AUSTRIAN BANKS IN THE PERIOD OF NATIONAL SOCIALISM

Austrian Banks in the Period of National Socialism focuses on the activities of two major financial institutions, the Creditanstalt-Wiener Bankverein and the Länderbank Wien. It details the ways the two banks served the Nazi regime and how they used the opportunities presented by Nazi rule to expand their business activities. Particular attention is given to the role that the Creditanstalt and Länderbank played in the “Aryanization” of Jewish-owned businesses. The author also examines the two banks’ relations with their industrial clients and considers the question of whether bank officials had any knowledge of their client firms’ use of concentration camp prisoners and other forced laborers during World War II. Austrian Banks in the Period of National Socialism is Gerald D. Feldman’s contribution to the multiauthor, two-volume study Österreichische Banken und Sparkassen im Nationalsozialismus und in der Nachkriegszeit, which was originally published in German by C. H. Beck in 2006.

Gerald D. Feldman (1937–2007) was one of the preeminent historians of Germany of his generation. He joined the history department at the University of California, Berkeley, in 1963 and spent his entire career there. His numerous publications include the seminal study The Great Disorder: Politics, Economics, and Society in the German Inflation, 1914–1924 (1993). In the later years of his career, Feldman focused on the activities of private companies during the Nazi era and their involvement in the regime’s economic policies. He served as an advisor to the Presidential Commission on Holocaust Assets in the United States. An active supporter of European–American scholarly dialogue, Feldman participated in the founding of the Friends of the German Historical Institute, Washington, DC, and was the group’s president at the time of his death.
The German Historical Institute is a center for advanced study and research whose purpose is to provide a permanent basis for scholarly cooperation among historians from the Federal Republic of Germany and the United States. The Institute conducts, promotes, and supports research into both American and German political, social, economic, and cultural history; into transatlantic migration, especially during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries; and into the history of international relations, with special emphasis on the roles played by the United States and Germany.

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Austrian Banks in the Period of National Socialism

GERALD D. FELDMAN

INTRODUCTION BY PETER HAYES
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GERMAN HISTORICAL INSTITUTE
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Contents

Foreword by Hartmut Berghoff page ix

Introduction 1

Peter Hayes

PART I THE CREDITANSTALT-WIENER BANKVEREIN

1 Ownership, Organization, and Personnel of the Creditanstalt-Wiener Bankverein, 1938–1945 7

2 The Creditanstalt, Its Jewish Customers, and Aryanization 117

3 An Expanding Creditanstalt in an Expanding German Empire 156

4 Serving the Regime in Peace and War 311

PART II THE LÄNDERBANK WIEN AG IN THE NATIONAL SOCIALIST PERIOD

5 The Mercurbank, the Länderbank Wien, and the Anschluss, 1933–1939: The Role of the Dresdner Bank 395

6 The Länderbank in the Second World War 482

Bibliography 547

Index 557
Foreword

Austrian Banks in the Period of National Socialism is the last book Gerald D. Feldman completed before his death in 2007. As Peter Hayes explains in his introduction, this book has its origins in a larger multi-author project that came about as a result of a class action against the Bank Austria Creditanstalt. That work, Österreichische Banken und Sparkassen im Nationalsozialismus und in der Nachkriegszeit, was published in German in 2006. It was decided after Feldman's death to publish his sections as a stand-alone work in English.

The German Historical Institute is honored to be able to include Austrian Banks in the Period of National Socialism in its series with Cambridge University Press. This series is conceived as a forum for international scholarly dialogue, and few scholars of his generation did more to promote dialogue between German and American historians than Gerald Feldman. Toward that end, Feldman helped establish the Friends of the German Historical Institute. He was a longtime member of the board of the Friends and served as president from 2002 until his death. With the publication of Austrian Banks in the Period of National Socialism in its book series, the German Historical Institute pays tribute to a preeminent scholar and sorely missed supporter.

The publication of Austrian Banks in the Period of National Socialism would not have been possible without the tireless efforts of Gerald Feldman's widow, Norma von Ragenfeld-Feldman. She was assisted in preparing the manuscript for publication by Stephen Gross, Jennifer Zahrt, and Heidrun Homburg. In close collaboration with the author, Dr. Homburg translated Feldman's English manuscript for the German publication, and in the process she suggested many revisions and refinements that he gratefully adopted for the English publication as well. Frank Smith, formerly senior editor at Cambridge University Press, provided invaluable guidance and assistance in the early stages of the publication process.

I would like to thank Frank Smith's successors at Cambridge University Press, Eric Crahan and Deborah Gerschenowitz, for their support in including Austrian Banks in the Period of National Socialism in the German Historical Institute's series. I am grateful to Peter Hayes for agreeing to write an introduction to this work. David Lazar handled the German Historical Institute's share of the editorial labors in bringing Austrian Banks in the Period of National Socialism to print.

Finally, I want to call the reader's attention to the acknowledgments included in Österreichische Banken und Sparkassen im Nationalsozialismus und in der Nachkriegszeit. Gerald Feldman and his three coauthors – Oliver Rathkolb, Theodor Venus, and
Foreword

Ulrike Zimmerl – voiced their gratitude to a long list of colleagues, archivists, translators, bank employees, and assistants who helped them in compiling the documentation they used in writing their respective sections of Österreichische Banken und Sparkassen im Nationalsozialismus und in der Nachkriegszeit. Had he lived to oversee the publication of Austrian Banks in the Period of National Socialism, Gerald Feldman would no doubt have taken the opportunity to thank his coauthors and the many individuals who provided assistance or advice.

Hartmut Berghoff, Director
German Historical Institute