

Tbilisi 2022 Abstract Submission

Title

Jewish Wine Merchants in Stuttgart (Württemberg) and the Impact of National Socialism on the wine trade in Württemberg

I want to submit an abstract for:

Conference Presentation

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Keywords

history, wine trade, Württemberg, jewish wine merchants, National Socialism, cooperatives, aryanization

Research Question

What role did Jewish wine merchants play in Württemberg? At what point were they forced out of business, what measures were taken? What was the role of cooperatives? Who profited?

Methods

Qualitative evaluation of archival sources from the state archive in Württemberg and other primary sources, including micro-historical case studies

Results

Especially customers such as innkeepers increasingly began to bypass wholesalers through purchasing cooperatives. Several Jewish wine merchants already gave up their business before 1933. The profiteers were wine retailers.

Abstract

In the important cities in the German wine regions, often more than half of the wine merchants were Jews.

The paper will explore the role of Jewish wine merchants in the wine trade in the Württemberg wine region in southwestern Germany, particularly in Stuttgart, which was the most important wine trading center in the region before Ulm and Heilbronn and had the largest Jewish community in Württemberg.

There are hardly any recent economic-historical accounts of the structure of the wine trade in Württemberg from the last third of the 19th century until the Second World War. An investigation of the importance of Jewish wine merchants in Württemberg has been completely lacking. This is not least due to the difficult source situation, as many archive holdings were burned during the Second World War. The paper is based in part on restitution case

files, which have only been released in recent years.

The paper will be prepared in the context of a conference on the topic of “the wine industry and National Socialism in Germany”, which the Gesellschaft für Geschichte des Weines e.V. is planning for 2023.

The paper focuses on the following questions:

When and how did the Jewish wine wholesale trade develop in Stuttgart, and what was their significance in the wine industry?

Were there already anti-Semitic tendencies directed against Jewish wine merchants before 1933 and what did they consist of?

What measures were taken to push back Jewish wine merchants?

What was the role of the winegrowers' cooperatives, which traditionally have a high market share in Württemberg (today they cultivate about 70% of the vineyards in the region)?

Who benefited from the elimination of Jewish wholesalers and how did this change the structures in the wine trade?

Did the development in the Württemberg wine region differ from that in other German wine-growing regions?

In 1835, Julius Auerbacher, the first Jewish wine merchant, settled in Stuttgart. Since 1864, Jews were equal citizens with full rights in the Kingdom of Württemberg. At that time, four Jewish wine merchants had already settled in Stuttgart. The rapidly growing city offered corresponding prospects. Various Jewish families who had already been active in the wine trade in the country moved to Stuttgart. In 1910, about 90 wine merchants were active in Stuttgart, of which 17 were important wine wholesalers, 11 of which in turn belonged to Jewish entrepreneurs.

They were mainly active in barrel wholesaling and sourced their wines mainly from producers in Württemberg, but also in Baden, Franconia, the Palatinate and Rhinehessen. One wholesaler specialized in importing wines from South Tyrol. The customers were primarily innkeepers. The wines were sold exclusively within Württemberg; exports did not take place. The Jewish wine merchants belonged to the upper middle class, were respected businessmen and were well integrated into Stuttgart's urban society.

Due to the small-scale farm structures in viticulture, the winegrowers in Württemberg were particularly dependent on the wine merchants. At the beginning of the 20th century, 97% of the wineries in Württemberg cultivated vineyards of between 10 ares and one hectare. Up to 90% of the harvest in Württemberg was sold as must directly under the winepress in the fall, as the winegrowers lacked the structures and financial resources to age and store the wines.

Producers and buyers tried to counteract the increasingly powerful wine trade that had emerged since the last third of the 19th century. The producers were concerned not to have prices dictated to them, while the innkeepers, as the main customers, saw the wine merchants as a superfluous link that made wine prices unnecessarily expensive.

The invention of cooperatives in the 19th century is considered a milestone in the development of the wine industry. It is often overlooked that anti-Semitic tendencies were linked to the founding of the cooperatives. A diary entry from 1878 by the writer, member of the Baden state parliament and pastor Heinrich Hansjakob, who founded the first Baden cooperative in Hagnau on Lake Constance in 1881, provides impressive evidence of this:

„These days, together, we are waging the annual war of all against all the Jewish and Swabian wine merchants who are coming to run us out of lake wine, or more correctly, to steal it away. The fight is all the more heated because our opponents are mostly true and right Württemberger and by nature much smarter than we Baden Seehasen and than the other German men in general. A Swabian Jew is even the ‚Victoria regia‘, the flower of Semitic commercial spirit.“ Hansjakob goes on to say that „the winegrowers were fighting for existence, but the wine merchants were only fighting to increase their capital.“

In Württemberg, the winegrowers were initially reluctant to join the cooperatives. They valued their independence and did not want to be bound by instructions. In 1910, there were 10 cooperatives, in 1920 there were 20. Then the number rose sharply, in 1930 there were already 40, in 1945 well over a hundred. In the Rems Valley near Stuttgart alone, 16 cooperatives were founded between 1930 and 1945. Of these, 10 were headed by board members who were members of the NSDAP. It was in the interests of the Nazis to promote the formation of winegrowers' cooperatives. They guaranteed a stable producer structure, which was essential for the autarky that the Nazis were

striving for. The role of the winegrowers' cooperatives during National Socialism requires detailed illumination.

In 1910, the Süddeutsche Weinzentrale was founded in Stuttgart as the Purchasing Cooperative of German Innkeepers with the aim of buying wine collectively and selling it to its members. The Weinzentrale was in fierce competition with the wine wholesalers. In 1922, the Weinzentrale already had over 5000 members. In 1929, the annual report was pleased to report that several competing companies had already given up. However, it was itself wound up in 1938.

In contrast to other German wine regions, Jewish wine merchants in Württemberg were already experiencing financial difficulties in the 1920s. The wine wholesaler Louis Hirsch, for example, reports in his memoirs in 1937 that the innkeepers used to be happy to be able to place their orders when the wine traveler came; in contrast to later, when their many frequent visits were considered a nuisance.

In 1929 he decided to give up the business. The general economic situation, the proliferation of grocery stores dealing in wine, the efforts of small traders, coopers and innkeepers to cover their needs directly from the winegrower, bypassing the wine wholesalers, made the barrel wholesale business seem unpromising, especially as it was limited to southern Germany. He sold his barrels, warehouse and customer base to the Süddeutsche Weinzentrale.

At least two other Jewish wine wholesalers ceased their business operations before 1933. Only one Jewish wine wholesaler continued to exist beyond 1936 before it was liquidated in 1939 and its assets confiscated. The owner, formerly chairman of the Württemberg Wine Merchants Association, was deported.

Two wine trading companies in particular profited from the gap left by the Jewish merchants who had been forced out of business. They operated wholesale and retail trade in bottled wines and were to rise to become the most important wine suppliers in southern Germany after the War.

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