

Spoken text accompanying the PPT on Analytical and formal diplomatics

Welcome! Thank you for your interest in diplomatics.

My name is Nicolai Zimmermann, I work at the Third Reich Department or *Abteilung Deutsches Reich* in the German Federal Archives. I shall be guiding you through a module on analytical and formal diplomatics, part of the EHRI online course "Modern Diplomats of the Holocaust".

Elements of a written document

In analytical and formal diplomatics, the formal external and internal characteristics of a document are studied in an attempt to identify traces of processing and to analyse the same. In a first step, we shall look at the incoming document and its varying elements. Second, we shall examine the traces of administrative processing.

Here you see a list of the elements of an incoming document, which we shall go through one by one.

The document serving as our main example is this April 1943 letter from Hans Heinrich Lammers, Reich Minister and Head of the Reich Chancellery, to the Reich Finance Minister, Lutz Graf Schwerin von Krosigk. It is preserved in the Federal Archives in the holdings R 2 Reichsfinanzministerium, file number 4480, folio 27. Its content deals with the procedure for appointing civil servants and the response of the Reich Minister of the Interior to this question. Our focus shall not however be on the content. This document was chosen because it is ideal for following the typical course of document processing or workflow in the Reich Ministry of Finance.

In order to better highlight the individual elements, we have digitally modified the document. Here you see the document without the processing marks made by the Ministry of Finance. This is how it must have looked when it left the Reich Chancellery and first arrived at the Ministry of Finance.

If you could hold this letter in your hand, you would notice something important about its physical quality that is even almost visible in the digitalized version: it is written on fairly thick, stable, high-quality paper with a raised Nazi eagle seal in the upper left-hand corner. These are the first indications that we are dealing with an official outgoing final document, and not a draft, which would be written on thinner paper or exist only as a carbon copy. The high quality of the paper is a sign of the high rank of the sender.

The document was written on Reich Chancellery letterhead, which includes sender and address. Notable is the stamped address below the letterhead, typical for the end of the war, when corrections were often made to official addresses, since many administrations moved their offices as a result of bombings. In this case, the stamp states that Lammers is writing from field headquarters, but answering letters are to be sent to the Reich Chancellery in Berlin.

The next element that we shall examine more closely is the date. Usually, dates take the form day—month —year. In outgoing documents, the month is usually written in long form.

As a rule, each important station through which a document passes in an administration is dated, whereby there is usually no year on internal notes, since the year is already clear. In an abbreviated date, day and month are separated by a slash. Otherwise, a period always follows the day in German. An example of an abbreviated date can be seen in the enlargements on the left. On the left-hand side are the initials of Himmler's adjutant Rudolf Brandt, on the right are the initials of Karl Wolff, Chief of Personal Staff Reichsführer SS, both with date. The date of Wolff's signature has a typical form: often the month is written in Roman numerals; the day is always given in Arabic numerals.

Other letters also have incoming or outgoing stamps with a date. Alongside the date, the stamp often shows whether a document was received or sent in the morning or in the afternoon. In telegrams such as this one sent by Himmler, it was particularly important to note the exact time. This telegram was sent on November 14, 1942 at 12:40 PM.

A letter of course needs an address. In the Nazi period, the address is usually in the upper left-hand corner, although sometimes it is found in the lower left-hand corner as had previously been the norm. It should be noted that letters were always addressed to the director of an institution, even though he himself naturally only saw a fraction of the incoming post.

If a sender wanted to make sure that the director did read a letter, it had to be marked "persönlich!" or 'personally' or "eigenhändig!," meaning hand-deliver to addressee. In this example, a letter from the General Commissioner for Belarus to the Reichsführer SS about suppressing partisans, Himmler's initials in green show that he did indeed see the document himself.

Next we will look at the file reference of the sender, in this case, the Reich Chancellery. As a rule, administrative bodies have a filing plan, a systematic, hierarchical list of tasks that provides a framework for registering and organizing documents and for creating files. The filing plan includes rules for the file reference, a distinctive notation consisting of letters and numerals that ensures the document is filed together with other related documents. Here, the reference "Rk 3188 C" is the number used by the Reich Chancellery for formal questions about the appointment of civil servants.

Most administrative bodies also worked with diaries, sometimes even exclusively. Diaries or journals were simply lists of every incoming and/or outgoing document, including a number for each one. This was another method of transparent records management. Diaries were very common in higher-level agencies, because they made it easy to see what came in and what went out. Especially those Nazi administrations that were set up quickly during the war did not have the traditional framework of a filing plan as found in classical ministries, and therefore often worked with diaries. This held true for example for the Reich Commissariat Ostland, or "Eastland" and its governing ministry, the Reich Ministry for the Occupied Eastern Territories. This example is a good illustration of the structure of diary numbers. A letter for the unit, in this case "P" for the High Command Policy Unit or *Führungsstab Politik*, followed by a consecutive number, the year, 1944, and finally a "g" for *geheim* or secret. The latter indicates the level of

secrecy. Classified documents started at "for internal use only or *Nur für den Dienstgebrauch*, abbreviated NfD or NfdD), and went through confidential or *vertraulich* to secret or *geheim*, up to secret command business or *geheimer Kommandosache* and secret Reich business or *geheimer Reichssache*. The Reich Ministry for the Occupied Eastern Territories had its own diary number for classified documents, *Verschlussachen* or *VS-Sachen*.

As a rule, the subject heading at the beginning of a letter indicates a document's contents. This heading may be specified more precisely with a note following a "*hier*" or here as in the example on the left. If the document is answering another letter, this is usually also referenced in the heading, as for example heading at the bottom left, which is answering a telegram about alien refugees from October 25, 1944.

Next comes the salutation. In our example, the customary "sehr verehrter" Herr Graf Schwerin von Krosigk is used. Often however, one will find the greeting most common today, "sehr geehrter," combined with either the person's name or function, as in "Sehr verehrter Herr Reichsführer SS." The more informal "Lieber" or "dear" was the usual form of address between the regime's leaders, and did not necessarily express emotional closeness, especially not when followed by *Parteigenosse* or party member, which merely stressed that both sender and addressee were NSDAP members.

A letter ends with a formal closing. Common in the Nazi period was not today's "mit freundlichen Grüßen" but the so-called German greeting, "Heil Hitler." The use of this closing was standard and does not express any particular closeness to the regime. It was even used as early as January 1934, as illustrated by the following document, in which the Reich Finance Office directs all administrative bodies in the Reich to end letters needing a formal closing with "Heil Hitler"

However many documents have neither opening nor closing salutations. This is in accordance with the Rules of Procedure, which stated that written communication among administrations should forgo elaborate greetings and formalities. Therefore, a lack of polite formalities should not necessarily be interpreted as a lack of esteem, but rather follows the common linguistic ductus, which also includes addressing the reader with the polite "Sie" and writing of oneself in the singular "ich" rather than the plural "we." This can be seen in the letter above from the Reich Commissioner for the Ostland to the Reich Minister for the Occupied Eastern Territories.

An outgoing letter also needed some sign of official sanction. This usually took the form of a handwritten signature, like the large autograph of the Chief of the Reich Chancellery Dr. Lammers in our example. In internal, informal, memoranda, two- or three-character initials usually had this function. Here, for example, we see Heinrich Himmler's initials.

Top civil servants and administrative chiefs often had to personally autograph numerous documents. In a classic workflow, they saw every document twice, once as a draft that they had to approve by initialling, and then as a final clean copy to be signed. To simplify day-to-day business, the Procedures of the Reich Ministry Chancellery determined that clean copies could be signed by the chancellery official who last approved the document, with "gez." for "gezeichnet" or 'signed' before the signature. The actual approval took the form of the handwritten signature of the chancellery clerk, who also had to add his official capacity and an agency stamp. This was the

usual procedure, except for correspondence with the highest public authorities, such as the Reich President or the Reich Chancellery, or official certificates or letters with a personal greeting and closing. Here you see an letter from Heydrich at the Reich Security Main Office; an invitation to a meeting about financing bordellos for foreign forced laborers.

Most official letters were not signed by the head of the institution, but by others who worked there. However they always acted—as is proper for a monocratic administrative structure—on behalf of the head of the administration, which they made clear by preceding their signature with "i.A." or "im Auftrag." Only the head of an institution could sign the letters from his administration without any preceding abbreviation. His permanent deputy, in ministries usually the state secretary, signed with "in Vertretung" or i.V. for 'in representation', everyone else signed "im Auftrag" or 'on behalf of'.

To illustrate this, we shall take another look at our second example, the letter from the Reich Commissioner for the Ostland, signed "im Auftrag" or on behalf of the agency's head by the local director, Karl Friedrich Trampedach.

In this document, we can also see that letters were frequently not signed by the person who wrote them. Usually they were written by lower-ranked officials who had been told to compose them or to whom the letter had been dictated. Or they had taken it upon themselves to write the letter and presented it to their boss for a signature. This was the usual practice when it was important for an agency's public image that a document be signed by a high-ranking official. Usually, there is no way of telling how many officials worked together to create one document. In rare cases, however, a document will contain a dictation note or the initials of the person who processed the letter. In the case of this letter, not only Trampedach, who most likely dictated it and is abbreviated Tr, was involved in the composition, but also another person whose last name begins with Boi—most likely the true composer of this report.

We now return to the letter from the Reich Chancellery to speak of one more element of incoming documents, the *Anlage* or attachments; texts that accompany the letter itself. Every attachment had to be clearly noted, usually by means of a dash in the margins at the line in which said document was mentioned. It was also possible to note the existence of an attachment at the start of a letter underneath the heading, as in our second example.

Up to now, we have looked at the characteristics of an outgoing document. Now we shall examine the traces made in the processing of incoming letters. Reconstructing the chronological order in which these processing marks were made on the document is an element of workflow analyses, and shall be discussed later in the course. At this point, we are simply interested in what the varying elements are. These are listed below and described in short.

Our main example of an incoming missive shall again be the letter from the Reich Chancellery. Here it is the letter with all processing marks, exactly as it was kept in the files of the Reich Ministry of Finance.

Our examination of the varying processing elements begins with the receipt stamp. The stamp tells us when the document was presented to the addressee. In this case it is difficult to read, but it says that the letter was received on April 22, 1943 in the morning. It is notable that the year has

been abbreviated to "3" and that *Vormittags*, or before midday, is abbreviated by "Vm." This letter has a second received date, April 21, written in pencil and initialled beneath the date of the Reich Chancellery's letter. The letter was therefore opened by somebody who noted its receipt before it went to the actual entry point.

Next we see confirmation that the missive entered the workflow or *Geschäftsgang*, which was always abbreviated GG, and then passed through the usual stations of an incoming letter. A proposal was made that *Abteilung* or department IV should manage the document. Department IV proposed in turn that the document be sent to department I or *Abteilung I*, and added the Roman numeral in blue.

Finally, there are three coloured lines over the date stamp. This is the endorsement by the executive level, with which it is clear that management had seen the letter. Usually, this is done by means of initialling. However if a person was allocated a pencil of a particular colour, a simple line was sufficient. Typically, green was used for the head of an institution, in this case the minister, red or brown for his deputy (in this case State Secretary Reinhardt in the Ministry of Finance) and blue for the head of the division.

Furthermore, we should note the file reference: R 3005 – 11 I. This is the number with which the letter was registered and deposited in accordance with the Ministry of Finance filing plan.

Below that is the name of the person who processed the letter, H Krug, whereby H stands for Herr or Mister. Furthermore, Mr. Krug's superior has added a note: *Vorgang bei Ihnen* or 'your process', indicating his responsibility for the workflow. With this, we have discussed all important traces of processing found on this document.

We shall now look at another letter that exhibits other possible traces of processing. The Reich Minister of Finance, who received this letter from the state governor or *Reichsstatthalter* of Vienna, put a green cross in the upper right-hand corner. By adding this mark, he reserved his right as head of the ministry to personally sign the answering letter. This means he wanted to see, and most likely would also sign, the answer himself.

If a state secretary wanted to see or sign an answer, he would make a red (or brown) hash symbol (see example left). Superiors could also make other marks on a letter, each of which was coupled with other directives. For example the "R" on this letter stands for *Rücksprache* or consultation. In this way the superior in question expressed his wish to talk with the clerk who processed the letter within the next three days, either to gain more information about the case or to pass on instructions concerning an answer. After said consultation took place, it was noted in turn, as it was here, by the abbreviation "erl." for *erledigt* or 'finished' and the date on which the consultation took place. Further possible directives are *Eilt* or urgent for expedited procedures and "V" for *Vortrag* or presentation, meaning not only a short consultation or *Rücksprache*, but a more intensive study of the case at hand.

With this we have discussed all if the main elements found on documents in files from the Nazi period. This look at analytical and formal diplomatics will now be supplemented by presentations on systematic and genetic approaches to the discipline.

If your interest is in the workflow and all steps in the processing of administrative tasks within an institution, please see the presentation on practical diplomatics in the following chapter. In that module, we look first at the rules of procedure for workflows and then reconstruct workflows chronologically using three examples. One of these examples is the main letter we have examined in this presentation, which you see again in the form in which it is filed in the Federal Archives.

Thank you for your attention.