the administration of the Finance Department of the Supreme Commissioner since the assets of the person in question had been sequestered four days earlier. From that moment on, the bank was to apply to that office for anything regarding the case in question. On 19 June 1944 the German Headquarters gave the order to transfer the assets to the *Oberkasse* account in the Commerciale Italiana; on the 24th of that month the secretariat of the Trieste branch of the *Credito Italiano* gave the orders for the aforementioned account to be closed, applying the minimum commission of L. 50 to close it and to transfer the net sum of L. 2,015 to the Commerciale Italiana, which it then did on the 28th; it appears that the money remained deposited in the *Credito Italiano*. An envelope containing a letter that was returned to the mailer that the *Credito* had sent to Bruno Forti on 23 March 1944 bears the annotation "Departed".¹¹¹

The analysis of the files regarding the sums that do not appear to have been returned basically concentrated on the names of those who were not deported but, any possible suppositions aside, it was not really possible to understand why these sums were not returned.¹¹²

Ilse Bernstein (née Schüssler) and her daughter Sofia both had a deposit of 50 Edison Shares and Cisalpina Shares that were frozen; as a result of the perfecting of a splitback operation, in August 1944 they were given 71 nominal L. 200 Edison Shares, deposited in Trieste and 150/3000

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, fasc. "Pratica Ebrei. Levi Giulio. Trieste"; *ibid.*, fasc. 35 "Pratica Ebrei. Tedeschi Wanda. Trieste", s.fasc. "Documenti vari", memorandum from the Secretariat, 20 October 1943; Liliana Picciotto Fargion, *op. cit.*, p. 377 and p. 528.

¹⁰⁸ ASUCI, *Filiali, Trieste, Ispettorato*, b. 1 "Pratica Ebrei", fasc. 5 "Bluer or Blauer Massimiliano or Blauer. Trieste", s.fasc. "Comunicazioni Segreteria", letter from the City Council of Trieste to the *Credito Italiano*, 27 January 1944; *ibid.*, fasc. 100 "Pratica Ebrei. Lossi Alfredo. Trieste", copy of the decree from the Trieste Law Court, 5 February 1944; *ibid.*, fasc. 30 "Pratica Ebrei. Schwarz Giuseppe. Trieste", s.fasc. "Documenti vari", memorandum from the Secretariat, 23 October 1943; *ibid.*, fasc. 25 "Pratica Ebrei. Mühlstein Regina. Trieste", s.fasc. "Corrispondenza con la Banca d'Italia", Trieste branch of the *Credito Italiano* to the manager of the *Banca d'Italia* in Trieste, 6 May 1944; L. Picciotto Fargion, *op. cit.*, p. 148, p. 203, p. 396, p. 533 and p. 435.

¹⁰⁹ 109 L. Picciotto Fargion, *op. cit.*, p. 333, p. 347, p. 437, p. 484, p. 562 and p. 568. All the people in question appear to have resided or been arrested in Trieste.

¹¹⁰ ASUCI, *Filiali, Trieste, Ispettorato*, b. 1 "Pratica Ebrei", various files.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, fasc. 66 "Pratiche Ebrei. Forti avv. Bruno. Trieste", letter from the Trieste branch of the *Credito Italiano* to Bruno Forti, 20 March 1944, enclosing envelope with the wording "Departed" and stamped 29 March 1944; *ibid.*, s.fasc. "Documenti vari", memorandum from the Secretariat, 23 October 1943 and 24 June 1944; bank statement, balance on 22 February 1944; *ibid.*, s.fasc. "Corrispondenza diversa", translation of the letter from the Finance Department of the Supreme Commissioner to the Trieste *Credito Italiano*, 19 June 1944; letter from the Trieste branch of the Banca d'Italia to the Trieste branch of the *Credito Italiano*, 31 May 1944; letter from the Trieste branch of the *Credito Italiano* to the Finance Department of the Supreme Commissioner, 28 June 1944.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, b. 1 "Pratica Ebrei", list with incomplete title "concerning Jews, still outstanding."

nominal L. 200 Edison shares, deposited in Milan; the dividends of the shares were then transferred into two inaccessible bank accounts that had been opened for that very purpose and then, once the costs and commissions had been deducted, the balances were transferred into the *Oberkasse des Obersten Kommissars* account at the Trieste Commerciale Italiana. The deposit bonds remained under sequestration at the Credit.¹¹³

In December 1945 Sofia Bernstein asked for copies of the documentation regarding her bank accounts, which were then sent to her on 7 January 1945. In June 1946 together with all the other sums, even including the share dividends that had been sequestered from the two women, the Trieste Commerciale Italiana restituted the sum of L. 478 to them both.¹¹⁴

It appears that the dividends of the Burgo shares, which had been sequestered from Carlo Felice and Franco Enrico Brunner, were never claimed.¹¹⁵

The case regarding Alfredo Lossi is rather strange. Interned in the provincial psychiatric hospital of Trieste, Lossi was taken on 28 March 1944 and deported to Auschwitz; his wife, Clara Kolbi was his provisional tutor. On an unspecified date the woman was also arrested in Trieste, and deported to Auschwitz where she was killed immediately.¹¹⁶ In compliance with the Supreme Commissioner's order dated 8 December 1943, on 10 January 1944 the Credito Italiano transferred the sum of 46.50L. 46,50, the net proceeds from a small savings book in Alfredo Losi's name to the *Oberkasse* account in the Trieste *Commerciale Italiana*. Since Mrs. Kolbi Lossi was "untraceable", on 10 February of the same year the Trieste Law Court appointed Bruno Presel as provisional administrator to take care of the sick man's interests. In November 1945 Presel asked the Trieste branch of the Credito Italiano for a bank statement of the assets belonging to Alfredo Lossi; the bank informed him that at that time the aforementioned had no assets since the savings book balance had been transferred to the account mentioned above. On 3 July 1946 the same bank wrote to Presel informing him that the Banca Commerciale Italiana had transferred the sum of L.46,50, which had been previously confiscated, back to the Credito Italiano, and this could be withdrawn upon presentation of the savings book.¹¹⁷ At this point the case stops and the sum in question does not appear amongst those erased from the list.¹¹⁸

Sergio Mautner, whose current account book had also been closed and the balance transferred to the *Oberkasse* account, also received a letter on 8 July that the Credito Italiano had credited him with

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, fasc. 47 "Pratica Ebrei. Bernstein Ilse. Trieste", memorandum from the Secretariat, 3 November 1943; letter from the Trieste branch of the Credito Italiano to the manager of the Banca d'Italia, 17 August 1944; letter from the Trieste branch of the Credito Italiano to the Finance Department of the Supreme Commissioner, 25 October 1944; bank statement, balance on 14 October 1944; *ibid.* s.fasc. "Corrispondenza con il cliente", letter from the Trieste branch of the Credito Italiano to Ilse Bernstein, 7 August 1944; *ibid.*, fasc. 48 "Pratica Ebrei": Bernstein Sofia. Trieste", letter from the Trieste branch of the Credito Italiano to Ilse Bernstein, 7 August; letter from the Trieste branch of the Credito Italiano to the Finance Department of the Supreme Commissioner, 28 July, 15 September and 25 October 1944; *ibid.* s.fasc. "Documenti vari", memorandum from the Secretariat, 3 November 1943.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, fasc. 48 "Pratica Ebrei. Bernstein Sofia. Trieste", request from Sofia Bernstein to the Credito Italiano, 27 December 1945; letter from the Trieste branch of the Credito Italiano to Sofia Bernstein, 7 January 1945. See also annotations on the back of the cover of the two files; *ibid.*; *ibid.*, 47 "Pratica Ebrei. Bernstein Ilse. Trieste".

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, fasc. 53 "Pratica Ebrei": Brunner Carlo Felice. Trieste", memorandum from the Secretariat, 3 August 1944; bank account statement dated 15 November 1944; *ibid.*, fasc. 54 "Pratica Ebrei": Brunner Franco Enrico. Trieste", memorandum from the Secretariat, 3 August 1944; bank account statement, balance dated 25 November 1944; letter from the Trieste branch of the Credito Italiano to the Finance Department of the Supreme Commissioner, 23 November 1944.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, fasc. 100 "Pratica Ebrei. Lossi Alfredo. Trieste", copy of the decree with nomination as provisional administrator from the Trieste Law Court, 5 February 1944; S. BON, *Gli ebrei a Trieste 1930-1945. Identità, persecuzione, risposte*, Istituto regionale per la storia del movimento di liberazione nel Friuli Venezia Giulia - Libreria Editrice Goriziana, Trieste 2000, p. 322; L. Picciotto Fargion, *op. cit.*, p. 396 and p. 350, where the woman's surname is given as Kolb.

¹¹⁷ ASUCI, *Filiati, Trieste, Ispettorato*, b. 1 "Pratica Ebrei", fasc. 100 "Pratica Ebrei. Lossi Alfredo. Trieste", copy of the decree from the Trieste Law Court, 5 February 1944; letter from Bruno Presel to the Credito Italiano in Trieste, 30 November 1945; letter from the Trieste branch of the Credito Italiano to Bruno Presel, 7 December 1945 and 3 July 1946; *ibid.*, b. 1 "Pratica Ebrei", list with incomplete title "concerning Jews, still outstanding."

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, b. 1 "Pratica Ebrei", list with incomplete title "concerning Jews, still outstanding."

the sum that had been confiscated by the German authorities. If he wanted to transfer the money back into the current account he had at the Credito Italiano, he had to present the book. Once again, this sum, which came to L. 252,25, was not erased from the list.¹¹⁹

It is possible, but it is only supposition, that some Jews did not collect the deposits they owned because they had moved. In August 1945 the Trieste branch of the Credito Italiano tried to trace Alice Pincherle Goldschmied to inform her of the sum of dividends from some shares she owned in 1944 and which had all been sequestered; written on the envelope of the memorandum which was returned to the sender is: "Left for San Paolo in Brazil in 1939". The sum of L. 507 was the dividend (after costs) from 10 Selt Valdarno shares, 40 Gerolimich shares and 10 nominal L. 160 Edison shares, (subsequently 9 and 50/300 nominal L. 200 Edison shares).¹²⁰ Bullaty Federico appeared to be "in America" in July 1945, Bruno Forti left on 23 March 1944, Felice Israel "moved" in 1944 and Leone Spitzer left Trieste in March 1944.¹²¹ It is obvious that if they had remained in Italy, the aforementioned people would still have been untraceable if they had gone into hiding; however, it is also possible that some of them might have emigrated prior to 8 September 1943.

6.2.4. The Trieste Cassa di Risparmio

For both the previous and this paragraph, the information was gathered and organised with the direct help of the bank management, in agreement with the Commission, following the analytical and detailed study of the documentation available. Although studies were carried out in as much detail as possible, it must be pointed out that certain periods of the entire events involving the Cassa di Risparmio remain unclear and certain questions still remain. A hand-delivered registered letter dated 11 May 1945 sent from the Trieste branches of the Cassa di Risparmio to the Banca Commerciale Italiana marked the beginning of the procedures to retrieve the Jewish property that had been sequestered by the German authorities and transferred to the Supreme Commissioner's account. The Trieste branches of the Cassa di Risparmio asked that the overall sum of L. 1,270,938.74 in the abovementioned account including the interest that had matured be frozen, and that it should be restituted as soon as instructions came from the relevant authorities. Furthermore, the bank declined any responsibility towards the depositors, who were to contact the Banca Commerciale itself, should the need arise.

This was followed by five handwritten sheets with the same date, including a list with the number of the bank account, the name (not in alphabetical order), the amount sequestered, the date, (ranging from 3 April 1944 to 26 April 1945). A few days later, on 15 May 1945, the Board of Directors ruled that the racial laws were no longer effective and as a result, all the directives that had made Jewish credits and deposits inaccessible were to be considered invalid.

This was the period in which the Yugoslav army was occupying Trieste and this was another reason why the Trieste branch of the Banca Commerciale Italiana did not contact the Trieste branches of the Cassa di Risparmio until 14 June 1945, following the exact instructions issued by the Allied

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, fasc. 110 "Pratica Ebrei. Mautner Sergio. Trieste", letter from the Trieste branch of the Credito Italiano to the Finance Department of the Supreme Commissioner, 5 February 1945; letter from the Trieste branch of the Credito Italiano to Sergio Mautner, 8 July 1946; memorandum from the Secretariat, 8 July 1946.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, fasc. "Pratica Ebrei. Alice Goldschmied (née Pincherle). Trieste", letter with payment of credit from the Credito Italiano to Alice Goldschmied, 4 August 1945; letter from the Trieste branch of the Credito Italiano to the Manager of the Banca d'Italia of Trieste, 7 August 1944; Bank account statement of Alice Goldschmied dated 17 April 1944; memorandum from the Secretariat, 25 March 1944; memorandum to the Secretariat, 25 March 1944; bank account statement, balance dated 17 April 1945.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, fasc. 173 "Pratica Ebrei. Israel Felice. Trieste", envelope addressed to him with the word "moved"; *ibid.*, fasc. 153 "Pratica Ebrei. Spitzer comm. Leone. Trieste", envelope returned to sender with annotation "Left Trieste" and print of 2 March 1944"; *ibid.*, fasc. 58 - 181 "Pratica Ebrei. Bullaty Federico. Trieste", envelope addressed to him and returned to sender with the wording "in America" and stamped 6 July 1945; *ibid.*, fasc. 66 "Pratica Ebrei. Forti Bruno. Trieste", envelope addressed to him with the wording "moved" stamped 28 March 1944.

military government, that had taken over the city just a couple of days earlier. The Finance Department gave the order that a form they themselves provided was to be used to transfer the amounts belonging to persons "of the Jewish race" that had been confiscated by the German authorities back to the banks of origin. "In accordance with the aforementioned – the letter continued – and in reference to the payments you have made – we will credit you with L. 2,347,663, the total of the sums indicated in the enclosed form. These sums are to be credited to the respective names and made available to them; you are responsible for the correct identification of the depositors".

The letter also referred to the sums paid by property administrators, sums that were to be made available to the respective beneficiaries. There is therefore a difference of around L. 1.100,000 between the sum reported by the Trieste branches of the Cassa di Risparmio and that made available by the Commerciale Italiana and there seems to be no definite explanation for this since it was not possible to find the "enclosed form" that Commerciale Italiana mentioned. However, on 18 August 1945 the Trieste branches of the Cassa di Risparmio compiled another more detailed list, which was similar to the aforementioned one.

It reported another two sequestrations by the German authorities, one a safe-deposit box belonging to Mrs Emma Morpurgo (widow) containing various valuables, sums of money with the relative interest and silverware. On 23 April 1945 the aforementioned valuables had been given to Mr. Giovanni Rovati, who had been appointed by the Supreme Commissioner.

According to the assessment record dated 23 April 1945, the contents in the closed envelope No. 3595 belonging to Mrs Gilda Tolentino (née Dauer) suffered the same fate. The valuables and the balance from the book had been given to Giovanni Rovati on 26 April 1945. This list included 120 names, including the name of one Jewish community, and it also reported that safe-deposit boxes had definitely been forced open. In fact, this had probably happened to more than just the two reported. This supposition is based on the unquestionable evidence of people who made claims regarding the assets in safe-deposit boxes, but without receiving any positive answer from the Trieste branches of the Cassa di Risparmio, who denied any infraction.

It was not until May – June 1946 that payments began to be made. In a memorandum dated 6 May, the Trieste branches of the Cassa di Risparmio informed the Allied military government, Finance Department of Trieste, of the sum withdrawn, repeating the sum that had been indicated a year earlier; they also listed six names of people whose property had been expropriated and paid the relative sums in advance. The Bank also requested they be liquidated directly, to cover what they had already paid out.

Cases regarding fifty different people were opened for the retrieval of the sums that had been sequestered by the Germans. One of the documents is that of the Commerciale Italiana, dated 17 June 1946 with the sum of L. 2,347,663.45 that had already been paid. The personal files are located in the archives, ordered alphabetically and include all the documents pertinent to 1946, based on the personal sums that were paid back by the Commerciale Italiana, on 14 June 1945 as has already been said.

On 20 June 1946 on the second page of local Trieste News in the "*Giornale Alleato*", was an announcement from the Trieste branches of the Cassa di Risparmio stating that all amounts that had been sequestered for racial reasons were to be made available to the rightful owners. On 25 June 1946, probably in response to the press release that had been suitably widespread, the engineer Clemente Kerbes claimed the sums of L. 13,552.65 and L. 23,944.80 in the name of the Jewish Community in Trieste.

Two days later the CRT Secretariat instructed the accounting department to transfer the relative debit orders, not only to the Jewish Community but also to another four private individuals, and included the relative names and amounts.

The document sent by the Jewish Community in Trieste on 2 December 1949, signed by the President, Dr. Mario Stock, is both interesting and revealing. At the request of the Allied military government (Property Control), the Community asked the Trieste branches of the Cassa di Risparmio to send them a list of the clients whose safe-deposit boxes or sealed deposits had been opened and emptied by the German occupying authorities in 1943-45. Handwritten notes dated 14 December 1949 show that Inspector Aussinam (the name is not completely legible), the head of department Cramasteter, Dr. Battiggi had both been asked if: "either of them (a partially illegible word "remembers that"?) sealed envelopes were sequestered by the German authorities in 43-45". A handwritten sheet was enclosed stating that the Securities department (the surname of the inspector is then cancelled and is illegible, but it did not correspond to the name above) and another two officials were questioned in response to the Community's request. "Only the latter (Cramasteter) remembers that during the period in question, a sealed envelope belonging to Mrs Nina Morpurgo Fon was sequestered which, according to the inventory, only appeared to contain objects of little value (silver candle holders and the like). The bank clerk also remembers the event. However, no trace remains. The name is not included in the list of those closed, there is no policy and file; there is no inventory or record of sequestration".

It is also likely that the more elderly officials were questioned - but they also claimed to have no memory of the event, while the abovementioned documents do mention two occasions when sealed envelopes were broken open. One of the documents found also mentions the sealed envelope belonging to Mrs Dauer and Mrs Emma Morpurgo (widow), but of which absolutely no trace is to be found; while there must also have been a record and inventory, similar to documentation found in the banks in Fiume.

On 20 January 1953, in a letter signed by the Head of the Audit Section, Alfred O. Atkinson, the Allied Military Headquarters informed the Cassa di Risparmio in Trieste that the accountant Giuseppe Bellizzi and Dr. Ennio Larese had been authorised to consult the bank accounts registered in the name of the German Supreme Commissioner and the Chief Finance Officer AMG 13. Corps. This document also bears a notation in pen "Received by Dr. (name illegible), who having ascertained that Dr. Larese is interested in Jewish property and not the accounts of the Commissariat, has promised to intervene and let him have a list of the accounts that were requisitioned from Jews".

In actual fact, the official reply from the Trieste branches of the Cassa di Risparmio arrived on 6 February enclosing a list of the sums returned by the Banca Commerciale Italiano on 14 June 1945. It specified: "the list has been divided into two sections; the first concerns the sums that are still available to the rightful owners, while the second is a list of the sums that have so far been paid to the individual beneficiaries".

In actual fact, these lists are not in the files, and the only trace that remains and that seems to be linked to this matter is an accounting list without any specific names, with the handwritten title "Recovery of Jewish property sequestered by the Germans", dated 31 January 1953 (therefore compiled in the very period the AMG was investigating the matter). The total amount comes to L. 630,343 and there is also a precise handwritten note in shorthand, "paid without hundredths."

The problem remains of the amount reported by the Commerciale Italiana and the one indicated by the Trieste branches of the Cassa di Risparmio, since such a considerable difference is not even

covered by the latter's account, for which there are no further details. It is obvious that a considerable number of papers are missing that would have clarified the whole German sequestration procedure.

Two sheets were handwritten on 4 January 1971, numbered 17 and 18 and called "Various non-interest bearing debts. Balance carried forward. 1943. Amounts sequestered by the Germans". Next to the names, which certainly belonged members of the Jewish community, is the total, which comes to L. 89.306 on the first page and L. 219,561 on the second (66 entries).

In a letter dated 16 February 1981, the Jewish Community of Trieste asked for the inheritance of the Jews who had died in concentration camps and left no heirs (bank accounts, envelopes, safe-deposit boxes, savings books). On 8 March 1981 the Vice-President Dario Misan received a reply delaying the matter "since the investigations concern a considerable number of names".

The issue ends with a resolution by the Trieste branches of the Cassa di Risparmio management committee on 17 January 1992, with the subject: "Various entries. Amounts available to third parties". These were accounts where it had not been possible to restitute the sums deposited. The entries, with a total value of L. 18,370,701, had been assigned to the revenue account. A handwritten document entitled "Various entries: various non-interest bearing debts" was enclosed with the resolution. The first year is 1943; the first entry "Amounts sequestered by the Germans" with the sum L. 219,561 written next to it, corresponding to the abovementioned sheet number 18.¹²²

6.2.5. The Trieste branch of the Banca Commerciale Italiana

One important point covered by the documentation concerns a decision by the Central Head Office of the Commerciale Italiana to deduct an amount corresponding to the withdrawals made by the occupying army at some of the Commerciale Italiana branches, (including that in Trieste), from a bank account belonging to a German military institution, *il Deutsches Marinenkommando*. Once the Finance Department of the Allied military government in Trieste had authorised the use of the *Oberkasse* account in June 1946 to reinstate the deposits and bank accounts belonging to Jewish clients, the sum in question for Trieste, which came to L. 4,794,000 was made available by the Finance Department itself.

6.2.6. Restitution to the Jewish Community in Trieste of five "sacks" containing objects confiscated from Jews by the German occupying authorities in the Adriatic Coast zone.

On 10 February 1962, a provisional deposit was made in the Italian Treasury. Indexed as number 1117, it comprised five "sacks" containing objects that had presumably been confiscated from Jews by the German authorities in the Adriatic Coast Zone. These "sacks" came from the Provincial treasury department in Trieste.

Until February 1997 - that is for around 35 years - the "sacks" were kept in the Italian Treasury without anyone ever claiming ownership so the deposit continued to exist in accordance with the directives ruling the so-called Treasury provisional custody deposits. Even those who might, for various reasons, have been interested in resolving the problems connected with the ownership of this property also gradually forgot the very existence of the "sacks" and its final destination.

It was only recently, i.e. in February 1997, that the issue suddenly became of interest once more, probably due to the international discussion of the so-called "Jewish treasure", which brought to light this strange and 'small-scale' episode of the five "sacks".

¹²² ASTrieste branches of the Cassa di Risparmio , *Segretariato generale*. AF 9. 1948.

In a memorandum dated 6 February 1997, the Province of Trieste informed the Treasury that they knew of the existence of the deposit with the five “sacks” in the Italian Treasury and asked, upon request from the Jewish Community in Trieste, to identify and carry out all necessary procedures to make these valuables available to the “citizens who could claim to have valid rights to the retrieval of the property that had unjustly been taken from their families”. If restitution should prove impossible, the suggestion was made to put the property up for auction and then give the money to the Trieste Community.

On 28 June 1945 the Trieste Commerciale Italiana sent the secretariat of the Italian branch service a list of the 62 safe-deposit boxes that had been forced open since September 1944. In some cases the German authorities had deposited the securities that had either been found in an account in the name of the Finance Department of the Supreme Commissioner or in the name of the individual owners from whom the valuables had been confiscated.

The Commission deemed it of the greatest importance to use the documentation available from the various institutions and offices to reconstruct how the objects in the “sacks” actually arrived at the Central State Treasury, thus making it possible to formulate a reasonable hypothesis regarding their ownership and therefore propose suggestions to close this issue once and for all - an issue that includes aspects that go far beyond mere bureaucracy. It does not seem to be necessary - and might be excessive - to describe the facts that have been reconstructed in fine detail by the Commission. A report has been published that can be consulted. A description of the final conclusion should suffice.

On the basis of a series of considerations, the Commission has proposed the closing of the provisional deposit No. 1117 in the Italian Treasury and that, at the same time, this property should be transferred to the Union of Italian Jewish Communities so that the aforementioned can assign this property to the Community in Trieste. These proposals were agreed with and on this basis it was thus possible to confirm a principle of a general nature in article 2 of law 18 July 1997, No. 233 “Directives for solidarity towards members of the Jewish communities who were persecuted for racial motives, in the application of law 336/1970 of 24 May and successive amendments and supplemental acts”. "1. Property that was taken from Jewish citizens or persons to be believed such for reasons of racial persecution, and that has not been restituted to its legitimate owners either due to the death or disappearance of the aforementioned and their heirs, and that is still in custody or kept by the Italian State for any reason, are to be allocated to the Union of Italian Jewish Communities that will make sure it is assigned to the individual Communities, taking into consideration the origins of the property itself and where misappropriation took place".