

## CASSA DI RISPARMIO DI VENEZIA

The documents relating to the expropriation of Jewish assets and related problems between 1938 and 1945 are contained in just one envelope, No. 23, at the Historic Archive of the Cassa di Risparmio di Venezia (Carive)<sup>1</sup>. It is divided into files distinguished by letters of the alphabet and sequentially numbered documents. The fact that accounting documents are missing and that even the letter-books, reports and every kind of general document have been lost, for reasons of time and damage caused by high tides, limited the real possibility of responding to all the Commission's questions.

Consultation of the surviving documents has, however, allowed some information to be gathered on the Fascist persecution from 1938 to 1942 (dismissals, direct and indirect debit positions of "clients, thought Semitic", mortgage agreements, regulations and their application); on the period of the RSI (stoppage, sequestration and confiscation of real estate, safe-deposit boxes); and on problems relating to the restitution of assets to the Venice Jewish Community.

The dismissal of Jewish employees began on 4 December 1938. The case of the taxation employee Eugenio Mires concerns a dispute over the method of settlement and lack of compensation, for which he lodged an appeal. But Dr Vianello – who represents the historic memory of the bank – recalls the names of other colleagues who were reinstated after the War: Angelo Silva, a certain Zéccheli and Emilio Calimari, a clerk.

The Cassa di Risparmio di Venezia received the regulation as interpreted by the Banca d'Italia, the Fascist Federation of Banks and Insurance Companies and the Federation of Veneto Savings Banks.

A first letter marked "urgent, highly confidential" dated Venice, 20 September 1938, signed by the manager of the Venice branch of the Banca d'Italia and addressed to the associate manager of the Carive, Furio Bettini, recommended the strictest observance of banking secrecy "before any requests by authorities in general, intent on gaining information about the existence of deposits in cash or securities of any kind, or about movements in the deposits contained in metal safe-deposit boxes or suchlike, in the names of Jews".

On 24 November 1938 the Federation of Veneto Savings Banks replied to the Carive about the change in the legal position of Jews resident in the kingdom since 1 January 1919, or with citizenship from a later date. The accounts or files kept by such "foreign Jews" "are to be submitted to the special regime concerning deposits and foreign securities". "Internal accounts" must be

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<sup>1</sup> Cfr. G. Vianello, *Guida all'Archivio storico del Monte di pietà e della Cassa di risparmio di Venezia, 1800–1950*, Venice 2000 (first edition 1987).

distinguished “in the specific category of accounts registered to foreigners permanently living in Italy or in Italian possessions or colonies who have issued a declaration renouncing negotiability”. The Fascist Confederation of Banks and Insurance Companies in Rome sent the banks an “urgent, confidential” letter regarding “Loans to foreign Jews” on 30 November 1938. Following considerable correspondence regarding interpretation of the regulation, the Carive drew up a schedule, in triplicate, of its “clientele of Jewish race, with foreign citizenship”, containing the full personal details of the debtor, the amount of the debt, the expiry date and a description of any surety.

On 15 December 1938 the Chief Executive of the Carive sent the Inspectorate for the Defence of Savings and the Provision of Credit, based in Rome, details of the direct and indirect debit positions “of clients thought to be Semitic with Italian citizenship”. There were 53 names, and all the information requested was also provided for “foreign Jews”. The various names of companies and individuals included that of the Venice Jewish Community.

A survey of the names of land loans “current with companies thought by us to be of Jewish race” began in the same period. This list, divided into “counter-guaranteed land loans”, “non-counter-guaranteed” and “agricultural”, containing 43 borrowers, was sent by the Carive to the Istituto di Credito Fondiario delle Venezie in Verona, representing the EGELI.

Around 15 December 1938 the Carive also began identifying the Italian and foreign “names of Jewish race” with details of “a) direct or indirect debit positions as at 30 November, with the distinction of any loans granted after the tenth of that month; b) clients who ought to be prevented leaving the kingdom”. Only one person “belonging to the Jewish race”, Angelo Fano, was among those clients granted credit in the form of current accounts on 30 November 1938. He was granted a loan of L.20,000 underwritten by securities.

The investigation of debit positions then also extended from the Head Office of the Carive to the provincial branches. Nominal lists were made, complete with personal details, place of residence and all the account details required by the bank. They included a list of advances on home loans expiring on 1 July 1942, comprising 13 people; a list of the “exposure of names of people presumed to be of Jewish race”, comprising 24 people; a list of “farm credit lines” in the Portogruaro branch; a list of the “exposure of Jewish clients” in the Lido branches, and again in Portogruaro. The list contained names of residents in Padua, and in Trieste, such as that of the senator Teodoro Mayer.

Two other Jewish people were extended credit, from the Mestre branch on 30 November 1938.

The audit of nominal details in the Land Bank Department, with all the specific banking information, began at the end of December 1938 and continued into January and February 1939. The Federal Institute of Veneto Savings Banks was the active party and the various branches of the

Carive responded in suitably detailed terms. In May 1939 the Federal Institute advised that “it does not think it the case that the Land Banks should grant loans to farmers of Jewish race”. In November 1939 it specified that not even “discriminated Jews” could be granted farming loans.

Following dlq 2/1944 of 4 January, instructions were given by the Venice Prefecture and the EGELI for the procedures of stopping, sequestering and confiscating the assets (open safe-custody deposits, shares, securities, savings accounts, valuables in suitcases in closed packs, safe-deposit boxes) reported by the Carive. There was a total of 30 cases.

In order to carry out the stoppage and subsequent confiscation of “valuables or current accounts deposited and registered to Jews”, from December 1943 the Carive proceeded to individually identify the Jews living in the various parts of Venice and in the provincial towns where the bank was represented. In order to compile the lists as comprehensively as possible, it used the survey made by the various Public Security Commissariats: 161 people were counted in the Venice district of Castello, 301 in San Marco, 28 in Sant’Elena, 74 in San Polo and 608 in Cannaregio; 10 were counted in Marghera, 67 on the Lido, 12 in Mestre, 5 in San Donà di Piave, 8 in Cavazzere, 9 in Dolo and 5 in Mirano.

The lists were based on the name of the head of family or the person who had a relationship with the Carive. But they did not refer to assets, nor did they provide an exact count of the resident Jewish population.

One set of documents, identified in the *Segreteria generale* series, concerns the stoppage and subsequent confiscation of moveable assets ordered by the EGELI, relating to companies and farming concerns, for which there was the additional problem of taxes. Marco Aurelio Pasti, a big rural land-owner and member of the Agricultural Land-owners Association, was appointed Commissioner for management of the farms: three “Jewish farms” were put under management by the commission, then sequestered and confiscated. Administrative correspondence on these confiscation processes remains, but there are no accounting documents apart from the sums owed for the payment of the management and taxes.

Another set of Carive *Segreteria generale* documents relating to the Federation of Veneto Savings Banks contains press clippings, along with regulations and circulars on inter-bank relations. It also contains the minutes of a meeting on 9 February 1944 when the EGELI assigned the Istituto di Credito Fondiario delle Venezie in Verona the task of managing sequestered and confiscated Jewish assets. The minutes offer an interesting insight into the political position of the managers or representatives of the various Savings Banks on acceptance of the appointment.

Finally, 48 cases of the EGELI real estate sale and management department of the Istituto di Credito Fondiario delle Venezie, based in Verona, concern the confiscation of “valuables, as shown

below, owned by the Jewish firm in question, of which that bank is depository”. The information is, however, divided and probably incomplete.

In June 1944, following directives concerning the sequestration and confiscation of Jewish owned safe-deposit boxes, the Carive supplied the list of names and relative place of residence of the “box holders”, who numbered 41.

On 14 July 1945 the Chief Executive of the Carive wrote to the Venice Jewish Community, giving his assurance that “citizens of Jewish origin have been and are able to immediately, without any impediment, collect the deposits or credits that in any case exist in their favour at this bank. We have advised the Istituto di Credito Fondiario delle Venezie in Verona of your rightful desire that it let us have the sums and securities of such citizens on deposit at that bank on behalf of the EGELI as soon as possible”.

On 27 July 1945 the Chief Executive wrote to the Credito Italiano, informing him that the Istituto di Credito Fondiario delle Venezie, in Verona “has returned the securities belonging to citizens of Jewish origin, previously deposited with you [...]. We will send you the securities in question, so that you can arrange, under your responsibility, to return them to their legitimate owners”.

Consultation of the report on the annual balance for the 1945 financial year shows that no mention is made of the restitution of assets taken from Jews. Neither do the minutes of the board of directors meetings of 18 May, 25 June and 13 July 1945 carry any mention of discussions or decisions on this. But in that same period, on 14 July, the Chief Executive sent the quoted letter to the Jewish Community offering his assurances.