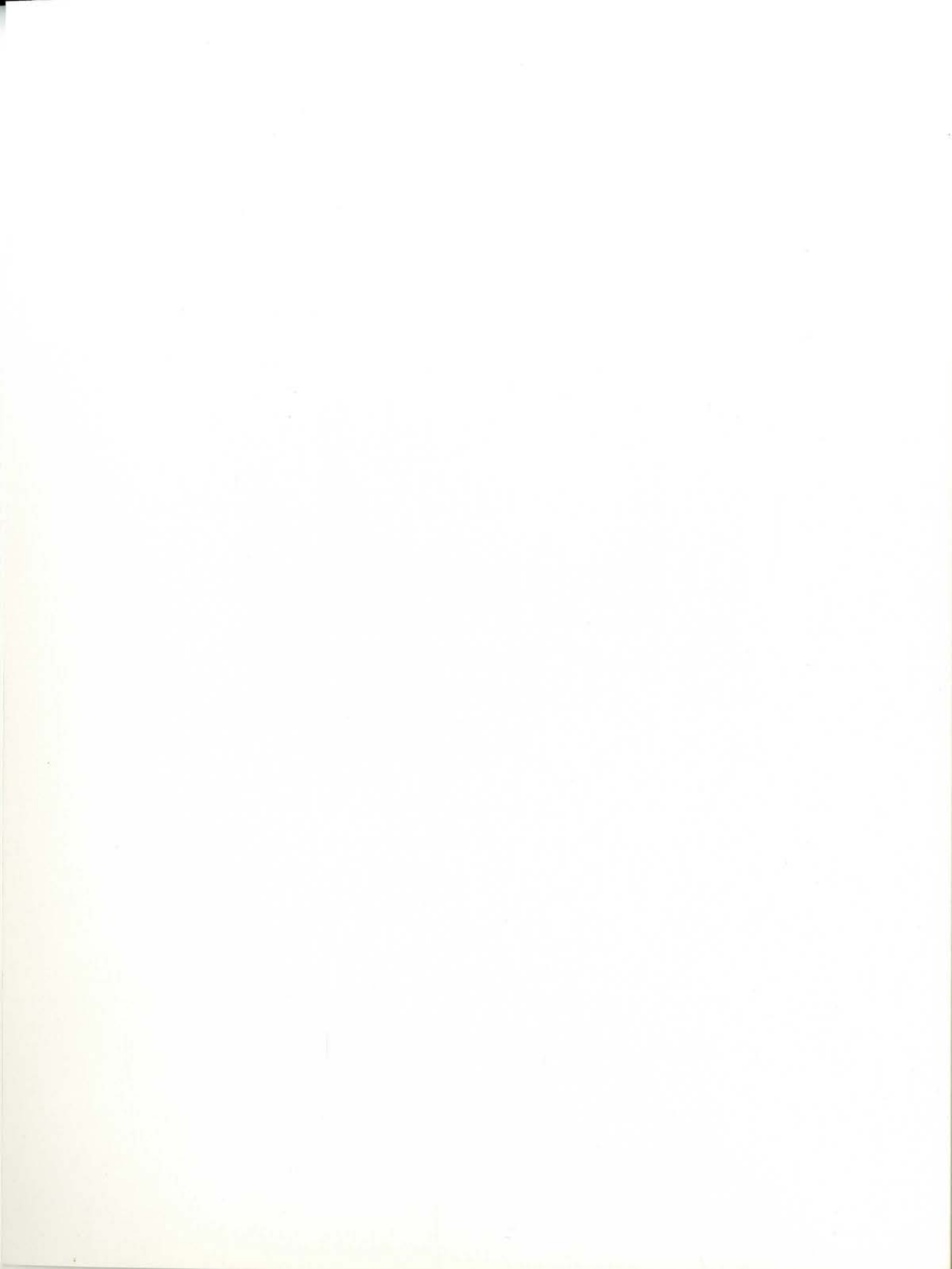




"THE TREASURE HOUSES OF AUSTRIA"
THE AUSTRIAN STATE ARCHIVES



AUSTRIA
DOCUMENTATION



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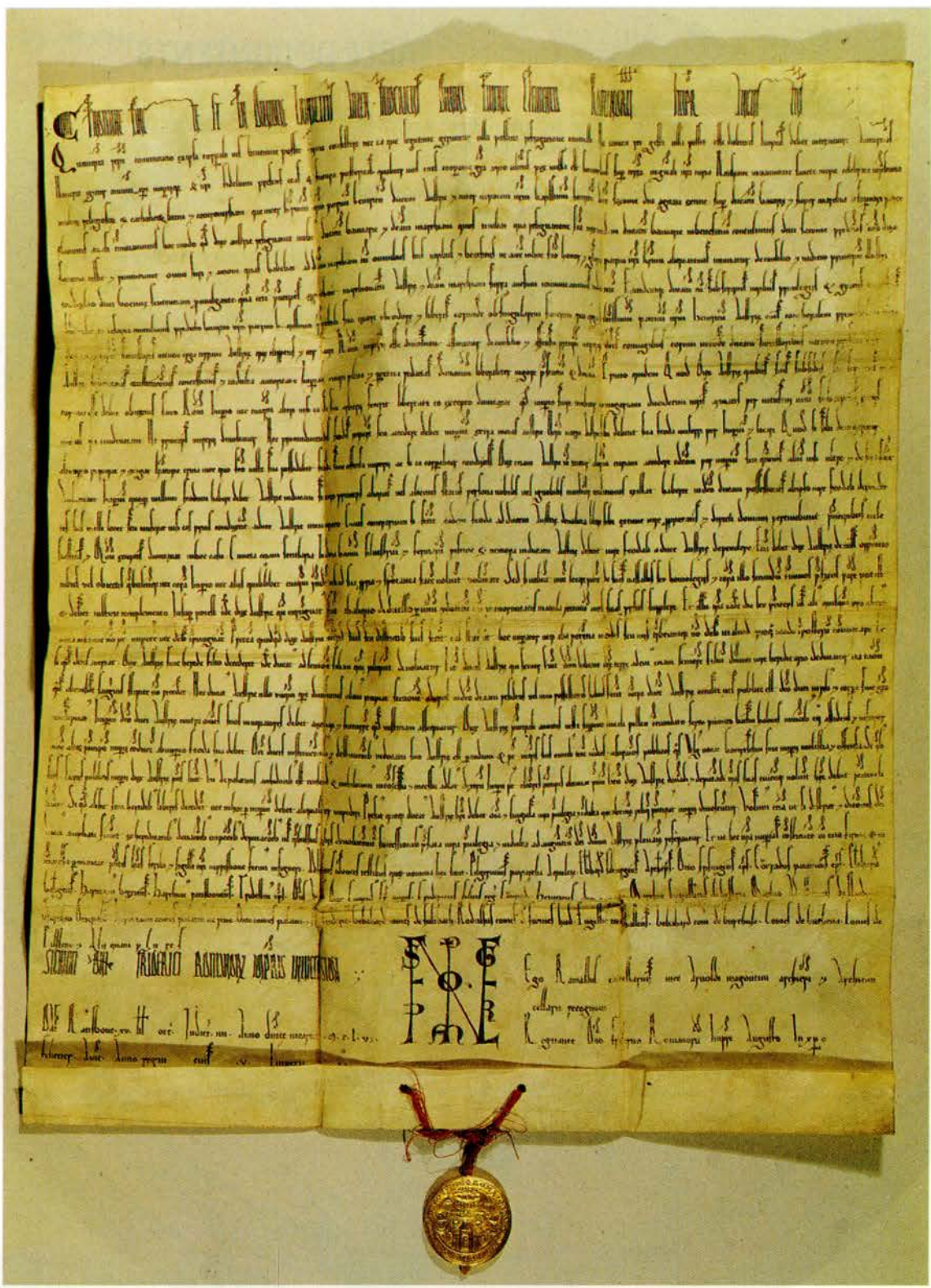


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The so-called "Privilegium maius" was forged by Duke Rudolf IV, the Founder, in 1359, with the object of obtaining more rights for Austria than were held by the Electors. This was his response to the issuing of the "Golden Bull" by Emperor Charles IV. The Privilegium maius was known to be a forgery even in Rudolf's time. It was finally sanctioned by Emperor Friedrich III in 1453.

The Austrian State Archives

Lorenz Mikoletzky

What is an archive?

"There are hardly any windows; apart from the fortunate few, most of the archive staff and users cannot see the daylight. They are like miners, burrowing into the depths of the past. The archivists are the key to the system. They are usually overworked and underpaid, but very often endowed with a strong sense of history and skilled in dealing with records and files. If approached seriously, steadfastly and reasonably, the archivist will more often than not enlighten you on how to find what you are looking for. However, it takes time and hard work to search through records which sometimes have not been touched for decades..." as two historians discovered in 1988. They briefly characterised thus an institution and a type of work, which are again and again called in question by outsiders: what, actually, is an archive? Most of the time it is inevitably confused with a library.

The term "archive" and the corresponding terms in most of the other modern languages are derived from the Latin "archivum". The derivation of this word leads via the Greek "archeion" not to "archaios" (old) or archaic, but to the radical "arche" (authority, government office).

The original task of archives was not to preserve time-honoured documents, but to keep the records and documents of administrative authorities. The records and documents generated by the administration which, for legal or administrative purposes, had to be preserved temporarily or permanently, were kept in archives. It was only later that archives became a reservoir of sources for historians and the most important repositories of data from the past, a development which occasionally tended to obscure their continued legal-administrative function. In most state archives of our time one finds documents, official journals and records from past centuries together with files which the current administration transferred for storage some years

ago. Frequently the holdings of many newly-established archives do not date back more than a few decades.

The Austrian archival system has had a great and eventful history. It was influenced by the most diverse notions of reform conceived by the rulers of the day, but was ultimately oriented towards one and the same principal task: the centralisation of all government records and documents. This idea can be traced back through several centuries, but was not implemented until after the end of the Second World War.

Reorganisation after 1945

Immediately after the liberation of Austria from Nazi dictatorship and the re-establishment of the Republic, the provisional Austrian government initiated the reorganisation of the state archives. § 10 of the Authorities Transfer Act of July 28, 1945 (STGBI 94/1945), which provided the basis for the reconstruction of the Austrian state authorities, dealt with the archives:

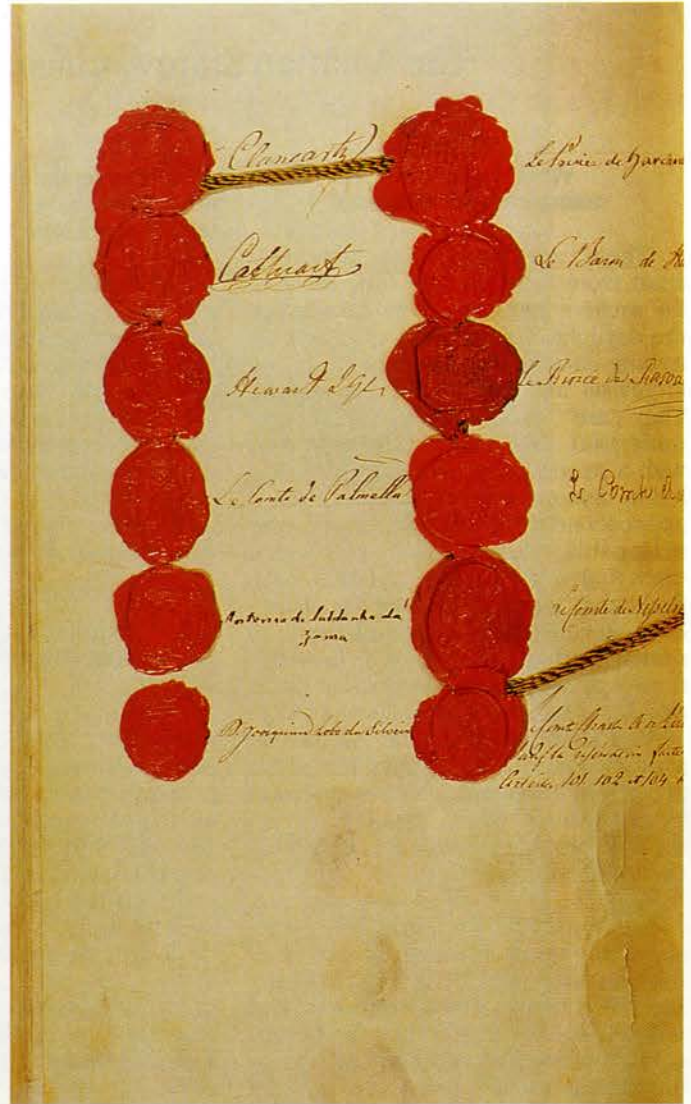
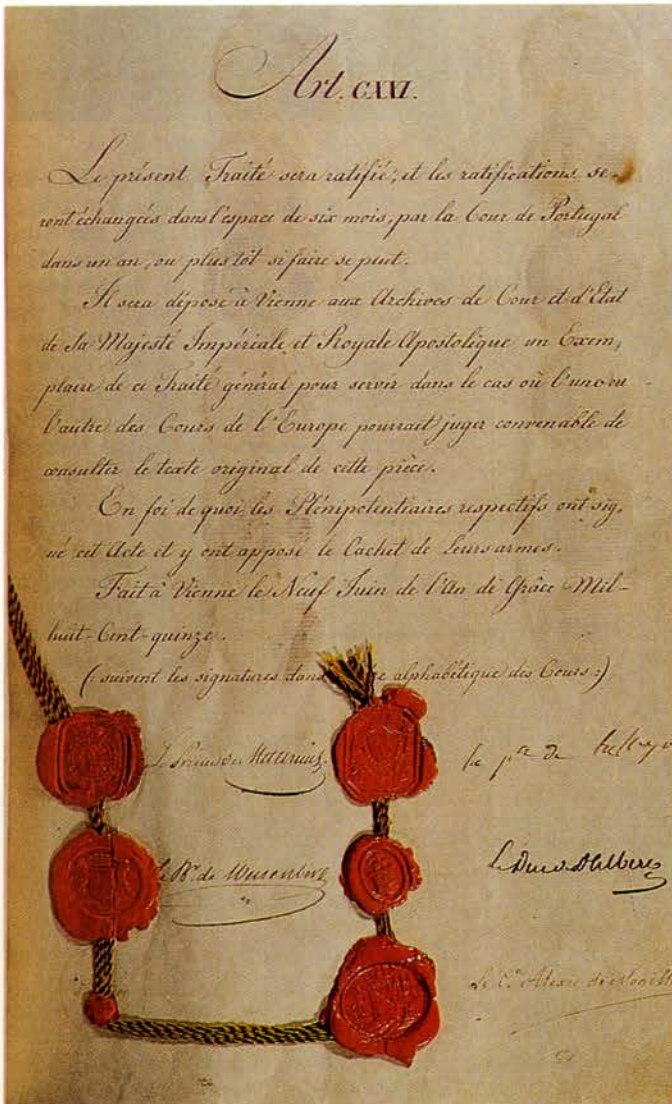
1. The *Reichsarchiv* in Vienna, the *Heeresarchiv* in Vienna and the *Verkehrsarchiv* in Vienna shall be dissolved;
2. they shall be replaced by the *Österreichische Staatsarchiv* (Austrian State Archives) in Vienna;
3. these Archives shall be divided into the *Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv* (Family-, Court-, and State Archives), the *Allgemeine Verwaltungsarchiv* (General Administrative Archive), the *Finanz- und Hofkammerarchiv* (Finance and Aulic Chamber Archive) and the *Kriegsarchiv* (War Archive).

This act signified, on the one hand, the beginning of a new development for the Austrian archival system and, on the other hand, the achievement of a goal pursued for 250 years: the amalgamation of all Austrian state archives, or rather the establishment of Central State Archives. The *Wiener Reichsarchiv*, set up in 1939, must in retrospect be considered the first step leading to this goal.

In 1940, Austria was divided into *Reichsgaue*; the central Austrian administration was dissolved and the Austrian ministries ceased to exist. The sixth statutory regulation on the transfer of the tasks and powers of the Governor of the *Reich* in Austria (Austrian state government) decreed in section 9/1: "The central archives of the country of Austria in Vienna shall be under the direct control of the Interior Minister of the *Reich* and shall form the *Wiener Reichsarchiv*." The Aulic Chamber Archive, the State Archive of the Interior and of Justice, the archives of the Ministries of Finance and Education were integrated into the *Wiener Reichsarchiv* as independent departments, whereas the War Archive was integrated into the Heeresarchiv and the Transport Archive became part of the *Reichsbahnverwaltung*. This organisational structure remained unchanged until the end of the *Ostmark*.

Centralisation – the order of the day

Upon his return from France, where he had, among other things, worked as a farmer after his dismissal from the diplomatic service in 1938, Norbert Bischoff (1894–1960), later ambassador of the Second Republic in Moscow, wrote a "Memorandum" for State Chancellor Karl Renner (1870–1950), in which he addressed the reasons in favour of merging the major Austrian central archives. Bischoff together with the future first Secretary General of the Austrian State Archives, university professor Leo Santifaller (1890–1974) submitted the memorandum on July 17, 1945. Bischoff stated that in so far as this had not been effected by the organisation of the *Reichsarchiv*, Austria's major archives ought to constitute one administrative entity managed by experts and staffed with civil servants with comparable qualifications and of equal status. The historical holdings and the scientific characteristics of the individual archives would, naturally, not be negatively affected by this concentration. A centralised organisation would be of advantage not only for the



administration of the state, but also for the administration of the individual archives. The archival characteristics of the individual archives would be preserved, while the administrative work would be substantially simplified, and the staff would be able to devote much more time to the archival and academic aspects of their work. The centralisation would permit individual archives and their staff to present and to enforce their wishes and demands much more effectively than if they remained isolated. Consolidating the management and concentrating the administrative work brings further advantages. There is an opportunity to exchange and transfer experience in the field of archival techniques (stock lists, catalogues, disposal, user regulations), while


taking into account the characteristics of each individual archive. A common approach can be taken to the recruitment and academic training of prospective archivists as well as to the academic and publishing activities of the archives. The acquisition of books for the individual archives could be coordinated and thus substantially simplified and, in addition, expenditure on foreign literature could be considerably reduced. These and a number of other factors have motivated the centralisation and consolidation of the management of state archives in almost every country. Hence it would be highly desirable for Austria to amalgamate at least the major state archives . . . "Apart from the Vatican Archives in Rome there are no archives anywhere in the world that

can be compared to the major Austrian archives as regards range, value and importance . . ." So much for the ideas laid down in the memorandum which was adopted.

After a transitional phase in which the *Reichsarchiv* was transformed into the State Archives, under frequent changes of management, Leo Santifaller, professor of medieval history and of subjects complementary to the study of history at the University of Vienna, was appointed first Director General of the new institution, in November 1942. In 1945, he became interim head of the university's History Seminar and of the Austrian Institute for Historical Research. Supported by the heads of the sub-archives he began to build and

Zu Urkund dessen haben die unterzeichneten Bevollmächtigten den vorliegenden Vertrag unterzeichnet und mit ihren Siegeln versehen.


Geschehen in der Stadt Wien in russischer, englischer, französischer und deutscher Sprache am 15. Mai 1955.




H. Monouchi.



R. Melchior




Hans Naiman




Geoffrey Wallingford


[11]




Richard D. Little



Leavelyn E. Thompson



Out Piny



Richard Little



Richard Little

[11]

expand the central state archives, a task which almost took up the entire second half of the forties. One of the measures taken was to create a special publication, the *Mitteilungen des Österreichischen Staatsarchivs*, as a platform for the archives' research staff, but also for outside researchers wishing to publish works based on their archival research. Major research projects exceeding the scope of the *Mitteilungen*, which were essentially collections of miscellaneous papers, were contained in special volumes. The question of premises was at the top of the agenda from 1945 onwards. Whereas the *Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv* and the *Hofkammerarchiv* were housed in buildings specially constructed for the purpose, the other departments as well as the *Finanzar-*

chiv were kept in buildings adapted for archival purposes. Although they had suffered little damage in the war, they lacked the flexibility of use now provided for in the planning of modern archive buildings. Problems were compounded by the growing number of files that had to be housed after 1945 and for which the load capacity was insufficient.

The Directorate General, in cooperation with the individual departments, had to deal with matters relating to the construction and adaptation of buildings, the reintegration of evacuated archival material and to the restitution of material. This primarily concerned all the records which, after 1918, had been turned over to the successor states

Pages with signatures affixed to the final act of the Vienna Congress of 1814/15 and to the Austrian State Treaty of May 15, 1955: except for the use of typewriters, little has changed in the physical appearance of state documents.



One of the greatest disasters in the history of the Austrian archives was the fire at the Palace of Justice in Vienna, in 1927. Irreplaceable documents were destroyed or severely damaged. Records damaged by fire were salvaged and later restored.

under the peace treaty of Saint-Germain or under special archive agreements, and had been returned to Vienna after 1939. While these restitutions presented no difficulties, the demands made by the former SHS-state, later Yugoslavia, and negotiated in 1923, was to occupy the archivists of the Austrian State Archives into the eighties.

Staff recruitment and augmentation

At that time, the workload was dealt with by a relatively small staff, the personnel of the individual archives having been decimated by summary dismissals in 1945 and by subsequent de-nazification measures, for in the state archives there had been a substantial number of sympathisers with the Nazi-regime. In the first ten years after the establishment of the Austrian State Archives, continuous recruitment brought the number of the staff to 110 people in 1955. All the academic civil servants had to furnish proof that they had succeeded in passing the state examination at the Austrian Institute for Historical Research. This requirement still applies to the staff of the "historically" developed departments but not to the academic staff working in the Archives of the Republic, which were set up in 1983.

Since 1947, the Director General has been assisted by a Personnel and Administrative Director. From the beginning, the tasks of the Directorate General extended beyond "academic and archival" matters to the setting-up of restoration workrooms, book-binding facilities and a photographic centre. Before the amalgamation, the individual archives had had their own smaller or larger facilities, however, it soon transpired that these were insufficient and that reorganisation was called for. In 1952, a larger restoration workroom was set up at the *Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv* which took on work from the other departments. In the following years, the *Kriegsarchiv* and eventually also the *Allgemeine Verwaltungsarchiv* were equipped with similar workrooms. The latter were mainly occupied with repairing the damage suffered by the records of the Ministries of the Interior and Justice during the fire at the Palace of

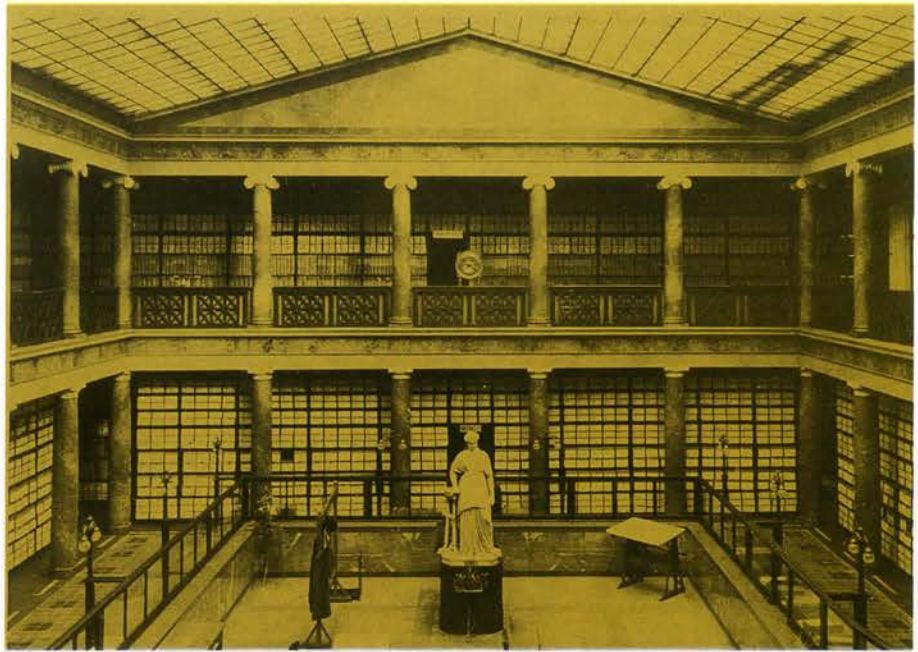
Justice in 1927. In addition, the restoration workrooms did book-binding work and offered assistance to other archives.

The photographic services suffered a set-back after 1945, because the workrooms attached to the *Allgemeine Verwaltungsarchiv*, the *Hofkammerarchiv* and the *Kriegsarchiv* had been destroyed during the war and its aftermath and, for years, the only facility available was the *Photostelle des Bundeskanzleramtes und des Österreichischen Staatsarchivs*. In the course of time, this double function increased the workload so drastically that changes had to be considered in this field as well.

Mounting exhibitions – a new task

An important, indeed indispensable task of archives is to mount exhibitions on their own premises or to participate in exhibitions elsewhere. Initially, suitable premises were provided in a specially adapted depot area of the *Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv*, where the first exhibition on “Austrian and European History” was held at the end of 1947. Later, a permanent exhibition of archival material was installed there. However, after several years, this had to be closed for preservation reasons. None of the other departments had special exhibition premises, with the exception of the *Kriegsarchiv*, which had a few “commemoration rooms” for high-ranking military officers, where several important exhibitions of archival material were arranged from the late sixties onwards, e.g. on the year 1934 and on the history of the Austrian military border. The *Hofkammerarchiv* has a room which is a museum in itself: the study of Franz Grillparzer who headed the institution from 1832 to 1856 (from 1848 in the current building), which is still equipped with the original furniture.

The idea of making the archival treasures accessible to wider circles was initially put into practice by offering guided tours of the individual departments. These tours, which became extremely popular, were not only designed to introduce visitors to the archive as a scientific institution, but



After the former banking house at Wallnerstrasse 6a had been taken over by the State Archives, stacks for the storage of archival material of the *Allgemeine Verwaltungsarchiv* were also set up in the main hall.



Construction of the new archive building in Vienna-Erdberg.