

4 Emigrated and Plundered. The Tietz Family after the “Aryanization” of the Company

The Affiliated Companies and the Legends about a “Severance Payment”

In the partition agreement of August 13, 1934, the Tietz family received the promise that one group company would be exempt from “Aryanization”. It was the Mechanische Feinweberei Adlershof AG, a Berlin textile company that had not previously been given any particular importance by either the Tietz family or Hertie. In Section 6 of the partition agreement, Georg and Martin Tietz received the assurance that they would be able to acquire this small part of the group’s assets as private property. The transfer was to take place in the form that the brothers would take over the Mechanische Feinweberei Adlershof with all assets and liabilities, i.e. including the buildings, equipment, warehouses, receivables from suppliers and obligations to creditors. For this purpose, Hertie provided the Tietz family with an amount of 1.5 million RM. It also undertook to grant the company in Adlershof the benefits of a purchasing group affiliation for a period of five years.¹

The agreement reached relating to the Mechanische Feinweberei was not only materially the most important promise that the family had received based on the contract for division, but also the only one that was not specifically designed to make emigration easier. The residential and commercial buildings left to the family were chosen specifically so that they could be easily sold when emigrating, and with the accompanying approval of foreign exchange transactions and the exemption from the Reich flight tax, which will be described later in more detail, the connection to emigration is still obvious. Only the time limit of five years reveals that the arrangement for the firm in Adlershof was not intended to be permanent.

In a chain of contracts, the Mechanische Feinweberei was initially renamed “Mefa” Bleicherei, Färberei, Apparatur und Textilhandels AG (hereafter Mefa Bleicherei), based on the name of the company Berliner Bleicherei, Färberei & Druckerei GmbH, with which it had been merged in 1923.² The renaming was apparently intended to differentiate it from the founding by the brothers Georg and Martin Tietz of a new trading company operating under a similar name, and thus the renaming process made sense. The Mefa Bleicherei was founded on November 9, 1934. The Tietz brothers founded Mefa Textilhandels GmbH (hereafter Mefa Textilhandel) with a share capital of 20,000 RM, initially together with Mefa Bleicherei, which was represented by the Hertie staff members Hermsdorff and Steffani. On

the same day, the Mefa Bleicherei shares were transferred to Georg and Martin Tietz, who thus became the sole shareholders of Mefa Textilhandel. They acquired the Mefa Bleicherei business property for 450,000 RM in further contracts and leased this site to Mefa Bleicherei.³ The former Mechanische Feinweberei was subsequently transformed from a commercial operation into a trading company. The Tietz brothers appointed their former chief secretary Charlotte Eigner (later Kücher-Eigner) as managing director in Adlershof.⁴ She had the family's full trust.

Georg and Martin Tietz founded two other companies for foreign trade purposes that – as stipulated in Section 14 of the partition agreement – would be allowed to belong to the purchasing group of the Hermann Tietz or Hertie Group as affiliated companies. There was a bit of a stir surrounding the founding of Tietz Connection and Export GmbH (Anschluss- und Export GmbH) in December 1934, which was already recognizable from its name as an affiliate of the department store group. Since this company was founded and entered into the commercial register almost at the same time as the brothers were forced out of Hermann Tietz & Co., speculation arose. Did the two of them continue to work in the group under different flags? Was their departure just a cover-up? The press was almost more interested in such news than in the long-awaited news of the family's departure. The Hertie management protested against the name and distanced itself from the new Tietz company in a press release. It was “a personal founding by Messrs. Georg and Martin Tietz, which has nothing to do with the business operations of Hermann Tietz & Co.” The brothers were now “complete strangers” to the Tietz Group. However, Hertie had to admit that the Tietz family's new company belonged to the firm's purchasing group.⁵

Georg and Martin Tietz founded another affiliated company for export business in London under the name Tietz Ltd. With the approval of the Berlin Foreign Exchange Office, they were able to raise the share capital of 10,000 British pounds through a loan from a Belgian financier.⁶ Tietz Ltd. was managed by the two brothers together with the British merchant Arthur Vandyk and the Dutchman Erik Emmer.⁷ Within Tietz's export business, the roles were probably distributed in such a way that Tietz Ltd. in London acquired orders for deliveries from Germany and Tietz Connection- und Export GmbH then concluded contracts with German manufacturers from Berlin. For such transactions, loans were essential, since the Tietz companies had to pay the German manufacturer before receiving payment from the client.

For the export business described above, Georg and Martin Tietz thus received a special permit from the Reich Office for Foreign Exchange Management on September 28, 1934. At this time, the Reich's chronic foreign exchange shortage was exacerbated by the increasing trade deficit. The beginning of an upswing in the domestic economy after the global economic crisis led to an increase in im-

ports, while exports stagnated. The new Reich Economics Minister Hjalmar Schacht, who replaced the ailing Schmitt in July 1934, responded to this situation as part of his "New Plan" by expanding the management system to include the entire foreign trade administration.⁸

It was in accordance with this policy that the Reich Office for Foreign Exchange Management was persuaded to use the Tietz family's connections to improve the foreign trade balance. On October 9, 1934, Georg, Martin and Betty Tietz received approval from the foreign exchange bureau of the State Tax Office in Berlin, in reference to the mentioned decree from the Reich Office, "to grant loans to two trading companies you set up abroad to sell department store items for the purpose of generating additional funds to purchase goods in Germany worth up to RM 9,000,000 (Reichsmark Nine Million)."⁹

At first glance, this approval of the Foreign Exchange Office appeared to be an extraordinary benefit that only a few Jewish entrepreneurs were granted to support their emigration, similar to the exemption from the Reich flight tax promised in the partition agreement. The Tietz family was faced with the problem of not being able to convert their remaining assets into foreign currency when they emigrated. According to the then current regulations, their assets, including the proceeds from the sale of the remaining properties, would have remained in blocked accounts in the country. It therefore sounded promising when the Foreign Exchange Office assured the Tietz family in its decision of October 9, 1934 that it would be allowed to use freely the foreign exchange proceeds from the approved export transactions.¹⁰

In this decision, the Foreign Exchange Office also stipulated that a total of 50 percent of the foreign exchange proceeds had to be paid to the tax authorities. The earned foreign currency was to be distributed between the Tietz family and the state according to a fixed key that varied with the amount. For example, with foreign exchange proceeds equivalent to 1 million RM, only 35 percent had to be delivered to the State Tax Office; if the business reached a volume equivalent to seven million RM, then 80 percent was to be paid out to the tax office. The export business of Tietz Anschluss- und Export GmbH and Tietz Ltd. was also subject to restrictive requirements from the Foreign Exchange Office: these transactions had to be orders from foreign companies that had not previously purchased in Germany and goods that were primarily made from German raw materials.¹¹

Only a small amount of data has survived regarding the business of Tietz's affiliated companies, especially since Georg and Martin Tietz refused to keep professional accounting, because they only saw themselves as representatives of the companies and not as owners in the sense of a general partnership.¹² The surviving report, however, an audit carried out by the Foreign Exchange Office in June 1937, clearly shows that the Tietz brothers' export business remained on a

**Der Präsident
des Landesfinanzamts Berlin
(Devisenstelle)**

Gefch.Nr. 2401/320 Dr.Bg.

Witz:

In der Antwort ist die Angabe der Geschäftsnummer
und der Witz nicht erforderlich.

Berlin NW 45, den 9. Oktober 1934

Neue Kasse: 28-36

Telefon: 2 : Nummer 0014

Edelstrassen: 10 und 13 1111

Erweiterung: 10 und 13 1111

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Eing. 12 Okt 1934 mo

PI BI

Herrn
Georg Tietz, Martin Tietz und
Frau Betty Tietz,
z.Hd. des Rechtsanwalts Dr. Wilhelm
Beutner,

Berlin W.
Markgrafenstr. 46, II.

Gemäss Erlass der Reichsstelle für Devisenbewirt-
schaftung vom 28. September 1934 -Dev. A. 38542/34-
erteile ich Ihnen die Genehmigung zwei von Ihnen im
Auslande zu gründenden Handelsfirmen zum Vertrieb von
Warenhausartikeln Kredite zum Zwecke des zusätzlichen
Ankaufs von Waren in Deutschland im Werte bis zu
RM. 9.000.000.-- (Reichsmark Neun Millionen)
zur Verfügung zu stellen.

Der Nachweis der Zusätzlichkeit der Warenbezüge
der noch zu gründenden beiden Firmen ist in der Weise zu
führen, dass Sie Bescheinigungen deutscher Auslandsver-
tretungen (Konsulate, Botschaften und dergl.) darüber
vorlegen, dass die in Frage kommenden Abnehmer der
beiden neuen Handelsfirmen bisher nicht in dem beab-
sichtigten Umfang oder in letzter Zeit überhaupt nicht
deutsche Waren unmittelbar oder mittelbar gekauft haben.
Diese Bescheinigungen müssen auch genaue Angaben über
die Art der zu bestellenden Waren enthalten. Die Ent-
scheidung darüber, welche Waren in Rahmen dieser Regu-
lung ausgeführt werden dürfen, behalte ich mir vor.

Sie

Die. 478 A 4

Fig. 22: Notice from the Berlin State Tax Office (Foreign Exchange Office), October 9, 1934.

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Sie haben aus den Devisenrückflüssen, die aus dem Verkauf dieser Waren im Auslande entstehen werden, die in Spalte 2 der nachfolgenden Liste angegebenen Hundertsätze der Eingänge abzuliefern, während Sie über die in Spalte 3 angegebenen Hundertsätze für Ihre eigenen Zwecke verfügen können. Mindestens in Höhe der Beträge, die danach abzuliefern sind, haben die beiden ausländischen Firmen die Kredite an Sie in Devisen zurückzuzahlen.

Betrag:	Abzuliefern:	Nicht abzuliefern:	Es bleiben nicht abgeliefert:
RM. 500.000	--	100%	RM. 500.000.--
x " 1.000.000	35%	65%	" 650.000.--
" 1.000.000	20%	80%	" 800.000.--
" 1.000.000	35%	65%	" 650.000.--
" 500.000	20%	80%	" 400.000.--
" 1.000.000	40%	60%	" 600.000.--
" 1.000.000	70%	30%	" 300.000.--
" 1.000.000	80%	20%	" 200.000.--
" 2.000.000	80%	20%	" 400.000.--
durchschn.....	50%		RM. 4.500.000.--

Zwecks Abwicklung des vorstehenden Warengeschäftes erteile ich Ihnen die allgemeine Genehmigung, dass Sie

- a) vor Ihrer Auswanderung nach Ablieferung des für den einzelnen Abschnitt geforderten Devisenanteils über den Ihnen belassenen Anteil der zu erwartenden Devisenerlöse sowie über von Ihnen im Auslande gegen Sicherstellung aufzunehmende Kredite frei verfügen dürfen und
- b) nach Ihrer Auswanderung, zunächst auf sechs Monate von der Auswanderung ab gerechnet, über Ihre inländischen Konten und Forderungen in Reichsmarkwährung in den einem Inländer gezogenen Grenzen frei verfügen dürfen,

insoweit

Fig. 22 (continued)

very manageable scale. Within a year and a half, Tietz Anschluss- und Export GmbH and Tietz Ltd. had acquired only three larger orders; two other cases, an intended trade in Siemens teleprinters and an export contract to deliver coal to France, did not materialize.¹³

One of the orders received was from Robert Cassel & Co. Ltd. in Port Elizabeth, South Africa for the establishment of a perfum factory. In order to pay the German manufacturer, Tietz's export companies had claimed the approved loan of 30,000 RM. Payment, however, could only be expected in the course of 1938. Another deal was a contract to deliver an order of machines worth six million dinars to Serbian Mining and Metallurgy Ltd. (Serbische Berg- und Hüttenindustrie AG). Georg and Martin Tietz's affiliated companies had placed orders for the contract in Germany worth 473,000 RM and paid 429,000 RM of this amount with bonds. The third larger deal was a contract with the Drach Mitteleuropäische Holzaktiengesellschaft in Vaduz/Liechtenstein, an international sawmill group, for the delivery of wood processing machines at a price of 5,250 British pounds.¹⁴ The Tietz companies had already paid the manufacturer, the Fleck company in Berlin-Reinickendorf, 122,950 RM. Later some difficulties arose in this transaction because the Mitteleuropäische Holzaktiengesellschaft could no longer pay for the order.¹⁵

It remains open as to whether Georg and Martin Tietz had high expectations regarding this export business. After emigrating, they were not dependent on the foreign exchange proceeds, since they had long had sizable deposits at banks in Switzerland and the Netherlands. Although the company owners' securities account with the Swiss Bank Association was included in the partition agreement, the securities account with the Zurich bank Blankart & Cie. had been left with them, and likewise their deposits with the Amsterdam bank N.V. Transandine Handel Mij. They were able to keep these accounts secret from the German authorities, the first one worth around 500,000 Dutch guilders, and the second around one million Swiss francs.¹⁶

It is reasonable to assume that Georg and Martin Tietz saw the affiliated companies as more than just a basis for a future professional existence abroad. The regulations on export transactions were nevertheless important because they enabled them in a transition period to sell their villas and to transfer other assets abroad. It also turned out to be important that the brothers were able to continue to act as company owners, which proved to be particularly advantageous abroad. German entrepreneurs who carried out business with the approval of the Reich authorities had an easier time outside Germany than emigrants whose citizenship had been revoked.¹⁷ Expanding the Mefa Textilhandel in Adlershof may also have nourished the hope that conditions in the Reich would change again in the foreseeable future.

Two years after the partition agreement had been signed, this hope was gone. The Tietz family decided to emigrate despite the ongoing business of their affiliated companies. As the persecution of the Jews became more and more radical over the course of the year, the agreements made in the settlement agreement became worthless. Hertie terminated the affiliation contract with Tietz Connection and Export GmbH five days after the pogrom night of November 9, 1938 with immediate effect: "Since you are undoubtedly a Jewish company, we can no longer be expected to maintain the current business relationship with you that we had to enter into at the time in connection with the severance package for Georg and Martin Tietz."¹⁸

According to later information from Tietz's lawyer, Aldenhoff, Mefa Textilhandel's business is said to have developed well.¹⁹ The assurances contained in the partition agreement were also broken here. In May 1939, on the instructions of a liquidator appointed by the Treptow district in Berlin, Mefa Textilhandel as a "Jewish company" was forced to close down. The remaining assets were forcibly auctioned off at bargain prices.²⁰ Since the Tietz family had already emigrated, they were spared the worst. The Zwillenberg family, however, had not joined them. After being forced out of the Hermann Tietz Group, Hugo Zwillenberg had no plans to emigrate and did not participate in the affiliated companies. In vain he relied on the promise that Jewish front-line fighters in the First World War like him would be spared from persecution.

In the restitution proceedings initiated after the war, Karg explained: "The Tietz family received assets amounting to around 6 million Reichsmarks, most of which, as far as is known, they were able to transfer abroad under favorable conditions."²¹ In 1970, after an interview and subsequent biographical sketch of "Herr von Hertie," written by Eglau about Karg, the amount had already doubled: "Oscar Tietz's heirs emigrated with a severance payment of twelve million marks."²² These claims were repeatedly accepted without question, even though it has long been known that no evidence of such a "compensation" can be found.²³ The research for this study has also confirmed that it is a legend from the post-war period. The suggested impression that the Tietz family had received an appropriate price to freely dispose of during the "Aryanization" of their firm thus corresponded fully to the requirements that the restitution legislation placed on proof of legal acquisition.²⁴ Against this background, Karg now wanted to see the settlement agreement recognized as "a generous and decent settlement for the Tietz family."²⁵

The legend of a "compensation" of this amount may have alluded to the credit line of nine million RM that the Berlin Foreign Exchange Office approved for Georg and Martin Tietz in October 1934. However, this was by no means a payment to the Tietz family, but rather a trade credit that the two brothers' affiliated

companies were allowed to use to pay the manufacturers until payment from the client was received. Even later Karg would have known this exactly, especially since he is said to have had an almost photographic memory.

The approval of the Foreign Exchange Office for Georg and Martin Tietz was nevertheless unusual; with later “Aryanizations” such an agreement between the authorities and the expropriated Jewish entrepreneurs was no longer conceivable. If it had been possible to fully utilize the credit limit approved by the Foreign Exchange Office, then the Tietz family would actually have been able to transfer assets of 4.5 million RM abroad. But that did not happen. Because of the Foreign Exchange Office’s requirements for the brothers’ export business, no significant foreign exchange earnings were achieved until the family emigrated.

The other promises stipulated in the partition agreement also did not put the family in a position to transfer millions of Reichsmarks abroad. In total, these assurances were valued at 2.5 million RM in the Hertie management’s motivation report from October 1934, but a large part of this was attributable to costs arising from the Mefa contracts.²⁶ Incidentally, neither the transfer of the business in Adlershof nor the transfer of individual properties stipulated in the partition agreement can be considered as “compensation” for the Tietz family. Ultimately, these values came from the company’s assets, which the family had to forego in favor of Hertie.

Overall, as will be described below, the Tietz family was only able to transfer a portion of their domestic assets abroad, because the radicalization of persecution caught up with them when they sold their properties.

The Costly Farewell to Germany

The Tietz and Zwillenberg families already had suffered multiple experiences of discrimination and persecution in the early years of the Nazi regime. They had to watch as their Jewish employees were harassed every morning by SA thugs during the April boycott to deny them access to the service entrances of the department stores.²⁷ Furthermore, the owners were personally in the crosshairs of the smear campaigns of the National Socialist press, which translated into violence on the streets and visible defamatory graffiti on their business premises. As shown, the anti-Semitic pressure from the party base complemented itself in a more formal, but by no means less aggressive, guise in the coercion of the Reich authorities and banks to exclude the family from their company. With the gradual “Aryanization” of their commercial property, by 1934 at the latest, the family members were faced with the question of whether life would continue to be possible in Germany, and if so, under what circumstances. Weighing up this question

rationally was extremely difficult, as numerous aspects had to be taken into consideration amidst great uncertainty about the path that German politics, the economy and society would take.

On an economic level, this included the extent to which the former highly respected department store owners would be able to find a new professional livelihood after the loss of the family business. In 1934, Georg and Martin Tietz as well as Hugo Zwillenberg shared the hope that by withdrawing from the department store group they would also remove themselves from the crosshairs of anti-Semitic hostility, but could continue to be entrepreneurially active in the background. The Tietz brothers had therefore specifically pushed in the “Aryanization negotiations” to take over the majority share in the “Mefa” Textilhandel plant. The company could, they hoped, become the new platform for their business engagement.²⁸ With similar ulterior motives, Hugo Zwillenberg largely moved to his *Dominium Linde* estate in West Havelland from 1933 onwards, where he believed himself and his relatives were in greater safety from the everyday hostilities in the Reich’s capital. He spent most of his time as a farmer managing his estate. At the same time, he founded several smaller, unspecified manufacturing companies in the surrounding area, in which he remained involved until 1938.²⁹

The behavior of all three former Tietz owners reflected not only an unbroken entrepreneurial spirit, but also the quiet confidence that conditions in their homeland would perhaps stabilize again after what was hopefully a short period of radical upheaval. However, this hope, which was always filled with concern due to early experiences of persecution, was in no way combined with innocence. As previously described, Georg and Martin Tietz had only signed the settlement agreement in 1934 on the condition that they would be exempt from the Reich flight tax in the event of their emigration and could transfer their capital abroad at preferential conditions. This was an agreement officially agreed to by the Berlin State Tax Office, allowing the former owners to make provisions to be able to leave the country with as little loss of assets as possible.³⁰ The fact that the brothers were still able to negotiate such special conditions in 1934 testifies to the prominent position that Tietz’s “Aryanization” was given at the highest government level. At the same time, it becomes clear that the corset of state deprivation for Jewish persecutees had not yet fully developed at this point in time. The Nazi state still resorted primarily to an emergency decree that had already been issued in the wake of the global economic crisis in 1931: the Reich flight tax was originally intended to prevent foreign exchange controls from being undermined through arbitrary capital transfers abroad. When emigration due to persecution increased as the Nazis came to power, this measure was easily exploited by the Nazi regime in a pseudo-legal manner as a special anti-Jewish tax. Accordingly, the exemption limits were reduced in May 1934 and the search for foreign ex-

change was intensified. From that point on, Jews willing to emigrate were criminalized solely on the pretext of potential tax evasion. Their assets could be blocked and ultimately confiscated by means of official security orders.³¹ Georg and Martin Tietz were probably very aware of this increasing tax persecution, discrimination and discrediting during the negotiations in the summer of 1934, so that they were already steering towards a ruling in advance of their departure that would address the tax concerns for their possible emigration.³²

The economic consequences were only part of the considerations on the basis of which the Tietz and Zwillenberg families had to consider the pros and cons of their emigration. The everyday discrimination that they, like all Jewish fellow citizens, were exposed to in the early years of the regime did have an impact. Harassment was increasing everywhere, even before the so-called Nuremberg Laws were passed in 1935. The extensive exclusion from social life, the ban on using theatres, cinemas, swimming pools or parks, or even being treated by “Aryan” doctors, were just some of the experiences of discrimination that made those affected people feel demoted to the status of second-class citizens. With a heavy heart, the family had to witness how long-standing employees of their company, as well as personal friends and acquaintances, lost their jobs and faced an uncertain future.³³

The sociologist and historian Wolfgang Seibel explains that in the 1930s, the persecution situation gradually became more and more stressful due to an interplay between formal ideologically radicalizing state persecution structures and an anti-Semitic attitude climate that spread informally in society, which ensured that the scope for moral behavior available in everyday life became increasingly disadvantageous for ethno-religious, social and political fringe groups.³⁴ This image aptly describes the joint effect of state disenfranchisement and limitation of everyday personal life, in which discrimination became a largely accepted social practice.

Unfortunately, there are no concrete sources that would provide insight into how the Tietz and Zwillenberg families dealt with these experiences. It is all the more valuable that Roe Jasen, the daughter of Edith and Georg Tietz, born in 1924, was available for a contemporary witness interview in which she shared some of her memories with the authors. According to her accounts, she saw herself – the nine-year-old Rösli Tietz – from 1933 onwards confronted with prohibitions and new rules of behavior that her parents were hardly able to explain to her. Above all, what remains in her mind are the numerous school changes that she had to experience.³⁵ While her uncle Martin Tietz had been abroad frequently since the Nazis came to power, her parents were initially hesitant about taking their school-age children Rösli and her three years older brother Hans Herrmann abroad. While their son was already attending high school in 1933, their daughter

went to a bourgeois public elementary school in Berlin-Grunewald, where she was exposed to increasing harassment from teachers and classmates. When it was time to move to a secondary school in 1934, the entrepreneur's daughter was denied access to almost all educational institutions in Berlin.³⁶ Her parents only found a place for her in the Dahlem Ursuline School, a former convent school run by Catholic sisters with secular teachers who were known for their religious liberality and who continued to teach students of Jewish origin. Rösli remained in this enclave until 1936.³⁷ There are already indications here that the individual family branches of the Tietz owners left Germany at different times for familial, emotional, but often also very pragmatic reasons. As it turned out, her future fate was to be largely linked to this decision.

Until the mid-1930s, the Tietz family owned modern business-owner villas in Berlin. Betty Tietz, her son Martin and his wife Anni lived in the above-mentioned house at Kaiserallee 184/185, built around 1900 and surrounded by large parks, which the company's founder, Oscar Tietz, had acquired before the First World War and expanded into a family home. By means of a purchase agreement dated December 28, 1936,³⁸ Betty Tietz sold this villa, presumably under duress, to the Kingdom of Bulgaria, which set up its embassy office there. The purchase price amounted to 286,500 RM.³⁹ In the following months she herself rented a guesthouse at Pücklerstraße 2 in Dahlem. Martin and Anni Tietz probably also moved from the villa to an apartment on Gelfertstraße in Berlin-Dahlem in 1936. It was within walking distance of the mother's accommodation.⁴⁰

Edith and Georg Tietz lived in a representative city villa at Koenigsallee 71 in the prominent Grunewald district, very close to the villa of Walther Rathenau, the Reich Foreign Minister who was murdered by right-wing radicals in 1922. The upper-class terraced building with two side wings and guest bungalows is embedded in a spacious green area with a tea temple and access to the lake.⁴¹ As was usual with their commercial property, the private property holdings were also grouped together in a separate management company called Grundstücksgesellschaft Koenigsallee 71 mbH. In addition to the approximately 4,800 square meter site, the company managed an adjacent waterfront property on Hundekehlee and an area at Gustav-Freytag-Straße 17. Edith and Georg Tietz made use of the latter in 1928 to expand their domicile by around another 5,000 square meters; they had purchased it at a price of 125,000 gold marks.⁴²

After their emigration, the couple sold their house with a contract dated July 19, 1938 to the up-and-coming Berlin manufacturer Willy Vogel, who had set up his own business for central lubrication systems in 1929. The deal was arranged through the real estate agent Kurt Nünnik. The "Aryanization" of the private property took place with all adjacent properties, including part of the inventory, which encompassed numerous built-in furniture and furnishings, such as: high-quality desk ensembles, car-

pets, lighting fixtures, but also gymnastics equipment, a rowing shell and a pool table.⁴³ A flat rate of 233,000 RM was set for the “Aryanization” of the entire property. The purchase price of 139,520 RM estimated for the property at Koenigsallee 71 alone was still significantly below the standard value of 157,000 RM. The property was still recorded in the balance sheet of the Koenigsallee real estate company at the end of 1936 with a value of 183,300 RM.⁴⁴ The secondary properties were sold for 76,700 RM (Gustav-Freytag-Str.) and 6,700 RM (water property) at the standard value. The inventory, valued at an extremely small amount of 10,000 RM, was included in the total price.⁴⁵

In concert with the numerous approval authorities that were involved in the assessment of the “Aryanization procedures”, the takeover took place subject to the approval of the Berlin district economic advisor and the responsible foreign exchange and price control office of the chief finance president. Consequently, the purchase price never reached the direct hands of the sellers, who were treated by the authorities as “non-Aryan” foreign currency holders. Instead of being paid out, the purchase money went into an escrow account with the notary Oswald Freisler and was blocked for payment of the resulting Reich flight tax. As early as July 1937, as part of their emigration, the Tietz couple was forced by the Foreign Exchange Office to deposit a security mortgage on their property in the amount of 220,000 RM at the responsible Tax Office in Wilmersdorf-Süd.⁴⁶ In this way the Nazi tax administration sought to guarantee in advance their access to the assets of the former department store owners. It was certainly no coincidence that the sales price estimated later corresponded almost exactly to this security amount.⁴⁷ The buyer of the property took advantage of the Jewish owners’ predicament created by the authorities to sell their property as quickly as possible and at a minimum price equal to the tax obligations. This type of interaction between the Nazi state and private buyers of the property of the persecuted was also common practice.

Georg Tietz and his wife had no way to resist these machinations, on the contrary: as can be seen from internal letters between Edith Tietz and her representatives Charlotte Eigner (later Kücher-Eigner) and Bruno Bley, who handled the sale in Germany for them, they had to accept all conditions in order not only to ensure a rapid transaction and to enable a quick payment of their tax liability, but also to protect those family members remaining in Germany from feared repression. Bley wrote shortly after the purchase contract was concluded:

It is naturally unavoidable that the handover of the property brings or will bring with it a certain amount of unrest, etc. [. . .] On the other hand, you must always keep in mind that we are very happy that the property has been sold and that we have the greatest interest in a smooth transaction; [. . .] We also have to keep in mind that if this smooth process is not

successful, the difficulties that have already existed could become much greater, including for your mother and Thea. Based on the negotiations I have conducted so far with the authorities involved in the purchase matter, I would rule out the possibility that they would try to block the resolution of the sale. Nevertheless, we are also dependent on the buyer, who could perhaps – if he wants to – create difficulties (although I don't think he wants to cause us any trouble).⁴⁸

The degree to which the Tietz family was taken advantage of in the course of this “Aryanization” is revealed a little later in a report from the pricing office of the district mayor of Wilmersdorf, which was prepared after the purchase contract was presented. In this case, the office accused Willy Vogel of having made excessive “de-Jewification profits” when purchasing the Tietz Villa, since only the standard value was taken into account, but not the significantly higher market value. In particular after the numerous forced sales of Jewish property following November 9, 1938, intensive debates developed among the Nazi authorities as to the extent to which the German real estate market could be protected from collapsing prices and personal enrichment.⁴⁹ The pricing offices were tasked with monitoring such negative developments and also taking regulatory action in individual cases. Hence, in the Tietz case, it only approved the purchase agreement on the condition that the purchaser paid a further 51,000 RM to the Reich Treasury in order to skim off the excess profits from “Aryanization” for the benefit of the regime. For the Jewish owners, this process only showed how badly they were robbed of their assets.⁵⁰

Since the much smaller apartments of Betty, Martin and Anni Tietz in Dahlem hardly offered enough space and the entire family initially had no new home after emigrating, they stored their household items, which they had put together over the years with effort and a great deal of art appreciation, at Spedition A. Schäfer in Berlin-Wilmersdorf. In addition to all the furniture, which ranged from high-quality furnishings to garden seating, the interim storage facility also included from their belongings a valuable library and a collection of historical paintings.⁵¹ There was still the faint hope that at least parts of the collections would later be released to them from Germany.⁵²

The First Stage of Emigration and the Financial Naturalization of the Tietz Family in Liechtenstein

The Tietz family did not emigrate in one step, but gradually, initially while still maintaining their residence in Berlin. In January 1937, the couples Georg and Edith Tietz and Martin and Anni Tietz registered a second home in Budapest.⁵³ It cannot be determined whether a move there was planned, but it must be viewed as unlikely since already in the spring of 1937 signs of a plan for emigration to

Switzerland began to appear. At that time, Georg and Edith Tietz placed their children in Swiss boarding schools.⁵⁴ On this occasion, they will have made some contacts and found out about financial naturalization in the Principality of Liechtenstein, which at that time helped a growing number of emigrants from the German economic elite to obtain new citizenship.

As early as March 28, 1937, Georg Tietz applied for membership in the citizens' association of the municipality of Triesen for himself and his family in the Principality of Liechtenstein.⁵⁵ His brother and sister-in-law followed this move in August 1937.⁵⁶ Georg and Edith Tietz left Germany permanently after selling their villa at Koenigsallee 71 in June 1938. Six months later, Betty Tietz also moved to Switzerland, to a guesthouse in Lucerne. The Berlin tax authorities dated their emigration to December 15, 1938.⁵⁷

In the 1920s, in order to consolidate its finances, the Principality of Liechtenstein expanded financial naturalization, through which people without residence in the Principality and without family connections to Liechtenstein could obtain citizenship in return for paying a tax. This procedure, which was initially practiced by the communities, was now used by the princely government as a source of money for the budget by issuing its own tax. In Vaduz it was hoped that this would also attract investors, which the area, still largely agricultural at the time, desperately needed. The principality's finances were shattered by the effects of the First World War and inflation in the protective power Austria, with which there had been a currency alliance. The principality therefore concluded a customs treaty with Switzerland in 1923, introduced the Swiss franc as its currency and from then on was represented diplomatically by Switzerland. Due to pressure from abroad, financial naturalization was reorganized in 1934; new citizens were now subject to a three-year residency requirement in Liechtenstein, which could only be waived in exceptional cases. The tax rate for naturalization was subsequently increased to 15,000 Swiss francs for the respective municipality and 7,500 Swiss francs for the state, then at the end of 1936 to 20,000 Swiss francs for the municipality and 10,000 Swiss francs for the principality.⁵⁸

Applicants for financial naturalization in Liechtenstein were almost all wealthy entrepreneurs or aristocrats from Central and Eastern Europe. In 1931, a temporary high of 36 financial naturalizations was reached due to the introduction of the Reich flight tax in Germany. After 1933, an increasing number of emigrants from Germany's Jewish business elite applied for financial naturalization; those naturalized included the major industrialist Paul Silverberg (1936), the entrepreneur Alfred Merton (1937) as well as the bankers Siegfried Bieber (1937) and Herbert James Beit von Speyer (1939) and Georg Solmssen (1939). The number of financial naturalizations of German emigrants rose to 30 in 1937.⁵⁹

When the Vaduz lawyer Ludwig Hasler submitted the naturalization application for Georg Tietz in March 1937, he praised his client highly. The applicant had paid taxes on assets of 1.4 million RM in Berlin, was also a “co-owner of Tietz Limited in London,” had large assets abroad and was “in complete compliance with the German authorities.” Tietz had a dual residence, Hasler explained, and would maintain his residence in Berlin until his business there is wound up. As supporting evidence, he enclosed a tax assessment, certificates of reputation for the couple from Budapest and a copy of the assessment from the Berlin Foreign Exchange Office for Georg and Martin Tietz.⁶⁰

Hasler's statements must have impressed the community meeting in Triesen. The community, which had around 1,100 inhabitants at the time, was under heavy strain due to the construction of an inland canal along the Rhine and the improvement of the community's land in the Rhine Valley, which also served to create jobs. The naturalization tax of a wealthy entrepreneur from Tietz Ltd. London was very welcome. Although there were also critical voices regarding financial citizenship in Triesen and the conservative Fatherland Union was strongly represented here, the community citizens' assembly voted on April 11, 1937 for the naturalization of Georg, Edith, Hans Herrmann and Rösli Tietz with 115 yes votes, 69 no votes, and 18 abstentions.⁶¹

Now the request had to be approved by the state parliament and the prince. The princely government obtained information about Georg Tietz from the family's banks in Amsterdam and Zurich. Transandine Handel Mij., whose owner Samuel Siegfried Fritz Hochheimer was a former Leonhard Tietz employee, certified that Tietz had assets of more than one million Swiss francs.⁶² The bank Blankart & Cie. confirmed that he had been known “for many years as a worthy, wealthy merchant.”⁶³ Impressed by this information, the state parliament attempted to secure from the “applicant” a naturalization tax of 30,000 instead of the usual 20,000 Swiss francs, but Georg Tietz did not want to agree to that demand. On May 7, 1937, the state parliament voted on his case. The Vice President had previously warned the opposition not to reject this proposal and not to make the – apparently common – accusation that “we would buy every Jew.” A majority, nevertheless, rejected the application. According to the ensuing debate, this was intended to set an example against the naturalization of Jews. The vote result was a disaster for the Triesen community. Its leader Ferdinand Heidegger (Fatherland Union), who was also a member of the state parliament, immediately pointed out the consequences: “The community of Triesen is in dire need, and now we'll have to stop working. We have already taken an advance on this expected tax.” He was accused of “blackmail” because of this clarification, but the well-being of the community of Triesen outweighed this maneuver. A “reconsideration of the decision” was requested, and the MPs now voted for the motion with two abstentions.⁶⁴

Fürstentum Liechtenstein.

Zl.

Familien-Heimatschein

von der untenzeichneten Ortsvorstehung wird hiemit beurkundet, daß

T i e t z G e o r g

geboren zu G e r a Fürstentum R e u s a m 10. Jänner 1889

sowie dessen Ehefrau E d i t h geborene G r ü n f e l d

geboren zu B e r l i n a m 25. Juli 1894

endlich dessen eheliche Kinder:

T i e t z H a n s H e r m a n n geb. am 21. Jänner 1920 zu B e r l i n

T i e t z R ö s l i M a r g geb. am 8. Jänner 1924 zu B e r l i n

geb. am zu

geb. am zu

geb. am zu

geb. am zu

Bürger der liechtensteinischen Gemeinde T r i e s e n sind und jederzeit in dieser ihrer Zuständigkeitsgemeinde Aufnahme finden.

Ortsvorstehung T r i e s e n

am 14. M a i 19 37.

Die Echtheit nebenstehender Unterschrift und des beigedruckten Amtssiegels wird hiemit beglaubigt.

Fürstl. liechtenst. Regierung.

Vaduz, am 15. Mai 1937 19

Fürstl. Regierungs-Kanzlei

Ferd. Heisigger

Vorsteher

Gemeindevorsteher
Triesen
Fürstenth. Liechtenstein

REGIERUNG DES FÜRSTENTUMS LIECHTENSTEIN

Fig. 23: Homeland certificate of the Principality of Liechtenstein, May 15, 1937.

Georg, Edith, Hans Herrmann and Rösli Tietz were accepted on the 14th of May 1937, “with the highest resolution of His Serene Highness the Sovereign Prince,” into the Liechtenstein State Citizens’ Association and were granted the civil rights of the municipality of Triesen.⁶⁵ Taxes and fees totaling 32,600 Swiss francs had to be paid for this – an amount equivalent to four times the annual salary of the head of Liechtenstein’s government. In addition, a security deposit worth 30,000 Swiss francs was established.⁶⁶

In August 1937, the lawyer Hasler submitted an application for the naturalization of Martin and Anni Tietz to the Triesen municipal council. He claimed that the applicant “can still stay in Berlin without being harassed and has also received permission from the German Reich to transfer part of his assets.”⁶⁷ Again he was able to obtain certificates from the banks N. V. Transandine Handel Mij. and Blankart & Cie. and the fact that the couple had no children was also considered an advantage, as in this case the Principality did not have any obligations for the next generation.⁶⁸ The Triesen community assembly approved with 110 votes to 41, and the application was routinely passed in the state parliament on October 26, 1937, as one of seven naturalizations, including that of the banker Hans Arnhold, his wife and daughter.⁶⁹ Three days later, Martin and Anni Tietz were granted the citizenship of the principality at the same price as Georg and Edith.⁷⁰

Georg and Edith Tietz never actually planned to move to Liechtenstein. They fulfilled the residency requirement that had in fact existed in the first years of citizenship by staying in hotels and a guesthouse in Vaduz for longer periods.⁷¹ However, no other permanent address can be determined in the surviving correspondence from 1937 to 1939. The couple apparently lived in hotels, alternating between Zurich, Liechtenstein and France.

The Tietz family initially did not inform the German authorities of their new nationality. Only after the German consulate in Zurich found out about this in the spring of 1938 and inquired with the princely government in Vaduz did they return their German passports.⁷² How useful the new citizenship turned out to be was to be shown when the mayor of the Treptow district in Berlin in December 1938 threatened to close the Mefa Textilhandel as a “Jewish company.” Hertie had previously terminated the company’s connection rights promised in the partition agreement for the same reasons. Georg and Martin Tietz asked the Princely Government for diplomatic representation through the Vaduz lawyer Alois Ritter and hoped to be able to prevent the closure by transferring the company to the non-Jewish managing director Charlotte Eigner and a Swiss businessman.⁷³ Although the Swiss embassy in Berlin considered the matter to be unpromising, it intervened with the German authorities. As a result, Theo Freimuth, the liquidator employed in Adlershof, was recalled and the ordered closure

was revoked.⁷⁴ When the district mayor then again appointed the commercial judge Freimuth as liquidator and he closed the company on May 6, 1939, the Tietz brothers' new citizenship was no longer of any use. The Swiss embassy in Berlin informed Bern that a new intervention would be utterly hopeless because these were German emigrants.⁷⁵

Georg Tietz and his family were released from the Liechtenstein state association on March 31, 1947 at their own request because they had now received American citizenship.⁷⁶ Martin and Anni Tietz did not emigrate to the USA and therefore developed a stronger bond with Liechtenstein, and Martin retained citizenship of the principality until his death. In a letter to the princely embassy in Bern dated September 7, 1949, he stated that he had lived in Triesen since his naturalization and assured the embassy that he would not move back to Germany.⁷⁷ Nevertheless, he would never have lived permanently in Triesen. He wrote a letter dated July 1938 with the address "Zurich, new castle," and, according to a certificate from the Liechtenstein government dated December 2, 1938, the couple lived in Zurich, Leonhardstraße 1.⁷⁸ After the war, Martin Tietz was involved in the restitution proceedings and his place of residence was consistently listed as Havana, even though he assured the Liechtenstein authorities in 1949 that this address in Cuba was merely a second residence, where he "stays" for three to four months every year.⁷⁹ Later residences in Locarno and Munich were added, but one cannot deny that Martin Tietz had a personal connection to Liechtenstein: In 1951 he purchased a house in the Ebenholz district of Vaduz, and his legacy later gave rise to the Martin Tietz Foundation for Educational and Family Counseling in Vaduz.⁸⁰

When they emigrated, the Tietz families parted ways with the Zwillingenbergs permanently. The Tietz brothers were still close during the transition phase of the time they spent in Switzerland and Liechtenstein, but they were unable to establish a new home for the family there. And they were unable to build a new professional life in any country after emigrating, even though both were in their prime in 1938, aged 47 and 42 respectively. Tietz Ltd. in London still existed, but with the termination of its affiliation status, it lost its basis for business operations.⁸¹ The forced "Aryanization" of the department store group and their expulsion from Germany led to the Tietz family being completely uprooted.

Presumably shortly before the outbreak of the Second World War, Georg Tietz and his family fled to England for a few months before setting off on an almost year-long odyssey in 1940 to finally reach the USA via Cuba.⁸² Due to her American citizenship, which had been reinstated at the end of 1938, Betty Tietz was probably the first of their family to emigrate to the USA. According to the correspondence of her Berlin general representative Walter Bernhard, she was already living in New York at the beginning of January 1941.⁸³ While Georg, Edith, Hans Herrmann and Rösli Tietz followed her there, Martin and Anni stayed in

Cuba, which at that time was one of the few countries still open to Jewish emigrants. The couple settled in Havana, where it was almost impossible for Martin to find professional employment commensurate with his previous experience, but their lives were at least secure.⁸⁴

From Camp to Camp: The Emigration of the Zwillenberg Family

Hugo Zwillenberg, his wife Elise and their two young children Lutz Oscar and Helga Henriette Linde were not blessed with this luck. The former co-owner of the department store group, who had fought for Germany in the First World War, did not want to give up his homeland and especially his estate, which he had built up as a farmer with great meticulousness over the years. His hope that his largely secluded life at Dominium Linde could protect him from repression was dashed at the latest with the brutal riots of the night of November 9, 1938. During the pogrom, Hugo Zwillenberg was arrested in his Berlin office, where he wanted to protect his business documents from the mob. His work rooms were completely vandalized and looted. On that same day he was taken to the Sachsenhausen concentration camp in the north of Berlin. While in prison, he was pressured into selling both his residential property on Berlin's Hohenzollerndamm 100/101 and his estate in Westhavelland. Only when he agreed to a sale and also paid a little more than 50,000 RM in so-called smithers money for the damage that the Nazi henchmen had caused to his business premises, was he released again on November 26, 1938 after more than two weeks of imprisonment.⁸⁵

Forced to sell his private real estate, Zwillenberg had to part with the Dominium Linde on January 20, 1939 at a purchase price of 268,000 RM. The rural estate, including the country residence and 1,500 hectares of fields and forests, was valued at around 640,000 RM in 1933.⁸⁶ A little more than a month earlier, the family had already lost possession of their modern home on Hohenzollerndamm in Berlin. On December 9th, the "Aryanization Contract" was signed directly by the Reich Treasury in the person of Chief Paymaster Friedrich Gebert. He, in turn, acted on behalf of the Wehrmacht High Command, which set up a new Site Administration II on the property under the direction of General Hoepner.⁸⁷ The Zwillenberg House was taken over along with all of its furnishings. Gebert dictated the purchase price for both the property and the furniture. He presented the family with an inventory list "with approved prices" and pointed out that there was no scope for negotiations. Gebert's listing came to a purchase price of 31,077 RM, with the real value of the furniture alone being 93,000 RM, i.e. it was estimated to be more than three times as much as the purchase price.⁸⁸ Not all

the money from the sale was made freely available to the Jewish owners, but rather was immediately offset against the burden of taxes and compulsory contributions in a blocked account.⁸⁹

Under constant fear of being forced into camp detention again, Zwillenberg and his family emigrated to the Netherlands on March 3, 1939. When they arrived in Rotterdam, he immediately started working as an entrepreneur again. He acquired the majority shareholding of N. V. Eerste Nederlandsche Snaren- en Catgutfabriek, which manufactured and sold internationally natural strings for string instruments. The contact with the long-established company and its Hakkert family, which was also Jewish, probably went back to his passion for classical music, which he had already pursued in the 1920s as a committed supporter of the Society of Music Friends of Berlin.⁹⁰ In the same year, 1939 Zwillenberg was also appointed Honorary Consul of the Republic of Nicaragua in Rotterdam. This diplomatic position came with a certain level of protection when the Netherlands was occupied by German troops in May 1940. Constantly harassed by the Security Service (SD) and the Reich Commissioner for the Netherlands, the radical anti-Semite Arthur Seyß-Inquart, Zwillenberg was able to avoid being arrested again for almost three years. At the end of October 1943, however, he and his relatives were arrested and taken to the notorious Kamp Westerbork transit camp, from where they were to be deported to one of the extermination camps.

The family only escaped this fate through an intervention by the Swiss embassy at the Berlin Foreign Office. Instead, in March 1944, Hugo, Elise and the children were transferred to an internment camp for so-called privileged prisoners in Vittel, France.⁹¹ "Vitell too," Hugo Zwillenberg later reported, "was a German camp with a German camp commandant, guarded by the German Military with Gestapo surveillance over the Jewish captives and similar prisoners. The Gestapo also arranged for their removal from the camp, which was ordered by SS officers. Before this transport, around 40 people and families had been transported from the Vitell camp to an extermination camp, a process that led to considerable distress and suicides among those affected."⁹²

In May 1944 the Zwillenberg family was finally loaded onto a freight train, initially with a destination that was unclear to them. How great the relief must have been when they were finally exchanged for German prisoners of war near Barcelona.⁹³ Having now been made a citizen of the country of Nicaragua by an emergency decision of the President, Hugo Zwillenberg found passage for himself and his family on the Swedish passenger ship Gripsholm, which was supposed to bring diplomats and wounded soldiers to New York.⁹⁴

But this was not the last stop on their difficult escape route. During a stopover in Algiers, the ship was intercepted by the British Navy and all passengers were subjected to a check of their origins and political reliability. While Elise Zwillenberg



Fig. 24: “Boulevard des Misères” of the Westerbork camp in the Netherlands, around 1943.

and her almost 14-year-old daughter were briefly housed in a hospital, Hugo Zwillenberg and his son were interned for a few days in the POW 203 Fort de l'Eau prisoner of war camp. When the identity check was finally completed, the family discovered that their transport ship had already set off for the USA. The Zwillenbergs laboriously searched for other travel opportunities, and on June 30, 1944, they only managed to reach Lyauty near Casablanca, where they lived in emergency accommodations provided by the United Nations until November 15, 1944, before finally moving to another, now French, camp of the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration near Philippeville.

On August 26, 1945, the family returned together to the now liberated Netherlands and Hugo Zwillenberg took over the management of the Nicaraguan consulate in Rotterdam.⁹⁵ The family finally found some peace after years of torture and various imprisonments and internments. Ultimately, they too had survived and had managed to escape the Shoah several times at the last minute. However, the Nazi state had appropriated a large part of their assets in the course of their escape and emigration.



Fig. 25: The Swedish diplomatic ship Gripsholm anchors with emigrants in Algiers, May 20, 1944.

Robbed and Expropriated: The Confiscation of Family Property

In addition to the private profiteers from the “Aryanization” of commercial enterprises, real estate and land, by 1936 at the latest the Nazi state moved into the position of enriching itself from the assets of the persecuted. The starting point for the confiscatory access was formally the abandonment of the domestic residences of the Jewish emigrants, later of the deportees. The monitoring of the payment of the Reich flight tax was further tightened. With the entry into force of the notorious Paragraph 37a of the Foreign Exchange Act, from the end of 1936 onwards a security order could not only be imposed on the tax debt incurred, but the entire assets of suspected emigrants could be transferred to blocked accounts and withdrawn from the control of the owners. Whereas up to that point, at least a suspicion – often fabricated by the financial or police authorities – was required to initiate the harassing tax collection, from the spring of 1938 onwards the Nazi regime had discarded any restraint it had previously exercised out of

consideration for possible foreign trade consequences. The state expanded its confiscatory toolbox with new tax and property control rules, such as the anti-Jewish compulsory levies and stricter requirements for the transfer of goods and capital.⁹⁶ In April 1938, a collective reporting and blocking obligation was issued for Jewish assets, which were now systematically recorded and prepared for state access.⁹⁷ A few weeks later, a decree was issued that officially registered all Jewish businesses and their shareholders. This also included the real estate companies that remained in the possession of the Tietz family after the department store “Aryanization”: Mefa, Königsberger Grundwert AG and Grundstücksgesellschaft Koenigsallee 71 GmbH as real estate companies.⁹⁸

After the November pogrom, the registration step was followed by suppression and robbery. On the same day, November 12, 1938, the closure of the remaining Jewish commercial, trade and industrial companies was legally decreed and all Jewish citizens were subject to a special levy totaling collectively one billion RM. In order to achieve this “contribution sum,” the state demanded 20 percent of the respective assets of each Jewish taxpayer, initially payable in quarterly installments starting on December 15, 1938. In the summer of 1939, a further five percent of the Jewish asset levy (Judenvermögensabgabe) was collected by the chief finance presidents of the State Tax Offices, so that a total of 25 percent of Jewish assets went into the public purse.⁹⁹ Even if the Jewish asset owners had ultimately managed to cope with this approximately 50 percent tax and levy burden, the Nazi regime again seized their property when transferring the assets. Similar to the Reich flight tax, the state here also instrumentalized foreign exchange management to hide special levies. As part of the foreign exchange controls, every foreign transaction involving cash or securities was subject to registration and approval by the Reichsbank. Payments had to be processed through its subsidiary, Deutsche Golddiskontbank (Dego). For this purpose, the assets were parked in so-called emigrant blocked accounts at specially approved foreign exchange banks, from where they could be exchanged for convertible currencies, so-called free Reichsmarks. For this exchange, Dego demanded an ever-increasing discount on Jewish assets. While “Aryan emigrants” were offered a constant exchange rate of around two blocked marks to one free RM, the rate for the persecuted fell from 100:30 (1935) to 100:13 (January 1938) to just 100:4 (September 1939).¹⁰⁰ In the three-step process of the Reich flight tax, the Jewish asset levy and transfer deductions, the persecuted Jewish citizens were financially plundered on a comprehensive basis. If assets were still held in German blocked accounts, they were ultimately deemed to have been forfeited to the Reich under the Eleventh Executive Order to the Reich Citizenship Law of November 25, 1941.¹⁰¹ In this rough outline of the instruments of

confiscation, it becomes clear that the intensity of the confiscatory action was also closely linked to the time of emigration.

This also applied to the Tietz and Zwillenberg families, who, after losing their family business, were now directly robbed of large parts of their assets.

Tab. 11: Confiscation of the Tietz family's private assets, 1936–1942.¹⁰²

	Assets 1936	Reich flight tax	Jewish asset levy	Transfer loss	Confiscated property/ enemy property
Zwillenberg, Hugo & Elise	1,058,500	267,208*	312,250	247,898	unknown
Tietz, Georg & Edith	1,384,067	325,180	not taxed as a foreigner	unknown	180,000
Tietz, Martin & Anni	997,795	249,449	not taxed as a foreigner	unknown	200,000
Tietz, Betty	1,760,200	440,050	352,041	158,905*	370,000

*calculated from information provided

Table 11 shows the asset losses of the four Tietz family branches in the course of the repressive tax and levy collection by the National Socialist tax authorities. It reveals the enormous, but unfortunately quite typical, level of state enrichment. It should be noted that the table only offers an incomplete insight into the actual confiscation measures, due to the still incomplete sources. Nevertheless, it may at least help to orient oneself on the types and intensity of confiscation.

The starting point for the tax assessment for all family members was the wealth tax notices from the summer of 1936. According to these notices, the assets of the family group totaled just over 5.2 million RM. Betty Tietz recorded the highest individual assets of around 1.7 million RM, followed by Georg Tietz, the last senior partner of Hermann Tietz OHG, who was assessed together with his wife at 1.38 million RM.¹⁰³

It is striking that all branches of the family were fully subject to the Reich flight tax. The special tax treatment in the case of emigration promised by the ministry in 1934 was ignored by the responsible tax authorities barely three years later. One of the central demands of the Tietz owners was not met and simply ignored in the increasingly radical climate of discrimination and enrichment.¹⁰⁴ Georg and Martin Tietz were forced to pay the Reich flight tax on a quarter of their assets immediately after their official emigration on November 5, 1937 and January 1, 1938.¹⁰⁵

Betty Tietz and the Zwillenberg couple, who remained in Germany until after the November pogrom of 1938, had to pay the confiscatory combination of the Reich flight tax, Jewish net assets levy, and transfer disagio. In the months following their emigration, they lost around 50 percent of their assets to the tax authorities. In addition, there were transfer losses when exchanging the remaining assets, which, at least in the case of Betty Tietz, can only be partially reconstructed today.¹⁰⁶

The confiscation steps in the case of Hugo Zwillenberg and his wife were much more closely documented. In February 1939, the family assets were valued at 1,058,500 RM on the basis of a tax assessment that was now almost three years old. This sum included cash assets of 707,161 RM, fixed-interest Reichsbahn bonds worth 350,000 RM and an undeclared gift of 1,339 RM.¹⁰⁷ The first four installments of the Jewish asset levy were demanded in December 1938, and then a further quarter of the remaining assets were collected for the Reich flight tax. Including the fifth installment of the special tax, known in Nazi jargon as the “atonement levy,” which was later applied, the confiscated value amounted to around 515,000 RM.¹⁰⁸ The contemporary calculation did not include additional arbitrary demands, which Hugo Zwillenberg had already agreed to under the pressure of his imprisonment in the autumn of 1938. His assets according to the assessment status of 1936 had already been noticeably reduced by these demands. In detail, this involved an emigration tax of a further 20,000 RM and the obligation to make a so-called Helldorf donation of 65,032 RM.¹⁰⁹ This was a compulsory tax declared to be voluntary, but was legally completely illegitimate. It was imposed on wealthy Jewish citizens in Berlin by the police chief Wolf-Heinrich Helldorf. The city of Berlin had confiscated Hugo Zwillenberg’s passport during his imprisonment, and the donation served as a trigger to retrieve the documents. The money was supposed to go into an emergency fund for Jewish welfare recipients, according to Helldorff’s claim. In fact, the board of the Jewish community was forced to issue a receipt labeling the donation as an “extraordinary contribution (emigration tax).”¹¹⁰ In reality, the police chief paid the money directly to the Reich Ministry of Economics.¹¹¹

Added to these losses was the loss incurred when the remaining private assets were transferred from blocked mark accounts to free Reichsmarks. The Zwillenberg family participated in a special procedure with the Netherlands under the so-called Rheinmetall-Borsig transfer agreement, which was arranged for Jewish emigrants by the N. V. Hollandsche Koopmannsbank. In order to obtain permission to take assets to the Netherlands, the German Foreign Exchange Offices demanded an exchange fee of 80 percent. The Zwillenberg family declared a total of around 310,000 RM for the foreign exchange transfer, which meant that the Nazi financial administration alone withheld around 248,000 RM. The 61,975.68

D 756

Finanzamt Zehlendorf Berlin -Lichterfelde, 3. Nov. 1938

3a/2014 — Zimmer 13 Drakestr. Straße 35a

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(Nur für Überweisungen)

Herrn u. Frau Martin u. Anni Tietz Bln.-Dahlem, Gelfertstr. 20

z. Hd. Herrn Rechtsanw. Dr. Kurt Jacobsohn
Bln.- Wilmersdorf
Gieselerstr. 12

Druckerei: Hausanschluß

Fördert den unbaren Zahlungsverkehr, erspart längeres Warten in der Finanzkasse!

Publikumsverkehr bei der Finanzkasse wochentags von 9 bis 13 Uhr; am letzten Werktag im Monat ist die Finanzkasse ganz und Sonntags ab 12,30 Uhr geschlossen.
Die Namen und Unterschriftsproben der zur Zutrittserteilung berechtigten Beamten sind im Kassenraum angehängt.

Berichtigung gem. **Reichsfluchtsteuerbescheid**

§ 218 Abs. 4 AO. A. Steuerfestsetzung und Fälligkeit

Nach den Feststellungen des Finanzamts haben Sie Ihren inländischen Wohnsitz — gewöhnlichen Aufenthalt im Ausland — aufgegeben. Sie haben daher gemäß § 1 des Reichsfluchtsteuergesetzes eine Reichsfluchtsteuer zu entrichten. — Die gleiche Verpflichtung haben die mit Ihnen ausgewanderten Angehörigen (Ehefrau, Kinder), soweit sie mit Ihnen zur Einkommensteuer oder zur Vermögenssteuer zusammen veranlagt worden sind oder zusammen zu veranlagten sind.

Nach dem letzten Ihnen vor der Auswanderung zugegangenen Vermögenssteuerbescheid vom 1. Nov. 1938 betrug das Ihnen und Ihrer Ehefrau wie Ihre Kinder zugehörige Gesamtvermögen 909 151 R.M.

Dem Gesamtvermögen sind gemäß § 3 Absatz 3 des Reichsfluchtsteuergesetzes hinzuzurechnen:

Die zu Ihrem Vermögen-zum Vermögen-Ihrer Ehefrau gehörenden Stücke der Reichsbahn-anleihe 1931 mit 88 644

Hiervon ist der Anteil Ihrer Ehefrau an dem zusammengerechneten Vermögen R.M.

abzuziehen, mit Summe 997 795 R.M.

Hiervon ist der Anteil Ihrer Ehefrau und Ihre Kinder an dem zusammengerechneten Vermögen mit R.M.

abzuziehen; es verbleiben als steuerpflichtiger Anteil am Gesamtvermögen 997 795 R.M.

Die Reichsfluchtsteuer wird hiermit gemäß § 3 Absatz 1 des Reichsfluchtsteuergesetzes auf ein Viertel dieses Betrages

= **249 449 . — R.M.**

festgesetzt. Die Reichsfluchtsteuer ist gemäß § 5 des Reichsfluchtsteuergesetzes am 1. Januar 1938 fällig geworden;

sie ist gemäß § 6 des Reichsfluchtsteuergesetzes mit einem Zuschlag von 1 vom Hundert für jeden auf den Zeitpunkt der Fälligkeit folgenden angefallenen hundert Monat an die Finanzkasse zu entrichten.

*) Reichsfluchtsteuergesetz 1934 §. 599; Reichsfluchtsteuergesetz 1931 §. 609; 1932 §. 571; 1934 §. 392, 941; 1935 §. 850.

Reichsflucht Nr. 2 Der Zuschlag beträgt mindestens 2 v.H. des Rückstands.

Reichsflucht Nr. 2 (Reichsflucht Nr. 2) 4. 37. 10000

Fig. 26: Reich flight tax notice for Martin and Anni Tietz on 1 January 1938.

RM remaining after the transfer deduction was to be transferred to the applicant in 4,200 British pounds.¹¹² However, after the German occupation of the neighboring country, this agreed-upon payment never took place. Ultimately, the family emigrated to the Netherlands with very little cash. In January 1940, Hugo Zwillenberg was finally given a tax clearance certificate from the Wilmersdorf-Süd Tax Office. This confirmed that all existing and future claims of the Reich were covered by retained funds and secured blocked accounts.¹¹³

Unfortunately, there is no information about the amount of Zwillenberg's assets that remained in Germany after 1940. However, it can be assumed that the rest of his property also fell to the Reich in full in accordance with the Eleventh Executive Order at the end of 1941. Hugo and Elise Zwillenberg still had German citizenship in the Netherlands at this time, which now served as leverage for the Nazi regime. The family was stripped of their citizenship, and their blocked assets were confiscated. In principle, the "forfeited assets of the Jews," the law stated, "should be used to promote all purposes related to the solution of the Jewish question."¹¹⁴

In the cases of Georg and Martin Tietz, it was more difficult for the Nazi state to enforce its confiscatory intentions directly. Both were already citizens of Liechtenstein in the autumn of 1938 and for this reason, as foreigners, they could not be required to pay the anti-Jewish property tax. The Berlin Finance Office levied the first four installments of the fine that had been introduced shortly before against Betty Tietz, who renewed her US citizenship in December 1938. Around a year later, the legal basis for a notice to pay the fifth installment was lacking, as the Reich Finance Ministry determined after a thorough examination of an objection by Konrad Breyer, Betty Tietz's legal representative in Germany.¹¹⁵ The apparent legalism of the Nazi tax authorities in dealing with the assets of the now foreign emigrants only slowed down their fiscal access, while their greed diminished hardly at all. In the context of the preparation of the Eleventh Executive Order, a lively exchange developed as early as the summer of 1941 between the Reich ministries, the Gestapo and the financial administration on how the gaps in the confiscation laws could be closed and thus the assets of the three branches of the family, whose accounts were registered and blocked in several foreign and emigration accounts – including at the Dresdner Bank, Hardy & Co. in Berlin and the Bankhaus Seiler & Co. in Munich – could be appropriated for the Reich. It is evident that the police apparatus in particular urged the responsible Berlin Tax Offices to expropriate the property. The Chief Finance Presidium initially rejected this request, arguing that it was not possible to denaturalize foreign citizens on the basis of the Eleventh Executive Order and thus allow their assets to be forfeited.¹¹⁶ However, the legal alternative already existed for declaring Tietz's property as so-called assets hostile to the people and the state. The basis for this

legal pretext was a law passed in the summer of 1933, which originally focused on limiting undesirable domestic political activities.¹¹⁷ With the so-called Enemy Assets Ordinance of January 1940, the scope of the law had already been extended shortly after the invasion of Poland to include the properties of warring states, their citizens or persons classified as enemies of the Reich per se, all of which could be placed under compulsory administration. From May 1941, a direct Führer decree regulated the responsibilities for the administrative process, in which, in addition to the office of the newly created Reich Commissioner for the Treatment of Enemy Assets, the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Economics and the Interior and their sub-organizations were also involved.¹¹⁸

In the specific cases in question, the domestic assets of Betty, Georg and Martin Tietz were probably confiscated at the same time on June 27, 1942 by individual orders from the Gestapo headquarters in Berlin.¹¹⁹ For further administration, the immovable and movable property was from then on under the control of the Reich Commissioner and trustees appointed by him and by the court, who had to approve each account movement individually in close cooperation with the Foreign Exchange Office of the Chief Finance President.¹²⁰ It is striking that the confiscated “enemy assets” of the Tietz family were apparently not liquidated to the advantage of the state by the end of the war. This corresponded to a basic guideline of the Nazi government in dealing with cash assets, real estate and company property owned by foreigners still in Germany. The Foreign Office in particular intervened strongly against open exploitation, as, based on the experiences from the First World War, there was a fear that German assets abroad would be expropriated just as ruthlessly in response.¹²¹ With regard to the property of Jewish emigrants, this legalistic logic led the Nazi regime to resort to comprehensive “forced Aryanization” and fiscal confiscation until the property in question was declared enemy property in 1942. From that point on, the state continued to manage real estate, securities, cash, and even patents and copyright claims in trust. Access was only to be granted after the war had been won, when there was no longer any need to exercise consideration. In practice, however, these boundaries became blurred. It was still possible to circumvent or abuse the trusteeship if individuals, party officials or authorities expressed a particular interest in the sale or squandering of the property of Jewish citizens of so called “enemy countries.”¹²²

The Tietz family had only residual assets, which were placed under compulsory administration in 1942. In a later compensation procedure, Martin Tietz estimated that by 1942 he had private assets of around 200,000 RM left in Germany.¹²³ Georg Tietz’s assets were roughly the same, at around 180,200 RM, and consisted of a balance of around 60,200 RM in a blocked account at the Hardy & Co. bank and around 120,000 RM in a Mefa GmbH escrow account at the Dresdner Bank.¹²⁴ The assets of the two Tietz brothers had thus essentially been reduced to their

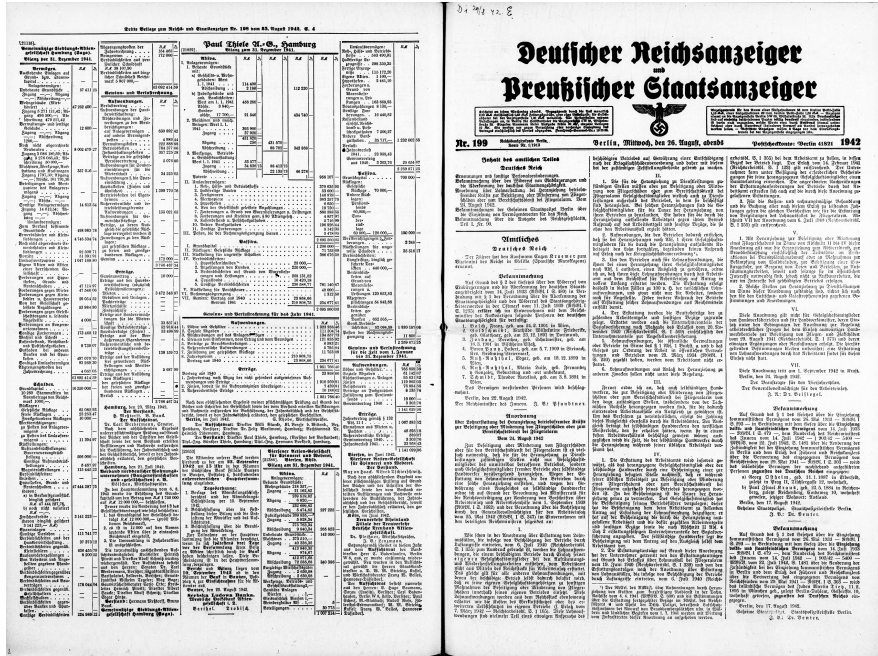


Fig. 27: Notice of the confiscation of Martin Tietz's assets, August 17, 1942.

former company assets, which had, however, been almost completely used up after various sales of real estate, equipment and warehouses between 1938 and 1942. The company remained in the ownership of the former department store owners during the Hertie division negotiations in 1934 and was managed by Charlotte Kücher-Eigner on their behalf. After the ban on Jewish businesses, the managing director was replaced in 1939 by the Berlin tax authorities without the consent of the owners by the party-compliant commercial judge Theo Freimuth, who immediately took the company into liquidation. The liquidator gradually sold off the inventory and the properties belonging to the business, “without taking into account the true value. Despite the lack of flawless and acceptable goods at the time, the large inventory was not even sold at the purchase price, but rather almost entirely squandered at less than that.”¹²⁵ In a compensation procedure in 1963, the Tietz family estimated the loss from the forced sale of Mefa's equipment and warehouse at 150,000 DM.¹²⁶ In fact, when the company was deleted from the commercial register on December 23, 1941, Freimuth noted that only around 13,300 RM was transferred to the blocked accounts for Georg and Martin Tietz as the remainder of the share capital.¹²⁷ In the list, the official liquidator also recorded loan repayments and interest worth around 105,000 RM for Georg Tietz

and 263,000 RM for Martin Tietz, which had already been distributed. The amounts in other accounts, including the assets stored in the Dresdner Bank's "Dep. K 64" account were confiscated by the OFD's asset realization office on July 7, 1942 (Georg Tietz) and August 11, 1942 (Martin Tietz), and the accounts were later closed.¹²⁸ Overall, the company was thus liquidated well below its value, and the two Tietz families had to use the funds released to cover the regime's flight tax demands.¹²⁹ Their property had thus already been largely plundered before it was declared "hostile to the Reich."

A similar observation can be made for Betty Tietz's assets, which, according to a list from 1944, amounted to around 371,000 RM. This involved cash assets of around 36,000 RM, which were stored in blocked accounts at the Dresdner Bank, Hardy & Co. and Seiler & Co. Rental income, maintenance costs and property taxes for four remaining properties in Berlin (Graudenzstr. 15, Gubener Str. 60 and 61) and Munich (Schützenstr. 1a) were also carried in these accounts. Betty Tietz's greatest asset, however, was the entire share capital of 300,000 RM of Königsberger Grundwert AG.¹³⁰ At that time, however, this enterprise was also only a kind of rump company, since significant parts of the extensive private property holdings had already been "Aryanized" under pressure since 1938 in order to free up money for paying taxes and compulsory contributions.

As already described, Königsberger Grundwert AG, founded in 1923, also remained with the family in the course of the partition in 1934, more precisely in the hands of Betty Tietz. For several years, the company initially remained largely untouched and managed six properties in Königsberg.¹³¹ In the company register of the Berlin Chamber of Industry and Commerce, the legal consultant Dr. Kurt Jacobsohn¹³² from Königsberg and the former Danat bank official Hermann Rachelmann from Berlin were still listed as board members. Both were long-time confidants of the family, to whom Betty Tietz had entrusted the management of the real estate company. The supervisory board was chaired by her son Martin Tietz, now living in Zurich, as well as the lawyers and bankers Walther Bernhard, Dr. Hans Rosenkötter and Franz Benezet from Berlin, and Dr. Alfred Mosler from London.¹³³

The first attempted seizure by the Nazi regime took place in October 1940. It was the Chamber of Industry and Commerce that classified Königsberger Grundwert AG as "not worth preserving" at the request of the Berlin police chief. The Chamber recommended that the owner be ordered to sell all of the properties.¹³⁴ Accordingly, the Gestapo requested the forced closure and confiscation of all assets, citing the Ordinance on the Use of Jewish Assets. The Reich Ministry of Economics intervened against what it called a "forced de-Jewification procedure" and justified its decision by saying that it had to take into account the American citizenship of the sole owner.¹³⁵ After the USA entered the war, the Reich Commis-

sioner for the Treatment of Enemy Assets finally initiated compulsory trust administration in May 1942.¹³⁶ On his orders, Konrad Breyer, who had been acting as legal representative and foreign exchange advisor for the emigrated Betty Tietz since 1938, was appointed as enemy asset administrator.¹³⁷ He was succeeded in the autumn of 1943 by the former Senate President Dr. Kurt Nowomiejski from Berlin-Nikolassee, who from then on kept the company's books, prepared the annual financial statements and handled all foreign exchange matters. On October 25, 1944, Nowomiejski reported that all six Königsberg properties had been bombed and the building structure destroyed. The value of the buildings brought into the company, around 210,000 RM, had thus been lost; the annual rental income of 42,500 RM was likewise lost. With a balance sheet total of 385,000 RM and a remaining property value of around 100,000 DM, which was burdened with over 20,000 RM annually in taxes and mortgages, he now classified the company as financially distressed.¹³⁸ After the end of the Second World War, the asset manager handed over the property and all company documents to an Allied trustee. The Königsberger Grundwert AG was presumably treated as American foreign assets to the benefit of Betty Tietz.¹³⁹

In addition to the large property company, Betty Tietz could no longer control the individual properties in her private possession, let alone benefit from the rental income to which she was entitled, which was strictly booked to blocked special accounts.¹⁴⁰ Documents are only available for the properties on Graudenzer Straße and Markgrafenstraße in Berlin. When she emigrated, Betty Tietz placed the residential building at Graudenzer Straße No. 15 in the hands of the property manager Auguste Rachelmann, the non-Jewish wife of the chairman of the board of Grundwert AG. The monthly rental income amounted to around 3,750 RM.¹⁴¹ In contrast, she sold house No. 14 in September 1938 to the master plumber Wilhelm Bock from Berlin and the businessman Robert Döhler from Reichenbach in Vogtland. The amount of the purchase price is not known.¹⁴² Betty Tietz presumably used almost all of the proceeds from the sale of the house and the rental income that had accumulated in the now-frozen emigrant account to help finance the compulsory contributions that had to be made. There seems to be no other explanation for the fact that as of August 31, 1939, there were only 9,600 RM left in the relevant account. Upon application to the Foreign Exchange Office, Betty Tietz was allowed to transfer 9,000 RM of this to the conversion fund for German foreign debts in Lucerne. However, this did not mean that the funds were at her free disposal. The payments to which she was entitled from rent, interest and repayments were simply transferred to interest-bearing Reichsmark bonds of the German Reich, so-called funding bonds, and were subject to further high transfer discounts.¹⁴³

In a particularly perfidious way, the Berlin financial authorities ensured at the end of 1938 that the emigrant's assets, which were tied up in the property on Markgrafenstraße, were included in the fiscal plunder. The residential and commercial building with a lucrative monthly income was rented out to two families and the textile trading company Hielscher & Co.¹⁴⁴ In order to cover the anti-Jewish taxes and compulsory levies, the persecution authorities pressured Betty Tietz to sell her property just two days before she was due to leave for Switzerland. In order to speed up the process, the German Reich, represented by the Reich Finance Ministry, acted as an "Aryanizer" itself. On December 13, 1938, the takeover contract was concluded on the basis of a purchase price of 460,000 RM. These proceeds went directly into a Dresdner Bank escrow account, from where 357,400 RM were transferred to the Berlin-Zehlendorf Tax Office and a further 11,500 RM to a property management company commissioned by the Reich, Wilhelm Droste & Co.¹⁴⁵ The remaining funds were used in 1939 for the additional "atonement levy" and the last remainder was finally placed under enemy property administration in 1942. These reconstructable cases of the Tietz family alone show how closely "Aryanization" asset freezes and fiscal plundering went hand in hand and how public and private beneficiaries enriched themselves equally from them. Particularly painful for the Tietz family was the loss of their private homes and personal belongings, which they had to leave behind when they fled Germany.

The Callous Exploitation of Household Goods and Collections

In the course of his rushed flight from Germany, Hugo Zwillenberg had no choice but to leave behind many of the art objects in his private house on Hohenzollern-damm. These included several paintings by Konstantin Cretius, Paul Meyerheim and Eduard Hildebrandt, among others, as well as a bronze animal sculpture by the well-known sculptor August Gaul, which alone was valued at 14,000 gold marks.¹⁴⁶ These art treasures were placed in the care of the Army High Command on the basis of a commission confirmation that was not worth the paper it was written on.

Some paintings were presumably distributed to various army officers' messes between 1939 and 1941, where they were later destroyed in air raids or had previously passed into unknown hands. After the Zwillenberg couple's assets were declared forfeited to the state on the basis of the Eleventh Executive Order, the Army High Command filed a claim with the Reich Finance Minister to four paintings and Gaul's elephant sculpture from the estate. "To simplify" the process, the claimant wrote under the heading "Transfer of former Jewish property" in January 1943,

“the Army High Command requests that the aforementioned paintings and the bronze cast [. . .] be transferred free of charge.”¹⁴⁷ The Asset Management Office of the Chief Finance President of Berlin-Brandenburg then began examining the application. It commissioned the art appraiser Ludwig Schmidt-Bangel, whom it often consulted, to evaluate the objects and brought in the special representative for the construction of a Führer Museum in Linz, Hermann Voss. The latter classified the art objects as particularly valuable and thus took over the sale of the Zwillenberg collection under Führer reservation.¹⁴⁸ However, the trail of the works of art goes missing here. All that is known is that Gaul’s bronze sculpture was taken to a monastery near Hohenfurth in Austria. It was apparently intended to be part of the Führer Museum, which was largely made up of looted art objects, but which was never realized.¹⁴⁹

A similar fate ultimately befell the goods to be moved and the art collections of Martin and Georg Tietz. After their property was declared “hostile to the Reich” in the late summer of 1942, the Berlin tax authority’s asset realization office set about selling the objects at auctions and direct sales, but not without first securing the state and its cultural institutions’ access to particularly valuable pieces. Historical provenance research has already described this pillage of the Tietz collections, in which a large number of public institutions and private beneficiaries were involved, with many details for individual objects, so that the complex processes will only be roughly outlined here.¹⁵⁰ In May 1940, Charlotte Kücher-Eigner commissioned Schmidt-Bangel, who also worked for the tax authorities, to re-record and evaluate the goods to be moved on behalf of the Tietz brothers. His report was intended to replace the rough inventory of the moving company and provide the basis for an application by the owners to be allowed to transfer the objects abroad, which never happened. The expert listed a total of 94 art objects from Georg Tietz’s collection. He estimated the total value at 105,680 RM.¹⁵¹ In addition to a few ornate carpets, the majority of the items were oil paintings, but above all an extensive portfolio with hundreds of etchings, graphics and designs by the prominent Berlin engraver Daniel Nikolaus Chodowiecki (1721–1801), as well as twelve early drawings by Vincent van Gogh (1853–1890) and works by Max Liebermann (1847–1935).¹⁵² The high quality of the pieces aroused rapacity. Schmidt-Bangel urged that at least six of the paintings be classified as national cultural assets and that German museums or collectors should be able to acquire them.¹⁵³ At the same time, the director of the Berlin Print Cabinet, Friedrich Winkler, had been urging the immediate acquisition of the Chodowiecki works since 1941, in order to free them from the poor storage conditions at the shipping company. In fact, the six prints were finally sold in early 1943 to an exhibition house at the list price.¹⁵⁴

This sale was in a way the start of a veritable race to sell the items. The regional finance office sold the pieces to the highest bidders, interested art collectors and antique dealers who came from all over Germany and even from the then “Axis power” Italy. In most cases, the list prices set in 1940 were significantly exceeded in such individual sales of paintings and arts and crafts objects. The same applied to collective auctions in which the property of both Georg and Martin Tietz was offered. The latter had had an almost equally extensive collection of paintings, fine tableware, porcelain and arts and crafts from his parents’ villa in the shipping company’s depot, which was now being liquidated. In the process of selling the items, a clear distinction between the collections was increasingly lost, so that the brothers’ property was often sold off without any further classification. In addition, the art and antique dealers ensured that Jewish property was distributed further and its origins were often concealed beyond recognition.¹⁵⁵

As early as 1942, the realization office of the Regional Finance Directorate also worked directly with auction houses. For example, the authority transferred 19 paintings to the Berlin auction house Hans W. Lange, which itself had emerged from the “Aryanization” of Paul Graupe’s long-established business. The auctions proved to be very profitable for both sides, as the works of Dutch masters owned by Tietz often fetched prices twice or several times higher than the original estimate. In the opening bids, the auction house had already added more than 50 percent to the original value of the picture collection, which had been estimated at around 25,500 RM.¹⁵⁶

Just like the art collections, Georg Tietz’s extensive book collection was also systematically disposed of. In the autumn of 1943, the Regional Finance Office commissioned the sworn expert Max Niederlechner to evaluate the library. The expert reported shortly afterwards that he had seen one of the most beautiful collections he had ever had the privilege of examining, and particularly highlighted the density of rare editions of novels, writings on economics, almanacs and various historical works from the 18th and 19th centuries. He estimated the value at around 20,000 RM and recommended that the book collection be transferred to the Reich Exchange Office (Reichstauschstelle), i.e. to the procurement office of German libraries. Individual valuable pieces were subsequently sold to collectors or auctioned off at the Munich art antiquarian bookshop Karl and Faber; the majority of the library, however, remained in a depot at the Reich Exchange Office in Bautzen and was incorporated into the local city library after 1945.¹⁵⁶

Overall, it should be noted that after the forced surrender of their company, the Tietz family gradually lost the vast majority of their private assets through



Fig. 28: Signet of the Edith and Georg Tietz book collection.

the “Aryanization” of their real estate and, in the last of the interlocking stages, through state confiscation. The example of the moving goods in particular illustrates once again how much not only the Nazi regime, but also a large number of silent partners and open profiteers in the German population profited from this robbery, for which all attempts at so-called *Wiedergutmachung* could in no way compensate. Only the fact that no member of the closest circle of the business family fell victim to the Shoah may have outweighed the material losses and serious emotional effects of the persecution.